

CITY SECRETS

insider tips from the people who really know the place. Compiled by **Mark Lowen**



COFFEE

The Serbs love their coffee houses. Strikl down Skadarska – a lively street lined with cafes – to get a feel for the place. Try Restoran Kalenic, Ion Milosevicka, next to Kalenic Market, which is very traditional and ideal for a quick coffee or bite to eat. Mama's Biscuit House (Kralja Milana) has stunning cakes. Ova Jelena is one of the best, and great for either a snack or a more substantial meal. Alternatively, take a short taxi ride to the suburb of Zemun, where you can relax to jazz music, while you drink coffee at Galerija. *ML*

DINNER

SABAN
Kej Oslobođenja 53
Serving fresh fish, typical Serbian dishes and featuring traditional music, this is a fabulous riverside restaurant in the suburb of Zemun. A visit will give you the chance to wander this beautiful Austro-Hungarian area with its elegant cafes and cobbled streets. *ML*

ZAPLET

Kajmakalaska 2
A stylish, modern eatery offering an interesting twist on classic dishes such as roštica, goulash and excellent venison. It tends to attract a fashionable, arty crowd. *Nick Groves, Second Secretary, British Embassy*

ABSINTHE

Kralja Milutina 13
This is a fabulously stylish restaurant and bar. It's always packed and is a great place for people-watching. *Ivana Davidovic, Ministry of Finance*

BARs

This is where Belgrade comes into its own. Bars are always packed at cocktail hour and the city is full of people who like to be seen. Many of the most popular places are on Strahinjica Bana – nicknamed Silicone Valley for obvious reasons. The best bars here are Pexis and Insomnik, though it's well worth bar-hopping between the rest. *ML*

HOTELS

TOWNHOUSE 27
Maršala Bujuzovića 56, townhouse27.com
This newly opened, four-star boutique hotel, has chic, modern rooms, each with high-speed internet connection and a flatscreen TV, and there's an elegant cafe/bar. *Anke Truyen, journalist*

ALEKSANDAR PALAS

Kralja Petra 13-15, aleksandarpalas.com
For a touch of glitz, book into Aleksandar Palas, the only five-star hotel in Belgrade. It has an ideal location, a few streets away from the bustling main drag, Knez Mihailova, and boasts nine sumptuously decorated suites. Prices are steep, but there are weekend deals and two-day packages. *ML*

LE PETIT PIAF

Skadarika 34, petitpiaf.com
For real atmosphere, try Le Petit Piaf, a charming little place with its

own garden and restaurant on Skadarska, a cobbled street dating back to the Ottoman era and surrounded by typical Serbian eating places. *NG*

CLUBs

If you're here in the summer months, you shouldn't miss a night out on a *spilav*, one of the city's famous nightclub boats. These pontoon venues are typical of Belgrade nightlife and line the banks of the Sava. There are many to choose from, but Sound is one of the best. On these floating nightclubs, you can boogie till dawn – they only get going around midnight. *Toby Brundin, DJ*

SHOPPING

ORFELIN
Knez Mihailova
This is a great old bookshop selling antique publications from Serbia and abroad. Apparently, the entire shop is one man's personal collection. *ML*



Le Petit Piaf: Fabio Maccaroni/Corbis Press; London: Peter Madsen/AMG/Corbis Images

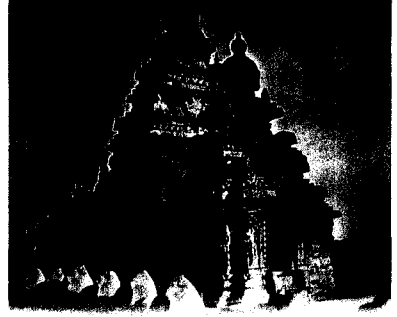
KALENIC MARKET

Maksim Gorkog Street
Here you can buy food, knick-knacks and plants. It is acceptable to barter at the market, but the prices are very low in any case. For something really different, take a 20-minute tram ride to New Belgrade and head for Block 70, where you'll find the Chinese market. The clothes here are much cheaper than elsewhere in the city. *Nana Davidovic, Ministry of Finance*

DON'T LEAVE WITHOUT...

Heading to the suburb of Dedinje, up the hill from Kneza Milosa (past several bombed-out buildings). Ask a taxi driver to give you a tour, or rent a bike and do it yourself. It has the most magnificent houses in Belgrade, including many ambassadorial residences. See the Bell Dvor, or White Palace, where the Crown Prince lives. Take in the opulence and imagine Yugoslavia in its finest times. *ID*

Mark Lowen is the BBC's Balkans Correspondent



RELIVE THE PAST... IN THE PRESENT!

The history of Tamil Nadu presents an exciting pageant of a powerful civilisation whose origins dates back to ancient times – early 7th century to start with. The early rulers of Tamil Nadu including the Cholas, Pandyas and Pallavas were renowned warriors, and more than that, visionaries in the true sense of the word. No wonder then that many of the monuments and temples built by them have withstood the test of time and to this day, stand with the same splendour.

In a land that is liberally strewn with temple art, Mamallapuram holds its own, and stands as a silent yet eloquent witness to the glory of its creators. A jewel in the crown of Tamil Nadu, Mamallapuram presents you with the outstanding examples of Dravidian art and architecture. The Shore Temple, built during the 8th century, is among the oldest temple in South India. Travel further south into Tamil Nadu and you will come to Thanjavur – where the illustrious Raja Raja Chola built the Brahadeseeswara Temple or Big Temple, as a tribute to the society he ruled. Not to be outdone, his son, Rajendra Chola, built a capital of his own called Gangai-konda Cholapuram to celebrate his victory over kings in the Ganges.

However, the heritage of Tamil Nadu does not end with that – in the recent past, the palatial palaces of Chettinad, the Nilgiri Mountain Railway, the longest temple corridor in Rameswaram are all landmarks in their own right. You are sure to find many more such spectacular splendours when you travel through Tamil Nadu. Come, be enchanted



Nilgiri Mountain Railway

A Chettinad house in all its splendour.

Dr. S. Balakrishnaiah Chennai, India