

# SOUTH SERBIA

5 days – by bus or by car

## TRAVEL PROGRAM:

**1.dan BELGRADE.** Landing at the airport Nikola Tesla. Transfer to the hotel. Dinner. Overnight stay.

**2.dan BELGRADE.** Breakfast. Departure of sightseeing city tour by bus and on foot. Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, is one of the oldest cities in Europe which has been a crucial junction since times before and a crossroad between East and West Europe. Belgrade lays on two international rivers, on the delta of Sava and Danube and the river waters surround it from three sides. Its location rightfully earned it a nickname “the gate to Balkans” and “the door of Central Europe”. The oldest archeological findings from this area date to the fifth millennia before Christ. In the historical center of Belgrade, in 1938, during the construction of Albanija Palace and where it still stands today, the remains of a Neanderthal, who died fighting a mammoth, were found. His remains were found in the vicinity, which testifies to an existence of a habitat on the territory of today’s Belgrade even in the prehistoric times. On the river bank of Danube a prehistoric settlement Vinca can be found, with the remains of artifacts of a prehistoric man. A Celtic tribe has founded Singidunum in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and the city is even mentioned in some ancient sources. Later on, this territory was occupied by Romans and with the division of the empire in year 395 it becomes a part of Byzantine Empire. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Slavs have started crossing the river more often and then permanently stayed in this area, and so, on the rocky highland over the delta of river Sava their settlement has been created – Beli Grad – White City. The name Belgrade is mentioned for the first time in year 878. In 1403 Despot Stefan Lazarevic gets Belgrade under his administration by the use of skillful diplomatic negotiations with Hungarians whence the city receives a status of the Serbian capital for the first time. **Belgrade fort** is the oldest cultural and historic monument of Belgrade – the fortification dates since the first millennium, built originally as a palisade with ramparts made of earth that developed over the centuries. Belgrade as we know it today has developed around this monumental historical structure: bohemian quartet **Skadarlija** in the city center, **Konak kneginje Ljubice** – the construction of the Konak kneginje Ljubice has started in 1829, and finished in 1830, and today it is one of the rare examples of the urban architecture of that period, **Kapetan Misino zdanje** – one of the most known structures of the nineteenth century Belgrade, where the University of Belgrade and a part of Faculty of Philosophy are situated today, built in the period from 1857 until 1863, according to construction plans of the Czech architect Jan Nevol. After the construction has finished, captain Misa has donated the building to his country for the educational purposes, **the Old court** located in the Kralja Milana Street this representative building in Belgrade that was erected by King Milan Obrenovic between 1881 and 1884. King Petar I Karadjordjevic has lived in the old court between year 1903 and 1921, and between 1921 and 1922 king Aleksandar I, while today this magnificent building serves as the Belgrade city council. **The New court** is a majestic building that has housed the headquarters of the Presidency of the Republic of Serbia. As a monument it is now part of cultural heritage and therefore under the protection of the state. It was built between 1911 and 1922, when its purpose was purely residential. **National parliament building** – the first construction plan was made by Konstantin Jovanovic in 1891. However, because of the political events and economic conditions the construction of the building was postponed for a few years, and then it was entrusted to architect Jovan Ilkic, the winner of the newly announced competition for the National Parliament building competition. The official starting date of the construction has been marked by a foundation laying ceremony on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1907 in the presence of the King Petar I Karadjordjevic and the heir to the throne Djordje, members of parliament and diplomatic core. **The church of Saint Sava** – is the biggest Serbian orthodox temple on the Balkans and it is built on the spot where Pasha Kodza Sinan had supposedly burnt the remains of Saint Sava, the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The construction started on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1935, when the patriarch Varnava blessed the foundations. **Saint Marko’s Church** was built between 1931 and 1940 but the breaking out of the Second World War disrupted it. During that period only the core constructions have been finalized on the Saint Marko’s Church, and it was built in a Serbian – Byzantine style, by Gracanica model. **Lunch.** Departure for Zemun. Once a separate town, and today one of the districts within the City of Belgrade, this location was first inhabited by a Celtic tribe Skordians in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and they named it Taurunum. The highest altitude point in Zemun is the hill Gardos, from which a beautiful panorama of whole of Zemun, Danube and Belgrade center can be seen. Also, a Millennium tower tall 36 meters can be found there, also known as the Tower of Sibirjanin Janko, which was erected in 1896 by Hungarian authorities. The area around Gardos is famous by its narrow, cobblestone streets and specific architecture. At the bottom of the hill on the walk along the Danube quay numerous restaurants with live music, cafes and clubs are situated. This is a famous walk, meeting point of the local fishermen and artists, along the boat marinas and art galleries. Belgrade keeps so many secrets and one of them hides a whole city beneath the surface, more than hundreds of caves, channels, and tunnels tell the story about its connection to the empires and states that ruled these lands over the centuries. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century the fortress was destroyed by the Huns and in the early Middle Ages an invasion of barbaric tribes came to pass. Legend says that Attila the Hun’s grave lays on the delta of Sava and Danube, more precisely in the hearth of the fortress. The historians claim that the first tavern in Europe was opened right here on Dorcol in 1522. At the time, only black coffee was served and hence it is suggested that this is where this Serbian word comes from (kafana). Because of its strategic location on the delta of two rivers, between the East and the West, the White City had always been a fertile ground for historical events. The area around Belgrade witnessed battles from 115 wars and the very city was leveled an amazing 44 times. Return to the hotel.

