2 Wonderful days in Belgrad Serbia / Belgrad a city you should see! - A trip to KaleMegdan, ZooPark War museum and Kaona monastery

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Me and my wife Svetlana, spend our **weekend in Beograd** (or BeoGreat! as it is also famous among English speaking). I was sceptical about Serbian, *always thinking Serbians are living poorer* and that we Bulgarians have *better living standard*. What I saw in Beograd convinced me *Serbs lives at least half or 1 time better than us Bulgarians*. Starting from Road Infrastructure and coming to the prices and ending with buildings, people live and mood and everything is just amazing!

serbian-tram-beograd-city-nice-infrastructure

Serbs as people have deeply impressed me, they are one of the best people, I've seen really. Serbs have respect for their Church, know how to enjoy their life much more than us. Also the culture in Serbs as they are more western oriented than us. The language is not so easy to understand as a I though, generally you can understand with a serbian as its slavonic similar language. The **whole 2 way sleeping car train ticket from Bulgaria (Sofia) to Serbia (Beograd), costed us about 55 euro per person** - which is a bit expensive because the real **distance between Sofia and Serbia is only 400 km**, but as it is international ride it is a bit overcosted.

bdz_slipenwagen-sleeping-old-car-of-bulgarian-national-railways

The sleeping car were inscribed with the words (*Liegen Wagen* - in German Sleeping Car) and were an *old wagons left from communism - produced in Bulgaria*.
Though the wagons were old the were clean and warm, the sleeping sheets were clean and generally it was confortable as we were only 2 people in compartment (this was so because not too many people travel from Beograd to Sofia and vice versa). Also the service in the train is on a high level, the woman who was accomodating us in the train was very affable. In train we were checked twice once by and once by Serbian border control and by **Bulgarian border police** and **customs**. On our way to Serbia the train come late with a **delay about 2 hours** we **started from Sofia at 20:30 on 5th of July**, **Friday and we were supposed to be in Beograd in 05:00 Serbian time (which is 06:00 BG Time)**.
However the train arrived in Beograd just about 07:00 (Serbian time).

Belgrade_railway_station

We had the **great blessing to have a very warm and dry days** which was quite nice (especially after the heavy floods that hit Serbia and Bulgaria less than a month ago. The central train station in Beograd is much smaller than Sofia's central station but it looks much beatiful as it is an old-fashioned building probably 100 years old. What striked me right after our arrival is the public transport trams, were very new and clean. Also the cars Serbs drive seem to be newer than Bulgarians, Serbians drive second hand bought cars from *West Europe approximately produced in 2006*, while the avarage *cars we drive here in BG is from 2001 or 2000*. There are few buildings in the city center which seemed abondoned and seemed like they need renovation but besides that everything looked quite well looking for a city that was bombed in 1998 - 1999. Later I learned from Galin **bombing conducted by Americans** was done **only on few government and military building**s - and were done in a very "human" way - everything was clear earlier what will be bombed etc. etc.

Serbia-Belgrade-bomb-damage-building

Can you believe, there might be a "human way of bombing?", well according to Americans and UN, there could be! On our arrival merrital god-father Galint took us from train station and brought us to their living apartment located on str. Maršala Birjuzova, Beograd. Andrea (Galin's wife) and our merriage god-mother received us warm harted as always. We met also Andrea's mother Milenka (Serbian equivalent of Bulgarian name Milena) ... Andrea's mother Milenka Perolo is owning a small an English to Serbian and Serbian to English translation angecy called "**Perolo**". Andrea and her mother are by linkage Croation, it is very interesting that genetically Croatiaons are very close to Bulgarians just like we Bulgarians are genetically close to Italians and even according to some researches Italian nation originated from Bulgarian. There is probably something true in that because it seems we can very easily interact with Croations ...

23 days old cute baby girl Boryana (which got baptized - becoming a young Orthodox Christian :))

