

W I N E

ROUTES
SOUTH
EAST
SERBIA

WHERE TO NEXT?

Road trip guide for the best
wine & gastro routes of South
Serbia



IN VINO VERITAS

Season 2023.

The growing interest of companies to participate in traditional activities in the countryside and nature guided us to make creative incentive programs. Based on the geolocation and cultural-historical heritage, wine routes of southern Serbia follow up on the European cultural route “Roman Emperors Route and the Danube Wine Route” and thus connect significant archeological sites from the Roman period, wineries, fortresses, museums, cultural heritage, and authentic gastronomic sense of the South and East Serbia.



WHAT DO WINE ROADS REVEAL?

CULTURE HERITAGE ON THE ROUTE

The most important sites on this route are Niš (Naissus), the birthplace of Constantine the Great, Mediana, a Roman settlement created at the end of the 3rd or early 4th century, consisting of a complex of summer residences such as urban villas and a large farm by the road which led to Serdica and Constantinople. The archaeological hall of the National Museum, the Niš Fortress, the concentration camp "12th February", Memorial Complex Bubanj, the Skull Tower, the Monument Čegar, and the Latin Church are places that testify to the turbulent past of this city.

Within the medieval fortress called Jug Bogdan's Town on the Hisar hill in Prokuplje were found the remains of the Roman city Hammeum, known as an important crossroads on the road Naissus-Lissus (Niš to Lezhe in Albania). The Museum of Toplica, the memorial room of the Iron Regiment, the Neolithic settlement of Pločnik, and the only paleontological site in Serbia - Prebreza speak of the importance of Prokuplje throughout history.

Justiniana Prima - near Lebane, is a Christian Byzantine city from the 6th century, one of the most prosperous cities in those times. Roman emperor Justinian I was also known as the creator of the Christian cathedral of Constantinople, today the Museum of Hagia Sofia in Istanbul. The Archaeological Hall of the National Museum in Leskovac, as an ethnographic exhibition in the house of Bora Dimitrijevic Pixel from the 19th century in Leskovac, authentically testifies to the importance of Leskovac through the centuries, especially as a center of the textile industry in Europe, which is why it is called "Serbian Manchester".

The National Museum in Vranje, located in the building of Pasha's Lodge from 1765, was divided into "salemluk" and "haremluk". The museum-house of Bora Stankovic, a famous Serbian novel writer, the house of the Venerable Father Justinian, and the White Bridge, known for the legend that testifies forbidden love between the Serbian shepherd Stojan with the Turkish girl Aisha.

Timacum Minus near Knjaževac is the oldest military fortification in the Timok area, dating back to the 1st century. It was an important mining and metallurgical center. Nearby is the Archaeological-Ethno Park in Ravna Village. The Homeland Museum in Knjaževac, with a permanent exhibition of double-knitted woolen socks, and the museum-house of Aca Stanojević, emphasize the importance of Knjaževac through the centuries.

TRAVEL

IS THE BEST FORM OF EDUCATION

WINE ROUTE OF SOUTH SERBIA

It passes through 5 regions (Niš, Prokuplje, Leskovac, Vranje) and several vineyards regions (Svrljig, Malča, Čegar, Prokuplje, Vlasotince, Vinarachko, and Vrtogoshko vineyards).

On this route, 7 top wineries grow indigenous grape varieties. Wine tasting with gastro sense, the cultural heritage of southern Serbia, and the Roman Emperors route make this wine route an authentic experience.

WINE ROUTE OF KNJAZEVAČ-TIMOK REGION

Wine production in the Knjaževac region and vineyards of Potrkanje dates back to Roman times. A statue of Dionysus, the wine god of the ancient Romans, excavated at the late antique site Timacum Minus, right next to Knjaževac, testifies to the fact. Roman legions empowered themselves with quality wines before embarking on military campaigns.

WINE ROUTE OF NEGOTIN REGION

The Negotin Wine Route is the center of wine tourism in Eastern Serbia, known for "Rajac and Rogljevo Pivnice" - a complex of 270 wine cellars from the 18th century. These authentic wine cellars, recognizable by their appearance of stone houses, are no longer being built today. Some wineries have remodeled them into wine-tasting cellars, which have become very famous in the country and abroad.