**Dinner.** Overnight stay.

**3.day BELGRADE - STUDENICA - ZICA- VRNJACKA BANJA (200 km).** **Breakfast.** Not far from the gorge of a lively Ibar river, on the right bank of the Studenica river, surrounded by high protection wall rises a monastery of **Studenica**, foundation building of the Great Zupan Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the independent Serbian state and first of the dynasty that will rule over Serbia for the next two centuries. The

monastery represents one of the most important medieval monastery complexes in Serbia and a great spiritual and artistic center of Serbian people. For a little over a decade, from 1183 until 1196, the most beautiful structure of Serbian medieval architecture was shaped. Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century when the monastery community was established, Studenica had never interrupted its centennial activity. As a foundation building and a tomb of the founder of the dynasty Nemanjić Studenica has served as a role model for many rulers of this line for the construction of the mausoleums that would look like Bogorodicina church (Virgin Mary church). Bogorodicina church is among the most important monuments of the Raska architecture school. An original crossover between Byzantine spacing and structure of the temple and the outer shape and its encasing in marble, that originate from Roman architecture and make Studenica a master piece of a Central Europe architecture. Frescoes, the master pieces of the Byzantine painting from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century have traced a way for the Serbian medieval painting. Some of the capital examples of Serbian artisanal works are kept in the treasury, like the ring of Stefan Nemanja, some metallic objects, shrouds, parchments and other relics. The special place in the monastery complex Studenica is taken by the King's church, foundation building of King Milutin dating since 1314, with wall paintings of an exceptional fineness. With its temples, dining rooms, towers and dormitories, Studenica has kept its original function, and as a first class monument it is protected by law and on the UNESCO world heritage sites list since 1986. Departure for **Zica** the most famous and the most visited monastery in Serbia, almost eight centuries old. Surrounded by sunlight, protected by the walls, and cherished by its nuns, Zica is the monastery that many visit multiple times in their life. The history of the Zica monastery starts when seventeen year old Rastko Nemanjić decides to abandon the court of his father Stefan Nemanja and to devote himself to the monastery life on the Mount Athos. When he returned from Mount Athos at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the remains of his saint father Simeon Miročević, the Serbian state was shaken by the conflicts between Stefan and Vukan. Reconciling the fighting brothers Saint Sava has decided together with Stefan to build Zica as an imperial monastery settlement. The place that was chosen is on the exact same distance from Constantinople as it is from Rome, which is interpreted as Serbia being on the crossroads between Orthodox East and Catholic West. The church in the monastery that is consecrated to the Ascension of Jesus (Sveti Spas) was being built for about twenty years. The church as a whole represented not only the monastery temple but also a cathedral of the first Serbian Archbishop. Some new things can be spotted in the church building comparing to the temples of the Stefan Nemanja period. This is the monastery of the brotherly love, because Saint Sava, a monk from Mount Athos reconciled his brothers Stefan Nemanjić and Vukan over the remains of their father, and that is when they agreed upon building this monastery. The things you just cannot miss are the preserved frescoes. In the north and the south transept apostles and crucifixion are preserved completely and Descent from the cross partially preserved, and one of the most important are those made in the period between 1309 and 1316. Some of them are the Ascension of the Virgin Mary on the western wall of the nave, charter of Stefan Prvovencani, portraits of Stefan Prvovencani and his son, as well as the images of Apostles Petar and Pavle. Over eight hundred years of existence, the time has made that this monastery becomes linked to many beliefs, legends and myths. The most famous says that after the coronation of Stefan Prvovencani, another six kings would be crowned there and for each and every one of them a separate door would be opened and then walled up again. For that reason the popular name "seven door Zica" was made. **Lunch.** Departure for **Vrnjacka Banja**, the biggest and the most famous healing spa in Serbia and surroundings and traditionally very attractive tourist destination for relaxing and recreation. The history of use of mineral water springs of Vrnjacka Banja date back to the old times, when the Celtic tribe named Scordians lived here. After the Roman conquest of Balkans in the last centuries of the old era and a few centuries of the new era the mineral waters are used for drinking and bathing. The proof is the Roman spring of hot, mineral, Vrnjacka water discovered in 1924 as well as the numerous coins with images of Roman emperors on them. It is very likely that in the medieval period new coming Slavs have heard of the healing properties of Vrnjacka water. There are reliable sources stating that in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century hot mineral water was used by the residents of the Vrnjaca village and the surrounding areas for healing; Janja, the bishop of Zica used it for bathing and drinking. However, the history of the modern spa in Vrnjci is linked to 1868 when the Krusevac county official Pavle Mutavdžić together with a few notable benefactors and members of the Krusevac, Kraljevo and Trstenik high society, formed Osnovatelno fondatorsko društvo kiselo-vruće vode (a society of mineral water) in Vrnjci. The same year the capture of two hot springs was done and the construction of the spa facilities had started bathrooms before all. The spa experiences an exceptional rise of popularity in the years before Balkan wars. Vrnjacka Banja had received at that time a large number of modern apartments, the new bathroom was built, a movie theatre and preparations for the construction of another have been made. Just before the wars, by Vrnjacka Banja the railroad passed on the Stalac-ozega destination, in this manner the Spa got good logistical connection with other parts of Serbia. The development of the healthcare has a 140 year long tradition in Vrnjacka Banja. The first spa doctor to recommend Vrnjacka Banja spa treatment to his patients was Josif Pancić, and the first patient who was treated there by his orders was Pavle Mutavdžić, Krusevac county official. This was in 1860. Since that time, the natural and balneoclimatic factor, which Vrnjacka Banja spa abounds in, has been used to treat diabetes, digestive tract diseases, liver disease, diseases of the urinary organs, diseases of skin, eyes, nervous system, as well as for the patients' health improvement and prevention. Since the 1920s when Vrnjacka Banja spa got its first real sanatorium, "Sveti Džorđe", up to the present days in addition to the use of mineral waters for medical purposes, there have been developed important centers for hospitalization of patients, laboratory and diagnostic centers with the state-of-the-art equipment in the fields of medical services they are used in. Arrival at the hotel. **Dinner.** Overnight stay.

