

### Practical Information

**FLIGHT:** We recommend you wait to book your flight until we have notified you that we have the minimum required enrollment for the tour. Book your round-trip flight to Nikola Tesla International Airport (BEG), Belgrade, Serbia, to arrive no later than Tuesday, 11 October, with return no earlier than Wednesday, 19 October 2011. You can shop for the best fares online at [www.kayak.com/](http://www.kayak.com/) or consult your travel agent.

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:** You must have a passport valid for 6 months beyond the date of your return to your home country. No visa is required for U.S. and Canadian citizens for visits of less than 90 days in Serbia/Kosovo. Most destinations, including Serbia, require that you have adequate unused pages in your passport, allowing for any necessary stamps upon arrival and departure. We recommend that you have at least two free pages in the Visas section of your passport before any international travel. It is the responsibility of each individual participant to make sure all of his/her legal documents necessary for travel are valid.

**PACKING:** Our motto is "travel light!" You're the one who has to wrestle your luggage on and off the coach, and in and out of hotels. If you have to think twice about something, don't bring it. You are limited to one piece of luggage. Pack separates that coordinate with other items in your wardrobe. Choose two or three colors that work well together and take only clothes in those colors. Don't forget good walking shoes and break them in before your trip! A light jacket and umbrella should cover all weather contingencies.

**APPROPRIATE ATTIRE FOR CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES:** Priests and monks may flatly bar either men or women from entrance if they are not suitably dressed. Men should wear long trousers and women should wear skirts below the knees. Shirts and blouses should have sleeves that cover the arms and should be modestly buttoned. Tee-shirts with slogans, logos, pictures, or mottoes; tank tops; halters; and cleavage- or midriff-revealing tops should not be worn. Women should cover their heads, while men should remove their hats, caps, or other head-coverings.

**CUSTOMS REGULATIONS:** Each traveler is required to declare and show, if asked, to the customs officer all items he/she is bringing into the country. Personal luggage and items for personal use or use of family members are declared orally (unless the customs officer has explicitly asked for a declaration to be made in writing). Personal luggage may contain any items the traveler is carrying on his/her journey and are needed for that purpose, such as clothes, shoes, toiletries, food items, and other articles intended for personal use. Medicines for personal use in normal quantities are also regarded as personal luggage. Foreign currencies may be brought into the country with no restrictions as to the amount of currencies imported. Foreigners may import up to 120,000 local currency (dinars) in 1,000 notes or in smaller denominations.

There is a limit of 2,000 euro on the amount of money you can take out of the country. If you are bringing in a larger amount than this and do not spend it all, and want to exit

the country with more than 2,000 euro, you must declare it to customs officials upon your arrival. Customs will then give you a declaration form that you must present on your departure. Failure to comply may result in the confiscation of all funds at departure.

No taxes are payable on items leaving the country. Items having historic, artistic, or cultural value may be exported only with permission from the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations. Travelers may leave the country with no more than 2,000 euro in local and foreign currency combined. No restrictions are placed on credit cards upon exiting the country.

**GETTING TO THE HOTEL FROM THE AIRPORT:** Specific instructions where to meet your transfer from the airport to the hotel will be provided with your final documents before departure.

**CURRENCY:** The official monetary unit of Serbia is the **dinar**, which is usually abbreviated as "din" and has the international currency code of RSD in exchange transactions. In recent years, the Serbian dinar has become a reasonably stable currency – the hyperinflation of the 1990s is a thing of the past. The dinar is divided into 100 **para**, although these are rarely used. Bank notes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 1,000 and 5,000 din; coins are 50 para (very rare), and 1, 2, 5, 10, and 20 din. **The official currency in the province of Kosovo is the euro.**

**CREDIT CARDS:** Credit cards are a safe way to carry money, they provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and they generally offer good exchange rates. You can also withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, provided you know your PIN. If you've forgotten yours, or didn't even know you had one, call the number on the back of your credit card and ask the bank to send it to you. It usually takes 5 to 7 business days, though some banks will provide the number over the phone. Travelers abroad often discover that their credit cards are invalidated after their first purchase – an automated security system kicks in to protect you on the assumption that your card has been stolen. To be sure this won't happen, call your credit card company or the bank that issued it, and inform them of your impending trip.

**VISA** is the most widely accepted **credit card**, closely followed by MasterCard, and cash can be withdrawn from ATMs bearing these symbols, as well as at banks throughout the country. It is worth remembering that, even for payment of goods with MasterCard, you will need to know your PIN. Electronic banking is moving swiftly forward in Serbia, but it is inevitable that there may be some hiccups: some ATM machines may not recognize foreign cards and, in a worst-case scenario, may even swallow your card. To be on the safe side, it is wise to carry more than one type of card if at all possible; say, two different credit cards – VISA and MasterCard – as well as a debit card.

We recommend that you make a copy of the front and back of your credit cards – passport, too – and keep the copies in a safe place in your luggage separate from your wallet. In the event they are lost or stolen, this with expedite cancellation and re-issue.

**TRAVELER'S CHECKS:** We don't recommend them. Traveler's checks are an anachronism, since ATMs make cash accessible just about anywhere, anytime. Most merchants are loathe to accept them, and banks and hotels charge outrageous fees to cash them.