FELIX ROMULIANA

The palace represents an artistic achievement of late antiquity 3rd and 4th centuries. It's the work of Roman Emperor Galerius Velerius Maximinus, who became the heir to the emperor Diocletian after marrying his daughter Valeria. But, the love for his mother Romula that had no bounds had proved when he built a magnificent palace Felix Romuliana in Gamzigrad, near today's Zaječar City.

Research has also shown that Magura Hill, a part of Romuliana, where Galerius and his mother Romula were buried and listed as constellations of Gods, has been a sacred place of greatest reverence since prehistoric times.

Felix Romuliana is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Rajac and Rogljevo cellars and Felix Romuliana represent the most significant localities on the official European culture route "Roman Emperors Route and the Danube Wine Route".



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE ROMANS

Whole day tour / History / Culture / Wine & Food

Departure at 10:30h

- Tour of Niš Fortress, a symbol of the city and one of the best-preserved fortresses in the Balkans. You will hear the story of the thermal springs that the Romans gladly used while drinking wine.
- A wine tasting at the authentic restaurant which is well integrated into the configuration of the fortress. You will be presented Merlot by Izba Jovanović Winery, the winner of many awards and a platinum medal at the Open Balkan Fair 2022. The valley of the South Morava River, the region where these vineyards are growing used to pass the Roman military road Via Militaris during the 1st century and were replaced later by the Constantinople Road. That had a decisive influence on the history of this small place. The wealth of this area is reflected in the thermal springs that the Romans gladly used. Although the village does not have the tradition of big winegrowers and winemakers, all houses had their vineyard and cellar, which they called "izba" from which a good host poured wine during the winter. Known for growing only the merlot variety, this winery has won numerous medals in the country and throughout Europe.
- Short drive to the archaeological site Mediana, a Roman settlement created at the end of the 3rd or early 4th century, consisting of a complex of summer residences such as urban villas and a large farm by the road that led to Serdica and Constantinople.
- Visit the Malča wine cellar, with wine tasting, and lunch, where you will enjoy the combination of tradition and culture of Roman emperors, medieval Serbia, and Georgian masters for making amphorae in which they keep the wine. This wine is unique in Serbia.
- A tour of the village Sićevo, known for growing vines since Roman times. Photo shooting on the lookout point with a panorama view of the Sićevo gorge and Via Militaris - the Roman road that passed here and went from Belgrade (Singidunum) through Niš (Naissus) and Sofia (Serdica) to Istanbul (Constantinople). This route had constructed in the year 33.
- Wine tasting in an authentic cellar over 200 years old, maintained by the household of Ramonda Serbica, which is a kind of museum of viticulture and tradition of southern Serbia.

Return to the city around 7 pm.

Inclusions:

The tour guide, transportation, wine tasting & bites in the restaurant at the fortress, and Sicevo cellar (3 wines, wine board), lunch and wine tasting at the restaurant Malča, 3 wines included)

Additional costs: (St. John's wort or plum rakia, and amphorae-aged wine) are at extra cost.



NIŠ THROUGH THE CENTURIES

**Half day tour / City tour / History / Culture
Wine & Gastro**

The tour starts at 1:00 pm.

- Tour of the National Museum, which has today over 40,000 items in its holdings from archeology, history, art history, numismatics and epigraphy, and ethnology. And the literary legacy of Stevan Sremac, a famous writer, and Branko Miljković, a poet. At the museum, tourists can see the most significant artifacts found in Mediana.
- The city walk continues along Obrenovićeve Street to Banovina, the former building of the old Niš administration and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Nikola Pašić, in which he received a telegram, on July 28, 1914, by which Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, formally marking the beginning of the First World War.
- A tour of the Niš Fortress, a symbol of the city and one of the best-preserved fortresses in the Balkans, with preserved buildings from the Ottoman Empire and archeological excavations from the period of the Roman Empire.
- At the summer stage restaurant which is well integrated into the configuration of the fortress, is a place where we will take a break and taste southern Serbia's wine & bites.
- Visit the concentration camp "12th February", an authentic World War II memorial museum.
- Skull Tower, the unique monument in the world of great importance that testifies to the tragic history of the Serbs after the battle of Čegar in 1809.
- Short drive to the archaeological site Mediana, a Roman settlement created at the end of the 3rd or early 4th century, consisting of a complex of summer residences such as urban villas and a large farm by the road that led to Serdica and Constantinople.
- Wine lovers will be able to experience a unique journey through wine time, from Roman times to the present day, in the over 110-year-old wine cellar. In sightseeing and tasting four completely different ways of cultivating wine, you will experience four different wine epochs, characteristic of those times, the Roman, medieval Serbia of the Nemanjić dynasty, the Serbian house, and the modern winery. What makes the Malča cellar recognizable and unique in Serbia is the wine that is aged in amphorae, just like in Roman times.
- Dinner in the beautiful garden of the restaurant Malča.