Galin and Andrea are having only **23 days born baby called Boryana**, its their 3rd child after Georgi and Konstantin. After having a good braekfast from fast food like Bulgarian famous Banica (from Pekara - a place where they sell fast food equivalents to Banica) and we bought **Yogurt** which is something like the **Bulgarian Soar Milk (Kiselo Mlijako)** with this difference that **Serbian Yogurt is not so good for health as Bulgarian Yoghurt (Kiselo Mlijako)**. After the morning meal Galin brought us to the city center where we enjoyed a lot the Serbian language writtings in shops and buildings. The words are similar to Bulgarian. However cyrillic writting in Serbia is not so common as they tend to write a lot of their words in Latin letters being highly influenced by western culture. After the main city **center street full of majestic buildings of significance to Serbian history, the national bank, the national museum, theatres** etc. We came to **KaleMegdan** a very beautiful green park full of statues of Serbian revolutionaries, Kings and national heroes, very much in the spirit of Sofia's Borisova garden (gradina) - Sofia's central park. What striked me is the fortress situated in the middle of the park. **KaleMegdan fortress** is probably **one of the best preserved and biggest early age (12/13th century) fortress and medieval times renewed fortress in Europe.** It is the biggest I've seen in my wife so far, in the middle of the fortress there is a tennis court! a basketball field, volleyball field etc. etc. In very middle of **KaleMegdan fortress there is a an exposition of tanks and warfare items and heavy anti-tank weapons left from I-st and II world war.** There are also a boats and even submarine **missles and underwater mines exposed, along with war boats**. I was never seriously interested in **warfare technology** but seeing all this complete took up my attention. Continuing further the fortress one ends to a fortress walls and park continuation from where you see the two rivers **Savva (Sava)** river and **Dunabe mixing beatifully** together their blue and green waters, along with a sideview to whole Beograd city! Again **amazingly beuatiful**!

Sava_river_in_Belgrade,_view_from_Kalemegdan_fortress

The air of course is very wet and there is humidity everywhere as there is a big river nearby. And in summer in Beograd **you feel like being on the beach except there are no beaches**. There is an improvised beach on the river, but as I heard from Beograd locals, beaching ont he river is much less enjoyable as **going to a real sea beach**. In the fortress there are two Churches as well one used to be a military church and interestingly its **lusters are all made of war bullets**. The otherChurch **Saint Petka** is historically very famous as it was temporary holding the holy relics of **Saint Petka** and even today in the Church there is small part of **holy relics from Saint Petka**. On Dunabe river there is a view of many boats and river resturants beautifully ordered on the river shore so it is perfect for **people to relax from heavy stressful daily life**. On the city park there is also a **large children playground**, where children could have a great fun and very near the fortress is situated **Beograd National - City ZooPark!**

Beograd-city-center-national-zoo-white-lion

The Zoo is fantastic and has even more animals though situated on less space than **Sofia Zoo**. We went t**o Famous Beograd Zoo** on Sunday **06.07.2014**, after being for a holy liturgy in the main cathedral Church of Beograd - **St. Archangel Michael** (the Church building is situated opposite to **Serbian Orthodox Church Holy Synod**, and very nearby to a **iconographic academy and the patrierchal residency**.

Saborna-Crkva-Beograd-city-center

The Church service was quiet understandable as big parts of the service is in *Church Slavonic* and as I'm adjusted to understanding big part of the Church slavonic and understand a bit of serbian speech, I wa*s feeling in Serbian church almost like in a service here in Bulgaria*. Serving Holy Liturgy in **Church in Church slavnic is a big blessing for us slavonic people** as we can understand the service in *Serbia, Bulgaria, Monte Negro, Croatia, Bulgaria* :) After the Church service we went for a coffee in a Serbian coffee nearby the iconographic academy in Beograd. One thing to note here is always in all **ex-Yugoslavia**, if you order coffee you get a cup of free fresh water with the coffee - a **great coffee drinking habit** of Serbs. In the street I've seen a car under the brand **Yugo** which is pretty much like the small old Fiat cars, but it used to be produced in the **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**. After the coffee we went back home have a another coffee with a small dinner and a cake with **Serbian Coca-Cola** which has a little bit of a different taste than the **coca-cola in BG** and other countries I've been (note **I usually hate Cola** and I don't drink it but here I d?cided to give it a try with experimental aim :) What impressed me on the Coca Cola plastic bottle was written "**This Cola doesn't contain conservants or any chemical substances**" - I **LOL**-ed (**Laughted Out Loud**) to this non-sense. We all know cola is one of worst conservant of modern man so such a writtings is a big non-sense.

Pljeskavica - Serbian Traditional most popular food meal

For a lunch I ate the **most famous Serbian (food) meal** called "Pleskavica" a very, very big meat ball - talking about food Serbian are crazy about meat. They probably are the **nation with biggest meat consumption in Europe**! - I heard for Serbs and Croations, a kilo and a half of meat eaten a day is something very usual!