**ATMs:** The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM. ATMs use only 4-digit, numeric PINs, so you must know how to convert letters to numerals. Transaction fees are usually built into the exchange rate you get; in any case, exchange rates are usually based on the wholesale rates of the major banks, so you may actually save money by withdrawing larger sums and paying your bills in cash. However, just as at home, there is usually a limit on how much you can withdraw in a single day – find out what it is before your departure. Keep in mind that many banks impose a fee every time a card is used at a different bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to \$5 more) than for domestic ones. On top of this, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. Ask your bank for a rundown on international withdrawal fees. Capital One is the only giant issuer that does not charge foreign transaction fees.

**CASH:** When traveling to smaller towns or villages, make sure you have some cash with you. If you run out of cash and there are no ATMs or banks around, your best bet is to go to the nearest post office.

**HEALTH:** The public water supply in Serbian towns and cities is safe and palatable. However, it is wise to stick to bottled water when traveling just because otherwise harmless foreign "bugs" may upset your American/Canadian digestive system. There are a great number of brands of bottled water, both still and sparkling, widely sold at affordable prices. Milk and dairy products are produced to European standards. Fruit and vegetables are safe to consume with standard washing before use. In general, as in every other European country, all food and drink bought at regular points of sale is safe to consume. Vaccinations against infectious diseases are not necessary unless you plan to go hiking in the countryside. Normal hygiene practices are enough to ensure a safe stay in Serbia.

**SAFETY:** Serbia's perceived image as a lawless, rather dangerous place is far from the truth. The reality is in fact very different and visitors have nothing to fear. If this sounds too good to be true, the statistics bear it out: robbery and violent crime are rare, which is not to say that visitors should be complacent. Opportunist thieves exist everywhere and perhaps should be expected in a country that has suffered continual economic hardship for such a long period. The UN-administered province of Kosovo fluctuates in terms of safety recommendations. However, following an extended period of calm, the British FCO no longer advises visitors to "*avoid unless a visit is essential.*" We will nevertheless consult the British FCO service prior to our visit in Priština, Dečan, and Peć.

**ELECTRICITY:** The standard is 220V 50Hz, and outlet sockets are compatible with the round European two-prong plug. Some hotels have 110-volt low-wattage outlet sockets for electric shavers, but they can't be used for hair dryers or curling irons. If you plan to bring an electric hair-dryer or other electrical devices, buy travel-sized, dual-voltage models and the

appropriate adapter plug. Adaptor plugs are available at most luggage shops and at Radio Shack. If you don't have dual-voltage appliances, you will need a transformer/converter in addition to the plug adapters, and we do not recommend it – even if you get it right, chances are you'll cause a power outage in the hotel. Power cuts are fairly rare, but they do happen.

**LANGUAGE:** The official language of Serbia is Serbian, a south Slavic language used primarily in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. Serbian is almost identical to Croatian, and very similar to Macedonian and Bulgarian. Many of Serbia's younger generation speak and understand English, but a few words of Serbian go a long way and, with the exception of most of Kosovo, will always be well-received. Other people may speak German or French instead. Indeed, in poorer enclaves like Kosovo or southern Serbia, German speakers are quite plentiful as so many of them worked as *Gastarbeiten* when they were younger. It is recommended to carry a dictionary or a phrase book with you. The Serbian alphabet is very consistent: one letter per sound, with an insignificant number of exceptions.

**TELEPHONE:** There are three mobile phone networks in Serbia: MTS, Telenor, and Vip. Prepaid SIM cards cost 200 dinars. Mobile phone service can be pretty patchy outside of the major cities. Halo telephone cards can be bought from post offices and kiosks at 150, 200, and 300 din value. They work in the more modern orange phones, which have an "i" button that can be pressed to change foreign language settings. Calls can also be made directly from post offices, where you are directed to a booth and pay for the call when you have finished. The code for dialing abroad from Serbia is 99; you then dial the country code, then the city and the recipient's number. To phone Serbia from abroad, you must first dial the international access code 00, then 381 for Serbia; then you dial the city code and the number. International calls can be made from orange kiosks using a telephone card, or from telephone centers at post offices, which are usually open fairly late at night. Making international calls from hotels is invariably very expensive and best avoided. Some internet cafes now offer headsets for internet calls using services like Skype.

**TIME:** The 24-hour clock is almost exclusively used in writing, while spoken language is dominated by the 12-hour clock, usually without noting whether the hour is AM or PM – that information is derived from the context. Local time is GMT +2, March to September, and GMT +1, October to February.

**TIPPING:** Tipping is not obligatory in Serbian restaurants, but if you are satisfied with the service then leave a 10 to 15% tip.

**TOILETS:** Public toilets are uncommon but may be found at markets and bus or train stations. The facilities in cafes or restaurants are usually a better bet. There is usually a small charge made for the privilege, but this does not guarantee cleanliness. Men and women's facilities are often marked in Cyrillic, with M, МУШКИ, Muški for men, and Ж, ЖЕНСКИ, or Ž, Ženski for women.

**WEATHER:** In general, the weather is warm and sunny in October, though you will need a sweater or light jacket for the early morning chill and late evening breezes. Though not an especially wet month, it's still a good idea to bring an umbrella.