Return to the city around 9:30 pm.

Inclusions:

The tour guide, transportation, museum tickets, wine tasting at Niš Fortress (2 wines & bites), dinner at Malča restaurant, wine tasting 3 wines).

Additional costs: Everything not mentioned.



THE PATHS OF PROKUPAC

Whole day tour / History / Culture / Natural phenomena / Wine & Gastro

Departure at 7:30.

The world-famous locality Devil's Town (srb. Djavolja Varoš) is famous according to two natural phenomena - two springs of extremely acid and mineralized water and 202 stone figures, which together look very mystical and attractive.

- The tour of the winery "Toplički Vinogradi", one of the most beautiful and the largest wineries in the Balkans. Located in the middle of an endless 51 hectares of vineyards, where, among others, the autochthonous grape variety of southern Serbia "Prokupac" is growing will leave you breathless.
- Panoramic tour of the Kuršumlja City with a visit to the monastery of St. Nicholas and The Most Holy Mother of God, the oldest endowment of Stefan Nemanja, built between 1159-1166. He was a founder of the Serbian state and the Nemanjić dynasty. Nemanja became "grand župan" (clan leader) of Raška under Byzantine suzerainty in 1169.
- Easy walk of the Devil's Town, the only natural monument declared a monument of exceptional importance. The stone formations were created by centuries of erosive processes and are unique in the world.
2:00-3:30 pm • Lunch at the cottage restaurant "Dva Ambara" (two barns).
- A short visit to the settlement Pločnik that belonged to Vinča culture represents the first example of metallurgy in Europe.
- We will visit a family winery Doja (read Doya), one of the famous in the Toplica region that cultivates mainly Prokupac - autochthonous Serbian variety of black grape with a long tradition in the production of red wine. Wine tasting & bites in the tasting room with a beautiful view of the vineyards.

Return to the city around 8 pm.

Inclusions:

The tour guide, transportation, wine tasting & bites in wineries Doja and Toplički Vinogradi (3 wines, wine board), lunch at the ethno restaurant.

Additional costs: Drink per consumption.



EMPRESS' TOWN

Whole day tour / History / Culture / Wine & Food

Departure at 8 am.

- Visit the Memorial Park Bubanj built-in memory of more than ten thousand citizens of Niš and southern Serbia shot during the Second World War. In addition to the white marble monument, with imprinted scenes of suffering and final victory, three strong fists symbolize resistance to the occupiers. Fists of different sizes represent the fist of a man, a woman, and a child, as the symbol of fallen victims.

- A tour of the vineyards and the winery near Leskovac. With every sip of wine, you will recognize the already far-famed southern temperament.
- Not far from Leskovac, the hydroelectric power plant on the river Vučjanka represents an incredible combination of nature and the work of human hands. Its construction back in 1903 marks the beginning of the electricity transmission system in Serbia. It is on the list of world industrial heritage and "Milestone" achievements.

- Visit the National Museum in Leskovac, which represents the time machine of the Leskovac area, from the Neolithic to the late Turkish era. The exhibition named "Leskovac Serbian Manchester" dedicated to the rise of the textile industry in Leskovac at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was among the most influential textile industries in Europe.
- Visit the ethnographic exhibition located in the house of Bora Dimitrijević Piksla from the 19th century that authentically depicts the social life of southern Serbia.
- Lunch in the Ethno Restaurant Groš, where authentic southern cuisine will satisfy all your five senses, especially the mix of barbecue specialties called "Leskovački Voz" (Leskovac train).