Monastery-kaonana-putusaba-serbia-monastery-near-Beograd-70-km-monastery-from-Beograd

Kaona Monastery Serbia Monks living cells

After lunch time on Saturday, around 14:00 serbian time, we jumped in our god-fathers Opel car and travelled to **Kaona Monastery** where was arranged to happen baptism of 23 days new-born baby Boryana. The archimandrite Philimon (which is very young 30 years old) received a us hospitably in Kaona Monastery - a monastery nearby the Serbian village Kaona. The monastery is a true heavenly garden. It has a **small monastic property - sheeps, ducks, chickens :)**

Crkva Kaona Monastir

There is a miraculous water spring like in most monasteries, a baptisterium, two beautiful Churches (a Church school) and lake with a boats where you can have rest sailing with a small rowing boat. My wife **Svetlana** became the spiritual mother of the 23 days baby **Boryana**, making our bond with our marriage god-parents family even stronger. We had a safe travel from *Beograd to Kaona* and vice versa by God's grace. By an old tradition after batism there was small gathering and we ate same biscuits, baklava and drink a little of Rakia, coffee tea etc. After that by Abbot's blessing Philimon we went to the small monastic lake and sailed on the small rawing boat, where I had the chance to oar the boat for a second life in my life (btw rowing is quite pleasurable and healthy thing to do).

Kaona monastery tiny monastic lake

The Abbot *Philemon* very much in the monastic spirit of good willness and love invited us to have a dinner together with a few of the other people who was on a pilgrimage journey to the monastery.

Kaona Monastery sheeps

Eating in a monastery is a true blessing as always. Before eating a prayer is said by the abbot and the food is blessed during the dinner. There was a person reading the sayings of the Holy Church fathers, letting the monks remember even when they eat that the spiritual food is more important and should not be forgot even when physical food is eaten.

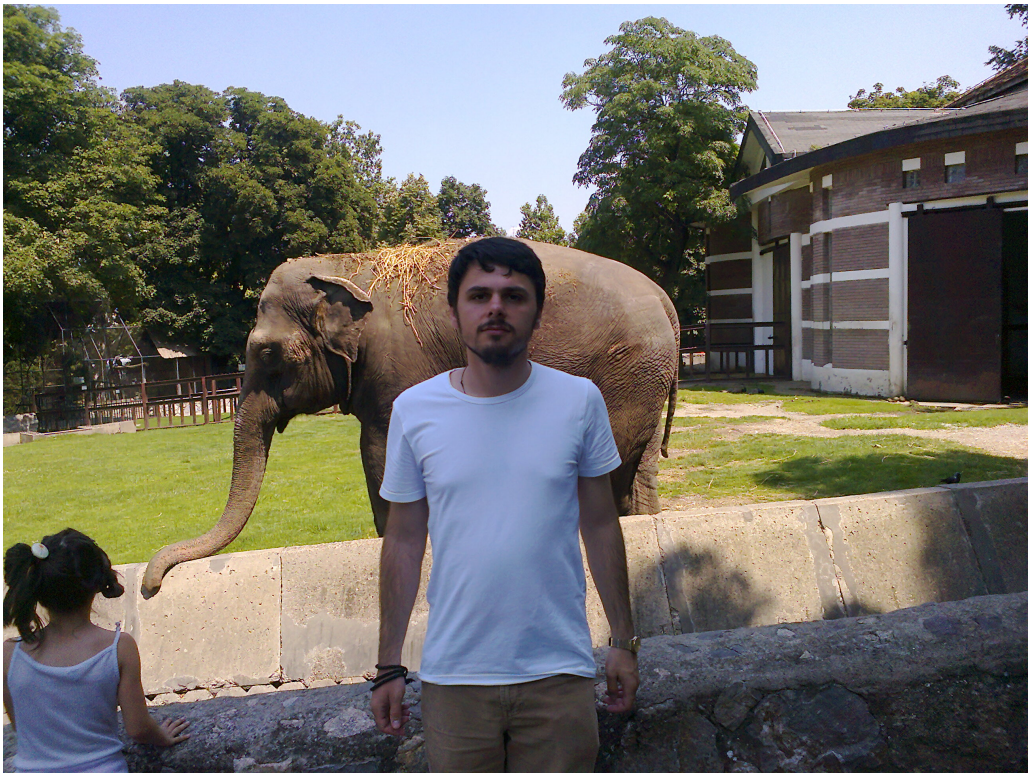
Church for funeral services nearby Kaona monastery

