



NINE LIVES OF A CAPITAL

"There is no city in the world which as many nations have scrambled for, under whose rocks as many battles have fought for, that has changed its rulers as many times and that has been destroyed fifty times only to be rebuilt from its historical ashes every single time – none, other than our Belgrade.."

Borislav Pekić



- 1403. - Capital of Serbian Despotate (Despot Stefan Lazarevic)
- 1841. - Capital of Principality of Serbia (Prince Mihajlo Obrenovic)
- 1882. - Capital of Kingdom of Serbia (King Milan Obrenovic)
- 1918. - Capital of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (King Aleksandar Karadjordjevic)
- 1929. - Capital of Kingdom of Yugoslavia (King Aleksandar Karadjordjevic)
- 1945. - Capital of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (President Josip Broz Tito)
- 1992. - Capital of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
- 2003. - Capital of Serbia and Montenegro
- 2006 - Capital of Serbia



Type: Walking tour
Duration: 3 to 4 hours
Theme: History, architecture
Languages: Serbian, English, French (other languages available at request)

We start the tour with a visit to Kalemegdan – Belgrade Fortress, that keeps over 2000 years of history including the legacy from the time when Belgrade first became capital. The fortress is built on a hill above the confluence of rivers Sava and Danube, on a crossroad of paths that connected Constantinople and Thessaloniki with continental Europe. The history of this settlement which has been fought for over 100 times and destroyed more than 40 times proves the strategical value of Serbia's capital. Within the fortress walls we will see the Church Ruzica (Little Rose Church) – first built in 15th century when Despot Stefan Lazarevic declared Belgrade the capital of Serbia. The church was destroyed in 16th century, but rebuilt at the same place with the same groundwork in 19th century.

In the period of 15th to 19th century in the battles between the Turks, Austro-Hungarians and Serbs, Belgrade has often changed its rulers, and finally in 1841. resurrected as capital of Principality of Serbia, under the rule of Prince Mihajlo Obrenovic. An enlightened absolute, Prince Mihajlo was a great cultural reformer and a leader who wanted to modernize the country after spending 500 years under the rule of Turkish Ottoman Empire. Among the most important legacies of Prince Mihajlo is the National Theatre, located at the Main Square as well as the building of Belgrade University Head Office – which was first built as Grand School in 19th century, a predecessor to Belgrade University.

In the second half of 19th century, Belgrade became the capital of Kingdom of Serbia for the first time. This is the period of technological progress and modernization of the city – first telephone landlines are installed, old craftsmanship is replaced by industry, and the building of railway Belgrade – Nis and Sava railway bridge heavily contributes to the development of trade and traffic. One of the most iconic examples of Belgrade architecture from that period is the building of Hotel Moskva – built in 1908 in secession style. The building was an investment of Russian Insurance Company and it initially included a hotel, restaurant, bar, apartments for rent and offices. Today the whole building is a hotel, a prestigious venue in Belgrade, that has over the years welcomed world leaders, diplomats and famous people during their visits to Belgrade. Just a short walk from hotel Moskva we reach the Old Palace, today Belgrade's City Hall, it was built in 1882.

The next architectural piece which we will see is the building of National Assembly of Republic of Serbia. The groundwork was set before World War I, but was soon stopped, and continue after the war in 1918 in what was already a new country – The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. It was decided that the National Assembly be built on the location where the sultan's hatt-i sharif from 1830 which granted Serbs freedom from Ottoman Empire was read. During the building of the Assembly, Belgrade has once more become capital of a new country – The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in 1929. The first National Assembly session after the completion of the building in 1936. Just across the street we will see another monumental piece from the same era – Main Post Office building, which was built from 1935 to 1938.

After World War II, Belgrade becomes capital of a new country – Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with Josip Broz Tito as president. Some of the city's symbols from this era are the former Square of Marx and Engels, House of Union, building of newspaper editorial Borba etc. Branko's bridge was also built during the communist rule, on the remains of the old King Aleksander Bridge which was destroyed during the World War II bombing. The bridge connects the old town with New Belgrade – probably the most important architectural project of the socialist regime, a city built from scratch, which has today become a business and financial center of Belgrade.

With the collapse of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in early 90s, Belgrade becomes capital of a new country – Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The 90s were marked by civil war in the country, sanctions, rise of crime, political turmoil and demonstrations which all culminated with 1999 NATO bombing of Belgrade and Yugoslavia. One of the buildings hit in the bombing was the building of Seat of Military, a modernist architecture monument that marked the post war era.

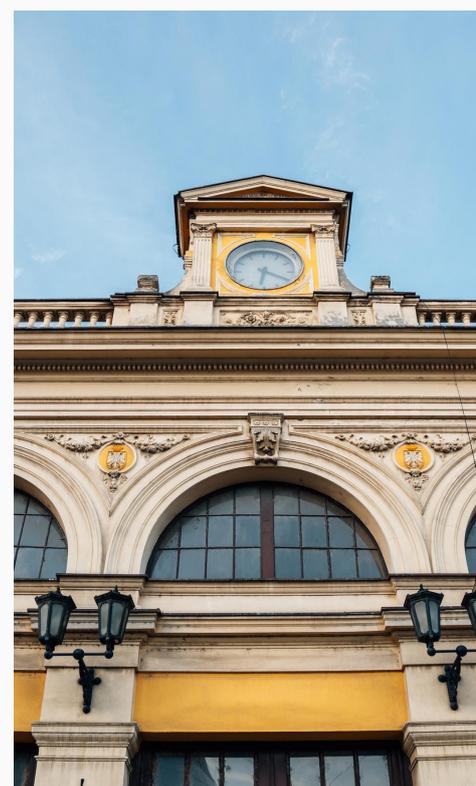
With the fall of the latest country, Yugoslavia as a term ceases to exist, and in 2003. Belgrade becomes capital of Serbia and Montenegro, a State Union of the two countries. It lasted only three years and finally in 2006. Belgrade became capital of Republic of Serbia.

The speed at which Belgrade changes is ever growing. A modern luxurious quarter "Belgrade Waterfront" rises on the right bank of river Sava, forcing the Main Railway Station to be displaced to a new location. Nonetheless, the building of Main Railway Station, built in 1884, remains here, renovated and with a given a new purpose. It is here, in the quarter which leads Belgrade to new adventures, where we will end our tour in a unique Belgrade bar.



"Ovaj veliki grad bio je, izgleda, oduvek ovakav: istrgran, prosut, upravo kao da nikad ne postoji, nego večno nastaje, dograđuje se i oporavlja. S jednog kraja niče i raste, a sa drugog vene i propada. Uvek se kreće i talasa, nikad ne miruje i ne zna šta je spokoj i tišina. Grad na dve reke, na velikom prostoru sapet vetrovima."

Ivo Andrić



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