

## 13 Things that Made Serbia Fantastic by Donna Wilson

Finally able to go thru over 1000 pictures from my time in Serbia. I was fortunate with the efforts of the Serbian Real Estate Cluster, Mainstreet Organization of Realtors, WCR Orlando and NAR to experience Belgrade and the countryside for over a week during their "Learn to Succeed 2019" conference. It was an experience of a lifetime and here are just a few indelible impressions that seem to be distinct Serbian culture:

1. Lunch is never ever before 2 p.m. and typically lasts for hours. Always with a live band who never takes breaks. All the locals will passionately sing their native songs and those who don't know Serbian wish they could join in.
2. The Serbian food pyramid is quite simple because there are three basic food groups: Meat, Cheese and Bread:) Is alcohol a food group? If so, add that.
3. Rakija is used to cure everything, even your mood, probably because it burns everything in its track. It is a strong alcohol made from plums that is a shot. It seems like all Serbs had their own home brew they produced in their "back yard" distillery. Not sure if you are to sip it or throw it back, I did both. You clink glasses, and shout "Ziveli".
4. After witnessing locals drink from public fountains and fill their bottles with this water it seemed certain they feel deeply in certain healing powers of this water.
5. Serbians value owning a home, especially to pass down to their children but oddly many don't live in them because they are working abroad. They enjoy working on their own homes..as a hobby.
6. There is graffiti everywhere. In some spots it is like art but in other areas it pains me to see such old architecture "tatted up".
7. The history will astound you, especially for Americans. Artifacts are displayed up close without glass cases and alarms.
8. 1 hour U.S. = 3 hours Serbian
9. Time is fluid as are plans. You must learn to roll with everything. Doing so you are usually rewarded with unexpected experiences and opportunities.
10. Food is abundant at meals. What you think is your whole meal is only the "starter/first course"...you have 8 more after that. Pace yourself:)
11. The Serbian people are proud and hospitable. They have gone thru many wars and have some stereotypes that run deep. They are able to suppress those feelings in order to be gracious host to any and all. As their country transitions from a former communist country to one that seeks opportunity to succeed and be prosperous, I suspect that

those cautionary feelings will subside.

12. Serbia is a country with rich history, genuine people, and a nation of extremely talented and smart people such as the scientist Tesla and number 1 tennis player Novak Djokovic. They are all quite tall, very tall and are gifted with an abundance of athletic abilities in all sports.

13. Serbia quite simply is a place that all should visit and experience . Once you do, you will start to count the days upon when you can return. It pulls on you somehow. Can't decide if it is the people, the history, or its beauty...I suspect all three are the reason I can't wait to return back.