Kaona Monastery entrance Church side door

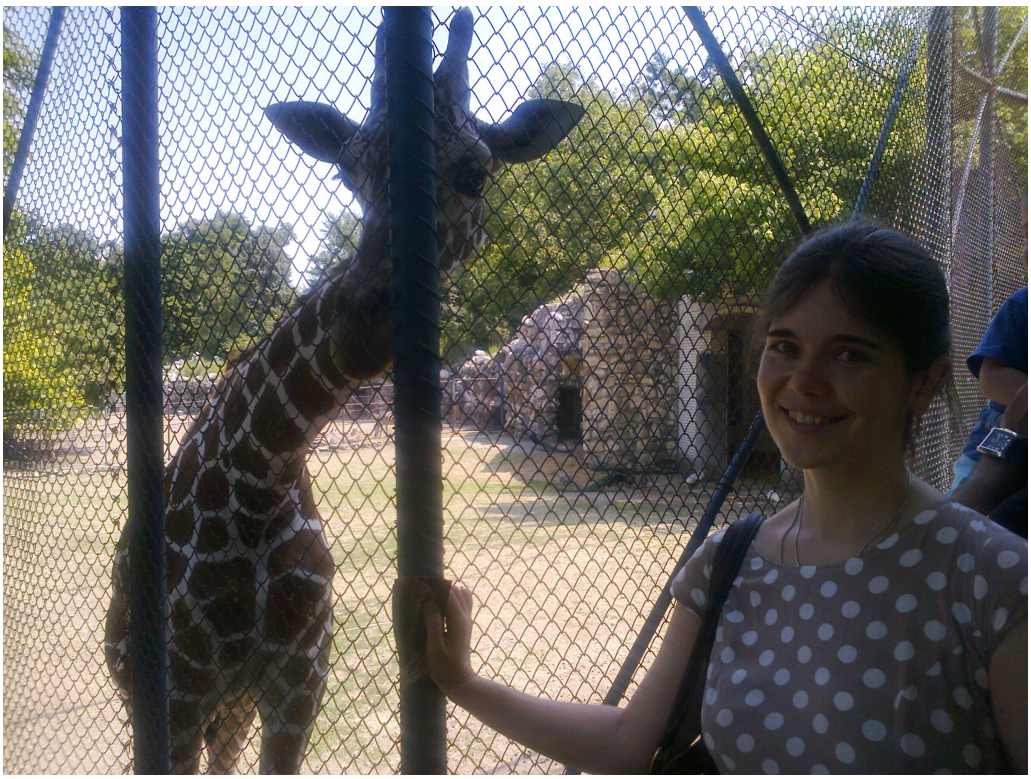
Parakles (Small Baptismal Chapel)

Going back from the monastery on late Saturday we had the plan to go outside with Galin and **enjoy a bit the night life of Beograd** but, we were very tired so we went sleeping almost immediately. On the next day after the *Church service*, we went to the Zoo and *we had 2 hours and a half of great time*, and I have the opportunity to see a lot of animals I saw for a first time in my life by God's grace :) Here are some *pictures from the zoo-park.*

Beograd-National-Zoo-Lamma



hip0-and-a-Lion-in-Beograd-Zoo



My-wife-and-a-Camelopard-in-Beograd-Zoo

hipos in Beograd ZooPark :)

Grandmother Camel in Beograd Zoo
In the afternoon after the zoo I went to the **Military museum**. It is the first war museum visitation in my wife so again *quite an interesting experience*.

Military-museum-belgrad-voenen-muzei-Belgrad

Among the machine-guns there was even Bulgarian. It is interesting too see that a *big part of history of Serbs is in their war history*, there *war weapons from all ages starting from pre-medieval times, going through the mediaval, the renessance* the **Serbian liberation war**, the Ist and II-nd world war and ending in the just recent **war**
in Kosovo and conflicts in Monte Negro (*Cerna / Crna Gora*)

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Military Museum within fortress wall Belgrad

To end up the great time, few hours before we had to go Galin and Andrea brought and left the two kids for a birthday party and brought us for a drink of few beers in boat-restaurant anchored on the river shore of Savva river.

Zaicharsko Serbian beer / Rabbit drink :)

An interesting fact is Savva river is named after Saint Savva (who was the first Serbian Archibishop, the creator of Serbian Church and partially the creator of Serbian state), **St. Savva is considered the greatest serbian saint of all times** and **protector saint of all Serbian.**

Saint-Archibishop-Sava-creator-of-Serbian-Orthodox-Church

A curious fact is saint Savva's dormition happened in nowdays Tarnovo Bulgaria.
As a closure I would say I enjoyed Serbian land a lot and I recommend it to anyone who want to have a great rest time. *I think it is a big blessing for Serbians to not be in the European union*, and one can feel the **difference even spiritually when he is out of EU**. In being not yet officially part of European Union though they have put their candidature Serbia reminds me somehow to Belarus.

Serbia just like Bulgarian is a land very rich in saints and martyrs throughout the long history, they're our brothers and we have one faith. One of the ways for a growth and *well being for us as Bulgarians is to keep tight connections with our Serbian brothers and sisters*. Just as an interesting fact for *those who like monastic tourism near Beograd* there is a mountain with **17 monasteries**! Serbia is also among the countries still having relatively big number of monks, as of my knowledge Serbia has about 2000 monks