- Tour of the archeological site of Justiniana Prima or the Empress' Town from the 6th century. The name comes from the legend of a waterless city ruled by an empress. There is a belief that Emperor Justinian I built and dedicated this magnificent early Christian city to his beautiful and ambitious wife, Empress Theodora.

Return to the city until 7 pm.

Inclusions:

The tour guide, transportation, museum tickets, wine tasting at the winery Stari Dani (5 types of wine, wine board), and lunch at the traditional restaurant.

Additional costs: Drink per consumption.



IN VINO VERITAS

Whole day tour / History / Culture / Wine & Food

Departure at 7 am.

The Roman Empire is a subject of fascination, even after many centuries, for archaeologists and lovers of ancient history and culture. In addition to the powerful cities they created, the Romans grew vines and made wines, especially in Eastern Serbia. The cult of winemaking has survived to this day. This tour is intended for hedonists.



- Visit Homeland Museum in Knjaževac, where special attention is on unique in the world, two-thread woolen socks.
- Visit Winery Jović in the village of Potrkanje for wine tasting & bites, authentic cheese from Stara Mountain, and "Belmuž" a special kind of dish made only in this area of cheese which must not be older than two days, cornflour, and salt. Jović's are also recognizable for growing an autochthonous variety of sour cherries (srb. višnja), from which they get the wine "Višnjica".
- Tour of the Archaeo-Ethno Park in Ravna Village, which includes several buildings, such as old village houses from the beginning of the 20th century, a lapidarium, etc. It is very close to the archeological site Timacum Minus.
- A tour of the archaeological site Felix Romuliana, a palace representing an artistic achievement of late antiquity of the 3rd and 4th centuries. It is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.



- Rajac wine cellars "Rajačke pivnice" a tour of the wine village built of sandstone in the middle of the 19th century, and the old Serbian cemetery, which is a protected cultural monument.
- Lunch in an authentic wine cellar from 1878 with wine tasting from the famous Negotin region and traditional dishes of eastern Serbia.

Return to the city around 9 pm.

Inclusions:

The tour guide, transportation, museum tickets, wine tasting & bites in the Jović winery (6 wines, wine board), lunch in Rajac cellar with rakia, and 5 types of wine along with lunch.

Additional costs: everything not mentioned.



THE PATHS OF THE PIROT CARPET

Whole day tour / History / Culture / Food

Departure at 7 am.

Each pattern of the original Pirot kilim has its centuries-old symbol and meaning.

Since the tradition of weaving is over 400 years old, the kilim was woven exclusively of wool from Stara Mountain (Balkan Mountain) as a symbol of family harmony and wealth, as a protector of the house, and as a gift to business friends and prominent people. The Pirot kilim belongs to the intangible cultural heritage of old Serbian crafts.

- A tour of the Museum Ponišavlje, which fits into the existing ambiance of the townhouse of Pirot in the 19th century, emphasizing the talent and skills of people in this area in pottery, and crafts made of wood, and metal processing. The Hristić House is under the protection of the state as a cultural monument of exceptional importance.

- We are heading towards Natural Park Stara Planina (the mountain).
- Easy mountain walk to the viewpoint of Zavoj Lake meanders, one of the most attractive on Stara Mountain. Enough time for rest and photo shooting. This path is easy, 7,2 km long in both ways. It will take around 45 minutes of walking one way.

- Lunch at the Ethno restaurant in Pirot which serves authentic dishes from Stara Mountain. The most delicious is lamb under the "sač" (slow cooking in a ceramic pot, covered with ashes and fired wood), flattened sausage, and Pirot cheeses.

- Visit the medieval Kale Fortress "Momcilo's Town."

- On request: On the way back we will visit the village of Sićevo, known for growing vine since Roman times, and the Via Militaris route, which was built in the 33rd by the Romans to connect Belgrade (Singidunum) through Niš (Naissus), Sofia (Serdica) to Istanbul (Constantinople). Nadežda Petrović, a famous Serbian and world painter, established the art colony here in 1905. Time for photo shooting at the beautiful view of the gorge.

Return to Niš around 7-8 pm.

Inclusions:

The tour guide, transportation, museum tickets, and lunch at the restaurant in Pirot.

Additional costs: Drink per consumption. Wine tasting at the Sicevo cellar (4 wines/wine board).