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## GOING FOR A SONG

**BELGRADE'S ONE OF EUROPE'S COOLEST AND CHEAPEST PARTY TOWNS – AND IT'S HOSTING THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST ON SATURDAY. BUT DON'T LET THAT PUT YOU OFF**

By Laura Dixon



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### BY DAY

The average temperature here in May is a balmy 23°C, so while you're waiting to party, you can hit the beach. Although Serbia's capital, Belgrade, is around 600 miles from the nearest seaside (in neighbouring Montenegro), Ada Ciganlija island in the Sava river is the perfect fix. There's a pebbly beach, a safe swimming area and a bungee jump platform set up above the water.

While you're out and about, don't miss Kalemegdan Fortress either. The ancient stone remains date back to the 3rd century, and even if you're not interested in the history, entry is free and the park's setting – overlooking the Sava and Danube rivers – is beautiful.

If you fancy some culture, check out Tito's mausoleum, hidden in the hills. A memorial to Serbia's former dictator, the museum is full of bonkers gifts Tito received from fellow world leaders, from daggers and Japanese hari-kiri knives to a full witch doctor costume from Bolivia. Entry here is free too.



### BY NIGHT

Start with dinner in the bohemian quarter of Skadarlija. It's lined with classic Serbian restaurants, including Sesir Moj, where you'll be greeted by strolling minstrels on arrival.

Prepare yourself for mustachioed waiters, strong Serbian coffee, plenty of meat, and a bill amounting to no more than £20 per person. Oh, and expect lots of smoking – it's not yet banned in Serbia. Next up is drinks on Strahinjica Bana, aka Silicon Valley. No, it's not the city's technology

capital, it's an area of trendy bars favoured by sharp-suited drinkers and buxom, silicon-enhanced women, hence the name.

Hunter Bar, with elk antlers on the wall, is just the place for the Eurovision contestants to sip cocktails after the scores are in.

Or you could try trendy Pastis, an unassuming and popular French-style bar/bistro. Serbian beer, called Lasko Pivo, is £1.20 a pint, but be warned – it's strong.

That should keep you busy until 11pm, when things really get started. Clubs are open until the early hours all week. It costs around £3.60 to get in at funky club The Tube. If you're feeling daring, try Black Panthers just outside the city. It's a crazy kind of gypsy party with a mad atmosphere. A taxi there won't cost more than £2.

Another must-try on the river are the floating barges, or splavs, which house clubs and bars playing anything from rock and pop to Serbia's new thing, turbofolk (a mix of Serbian folk songs and euro pop). It's frowned upon by traditionalists, but adored by young people. A hit like Eurovision, then

### GETTING THERE...

\* Regent Holidays (0845 277 3317, [regent-holidays.co.uk](http://regent-holidays.co.uk)) offers three-night city breaks to Belgrade, in three-star accommodation, from £345 per person. Price includes return flights with British Airways from Heathrow.

\* If you want to book your hotel independently, try the three-star Balkan Hotel in the centre of Belgrade ([Balkanhotel.net](http://Balkanhotel.net)), which has rooms from £89. It's a stone's throw from the Kalemegdan Fortress.