**4.day VRNJACKA BANJA - DJAVOLJA VAROS - PIROT (290 km).** Breakfast. Continuation of the tour. Natural monument „Djavalja Varos“ is made of two very rare natural phenomenon: earth figures, like a specific relief shapes that look very attractive in space, and two springs of high mineral coefficient. These two rare phenomena together make Djavalja Varos a real wonder of the nature. The attire of these two natural wonders occupy the surrounding natural surroundings that seem untamed around the earth figures, almost mystical, and in the wider surroundings lively and calm, like the remains of a town, an old church, cemetery and a few interesting mining pits. The site „Djavalja Varos“ has been placed under the protection of the state in 1959 and in 1995 by the Resolution of the government of the Republic of Serbia it was proclaimed a national heritage and was placed in the first category of protection – natural monument. **Lunch.** Since 4<sup>th</sup> century when **Pirot** is mentioned for the first time as the antique settlement Tures, many armies have stormed through this small town, different cultures and states came one after another, architectural styles and art movements were mixed. They all left behind a permanent historical trace that today in the connection with the modern age make Pirot the unique place where old and new, tradition and modernism, eastern and western intertwine. Pazar and Tijabara are the two parts of Pirot separated by Nisava River and connected with three bridges: Gazela, Golemi and Ljubavni most (Love bridge). Walking by the river you will have an opportunity to get to know this town in a unique way and from a different angle. View of the different style structures, surrounding environment, and Nisava that seemingly separates the new from the old part of town, will bring you closer to the atmosphere and the spirit of the place. Arrival at the hotel. **Dinner.** Overnight stay.

**5.day PIROT - NIS - BEOGRAD (310 km).** Breakfast. Departure for **Nis**, also known as the birthplace of a Roman Emperor Constantine, in Nis even today a mixture of exotic East and elegant West can be observed. Today a modern tourist center with museums and historical sites that are on European must see maps; Serbian city of Nis has been a gate connecting the East and the West ever since it was established. Even nowadays, driving down the roads through Nis is the shortest way to reach the Middle East from Europe, or cities like Sofia and Istanbul from Vienna,

Budapest or Prague. It was the Celts that have named this old city, and they did it after the river Nisava that still runs through it. In their language, its name is Navissos – the Fairy’s river. This city was a major cultural, economic and military center, and the birthplace of Emperor Constantine the Great, who has proclaimed religious tolerance throughout Roman empire and was first ruler of Rome to convert to Christianity. Anyone interested in history and ancient Rome should visit the remains of Emperor Constantine’s palace in “Mediana” – whether they read about it in the books, or watched the series shown and movies about this period. A tour of the “Emperors city” will help you revive the ancient times! The Nis fortress – best preserved Ottoman fort in this part of the Balkans – or “Cele kula” - “The Skull tower”, a unique structure built by the order of the Ottoman Hursid pasha using the skulls of Serbian soldiers killed in the Battle of Cegar during the First Serbian uprising. **Lunch.** Return to Belgrade. Arrival at around 20h.

PUTNIK

TRAVEL