



OUTCAN Guide | Life in Belgrade, Serbia

LOCATION

Country: Serbia

Town: Belgrade (capital city)

Base: Embassy

Entry/Exit requirements:

- It is important to get your passport stamped when you first enter Serbia. The absence of an entry stamp from the point of entry could create difficulties at the time of departure from the country.
- You must register with the local police within 24 hours of arrival in Serbia. Registration will normally be arranged by your hotel. If you are not staying in a hotel, registration must be organized by your host. Failure to register can result in fines and difficulties when departing.
- Serbia does not recognize any border crossing points from Kosovo as official international entry points. Do not attempt to enter Serbia directly from Kosovo, unless you initially travelled into Kosovo from Serbia and obtained a valid entry stamp from the Serbian immigration authorities. Otherwise, you should transit via a third country such as Albania, North Macedonia or Montenegro.
- Entry to Kosovo from Serbia is subject to delays or may be prohibited entirely.

Other info to Consider:

- Family (non-dependants) can visit and stay 90 days **without visa**. Families must register with the local police within 24 hours of arrival in Serbia. The hotels can generally help with this. If they are staying at your home, you are required to register family members.

POPULATION

Size: over 8,762,000

Ethnicity: 84% Serbs

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: Serbian

- **Prevalence of French or English speaking:** Very limited. Within city-limits, most establishments will have an English-speaking employee. English is more common with locals under 50 years of age. Limited to no French.

COST OF LIVING

- **Currency & Exchange rate to consider:** Serbian Dinar. 1 RSD = 0.01258 CAD.
- 1 CAD = 79.50 Serbian Dinar (March 2024)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- Serbia is located in an active seismic zone.
- Bush and forest fires are common in the summer months. The air quality in areas near active fires may deteriorate due to heavy smoke. In case of a major fire, stay away from the affected area, particularly if you suffer from respiratory ailments. Always follow the instructions of local emergency services personnel. Monitor local media for up-to-date information on the situation.
- Air pollution is high in major cities (smog in the summer and coal burning in the winter months). If you have a respiratory condition, it would be prudent to check in with the GK Medical team before your posting.
- Heavy rains and thunderstorms during spring and summer may result in flooding and may cause significant damage to roads and generate localized landslides.
- Snowstorms throughout winter may lead to problems along transportation routes and with power and telecommunications systems. Pay close attention to road conditions and refrain from driving during or immediately after severe storms

Laws and Culture:

- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.
- It is highly recommended to have an international driving permit.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.03 percent (0.00 percent when on motorcycle). Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines and jail sentences.

Safety and Security:

- Exercise caution in the areas bordering Kosovo due to the potential for political tensions and possible unrest. In particular one should stay on the main roads due to the risk of unexploded landmines and other unexploded ordnance remain in Serbia, particularly in the southern Serbian districts of Bujanovac and Preševo.
- You should exercise a high degree of caution and expect possible delays at the border with North Macedonia and Hungary due to the migrant situation.
- Pickpocketing occurs at airports, on public transportation and in other public places, particularly on public transportation and in large crowds or public markets. Foreigners could be targeted by thieves.
- Credit card fraud is common.
- There is a threat of terrorism in Europe. Terrorist attacks have occurred in a number of European cities. There is a potential for other violent incidents.
- Road conditions and road safety can vary greatly throughout the country.
- There have been incidents where police have targeted vehicles with foreign plates, often demanding immediate cash payment for alleged traffic violations. If stopped, request a full explanation and, if an explanation is not forthcoming, request permission to speak to the Embassy of Canada to Serbia in Belgrade.

Level of isolation:

- There are 3 Canadian families in Belgrade (embassy).
- This post is considered remote and has limited access to French and English; risk of feeling isolated is high.

HOUSING

- Housing will be on the economy.
- Houses | apartments are selected by the embassy for the member based on family requirements. For questions, reach out to the housing department.

EMPLOYMENT

Are there employment opportunities for spouses?

- Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in the economy is not an option.
- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, families should plan to be single income for the duration of the posting. [CFMWS | MFS | OUTCAN Europe | CFMWS](#) Language abilities in French would be a condition for employment for some positions.
- Spouses may be able to work remotely from home only.

Op Tempo: Varies depending on place of work and position.

HEALTH CARE

Access:

- Good health care is limited in availability. Quality of care varies greatly throughout the country. Private health care is available in major cities.
- Physicians and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.
- English speaking personnel very limited.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP. [PSHCP Member Portal \(pshcp-msh.ca\)](#)

Special needs:

- Supports are extremely limited in English or French.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and / or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

Consideration for pregnancy / birth:

- Health care for pregnancy and birth is available on the economy.

Dental:

- Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay up front, and you can then claim your expenses.

SCHOOLING

- There is an international IB school (International Baccalaureate, which is recognized by Canadian Universities) (International School of Belgrade – K to 12), a French Lycée (K to 12), and a British school (up to grade 8).
- Homeschooling is only legal for students with special education needs in Serbia.
- For an approved list of schools, please contact Children's Education Management at: CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca
- [Children's Education Management - Canada.ca](#)
- [Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca](#)

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- The curriculum varies depending on the choice of school.
- Canadian history or geography is not offered at any school.

Resources for special need children:

- Access to special needs services depends on the choice of school, there may be language requirements, area of specialization and degree of support needed, so it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and the school before making any commitments.

CHILDCARE

- Local daycares are available on the economy.
- Very few will provide childcare option will be available in English or French (some limited private daycare options available in English).

TRANSPORTATION

Things to Consider:

- Secondary roads are often narrow and poorly maintained. The Ibarska Magistrala road is dangerous due to poor road conditions, erratic driving and traffic congestion.
- Trains are slow and often subject to delays due to outdated railway tracks, which are subject to extensive repairs. Railway equipment is old and poorly maintained.
- Public transportation within the city is very good, affordable, but crowded.
- Bicycles and scooters are very popular. Bicycles and scooters are expected to share the road with traffic (extra caution advised).

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No physical centre. Families in Serbia are supported by the Remote Team:
MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com

Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:

- Not at post, MFS(E) Social Workers, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. Padre is located in Casteau, Belgium (SHAPE).

Communications:

- The internet can be good and can support remote working.

ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- Yes, plentiful. Sports, art, dance, music all available with limited English-speaking coaches.

Availability of playgrounds:

- Yes, outdoor and indoor. Indoor playgrounds are popular (due to the poor air quality).

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes, however, the Serbian legal system still does not treat cohabitating relationships equally.

Are same-sex couples recognized? No. While not illegal, homosexuality is not socially tolerated in Serbia.

Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Use without a prescription of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is illegal.

- Cannabis in Serbia is illegal. Possession is punishable by a fine or by imprisonment of up to 3 years. The sale and transport are punishable by imprisonment from 3 to 12 years.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- European Commission Country Reports (2023)
https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports_en
- Canadian Travel Advisories
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from the US)
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/serbia>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/serbia>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below

- MFS(E) Social Worker: MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Team: MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com