

TIMES

LIFE

travel planner



Balkan glory

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Famous Serbian writer Duško Radović once said, “Whoever was lucky enough to wake up in Belgrade this morning can consider that he has achieved enough for life today. To insist on anything more would be unseemly.” One of the oldest cities in Europe, Belgrade’s beauty doesn’t impress instantly. However, after spending a few hours ambling along its streets, you realise it is more than just a city. It’s a deep thought that won’t go away, a thought that inspires you to rise from the ashes.

My first day in the White City (city’s fortress looks white from the river) is spent capturing the mood of its lively pedestrian boulevard in the heart of Stari Grad. Artists lost in imagination, talented buskers serenading the crowd, locals enjoying leisurely meals in the sun and people perfecting the art of doing nothing! The Republic Square and Knez Mihailova Street, despite being laid-back and slow-paced, ooze a certain energy and charm that cannot be ignored. I am walking past some handsome historical buildings — National Theatre, National Museum

and the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, cultural centres, numerous art galleries, bookstores, chic roadside cafes, hole-in-the-wall joints, several shops and stalls selling boiled corn and popcorn — before reaching the gem that is Kalemegdan Park.

HISTORY IS OMNIPRESENT

Hugging the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers, the massive Kalemegdan is where the chaotic past of Belgrade unfolds before my eyes. Often described as an open-air museum, it is home to the mysterious Roman Well, 18th century Clock Tower and

the Ruica Church that boasts of chandeliers made by WWI Serbian soldiers from spent bullet casings, swords, rifles and

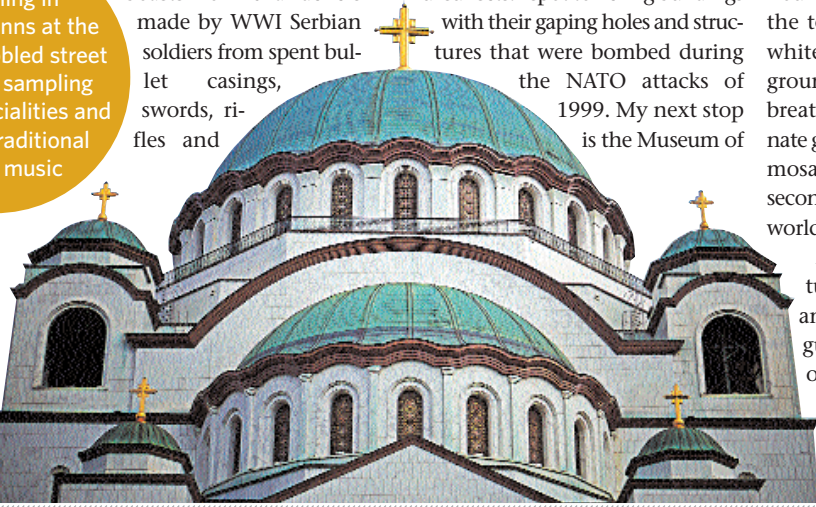
CHRISTMAS IN BELGRADE Serbian Christmas is aligned to the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian one, meaning the key date for festivities is January 7. However, the festive season starts in December and you can enjoy a prolonged holiday atmosphere. In Belgrade this Christmas? Witness the Santa Claus race where over 3,000 people dressed up as Santa Claus and Mrs Claus run across the city!

cannon parts. Its shaded pathways take me past postcard-perfect medieval fortifications, offering several photo opportunities. From the towering Belgrade Fortress, I witness the stunning view of the city and one of the most beautiful sunsets. I spot towering buildings with their gaping holes and structures that were bombed during the NATO attacks of 1999. My next stop is the Museum of

Yugoslavia and the neighbouring House of Flowers where socialist Yugoslavia’s lifelong president Josip Broz Tito is laid to rest. The museum offers an insight into the various aspects of life in 20th century Yugoslavia. A must-see is a display of several priceless gifts that Tito received in his lifetime, such as his portrait painted on half a grain of rice, a flag of Yugoslavia that has travelled to the moon and desert rose from Libya.

No matter which part of Belgrade I am in, there’s one edifice that follows me wherever I go. The city’s crowning jewel, St Sava Temple boasts a 4,000-ton copper dome that protrudes from the top of Vracar Hill and proudly announces noon with its 49 bells. While the temple’s surface is covered with white marble and granite, the underground crypt has massive archways, breathtakingly gorgeous frescoes, ornate gold chandeliers and Murano glass mosaics. The interiors of St Sava, the second largest Orthodox temple in the world, truly blows me away!

A melting pot of diverse cultures, Belgrade has several venues and uniquely-designed pubs that guarantee a fun, pleasant evening out! The city’s characteristic spirit of openness and cosmopolitanism makes everything all the more interesting.



Spend an evening in one of the inns at the ancient, cobbled street Skadarlija, sampling Serbian specialities and enjoying traditional old city music

PICS: ISTOCK

wellness

Screen time & sleep

PIC: ISTOCK



Screen time, has for long, been associated with lack of sleep and sleep, as we all know it, is extremely important for good health. Any kind of screen time certainly hampers sleep

as it results in cognitive stimulation, which is the opposite of what you want before bedtime. “When you are using your phone or laptop, or watching TV, the screen emits light which gives the brain

the impression that it is not bed time yet. This affects the production of a hormone called melatonin, which contributes to insomnia, sleep deprivation or poor quality of sleep,” says Bhakti Thakkar Bauva, clinical psychologist.

Researchers of Salk Institute for Biological Studies have pinpointed how certain cells in the

SLEEPING NEXT TO YOUR PHONE?

Even if you’re already asleep and your phone is on silent, if your phone beeps, it will emit light, which is perfectly capable of piercing through your sleeping eyes and waking you up. First things first, automatically set your phone’s blue light filter to come on at a certain time every day – like 7 pm or 8 pm. Keep your phone away from where you can reach it from your bed – on a night stand, bedside table, or even outside your bedroom.

eye process ambient light and reset our internal clocks or circadian rhythm.

When these cells are exposed to artificial light late into the night, our internal clocks get confused, resulting in a host of health issues.

While we use our phones, we tend to send emails, text, pay bills or see the news. Most of these activities can cause stress which increases the release of the stress hormone, ‘cortisol’, in the brain. Therefore, the brain’s electrical activity increases, refusing to calm down. Hence, it is essential that we avoid using a screen for at least an hour or two before bedtime.

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celeb travel

Rhea Chakraborty, actor

“I stayed in a haunted hotel once”



- **On travel planning:** I’m a very impromptu and moody traveller. I don’t like pre-booking anything except hotels.
- **Travel style:** Boho chic is my travel style. I love layering and mixing and matching tops and bottoms. It really works for long trips when you have a limited number of clothes.
- **Style tip:** Blend in. When in Rome, dress the way the Romans do. This way, you won’t look like a tourist.
- **Foodie moment as a traveller:** Truffle pasta in Positano.
- **Must-pack items:** All kinds of toiletries. I carry more toiletries than clothes when travelling.
- **A travel lesson I have learnt:** Travel light but I never seem to do that.
- **Scariest travel moment:** I stayed in a hotel that seemed haunted. It used to be a gothic hostel which I realised post check-in.



● **A memorable trip:** Last year, I went to the Maldives with friends and family and it was a wonderful trip. It will stay with me for a long time.

- **Travel goals:** Northern Lights and New Zealand.
 - **Favourite travelogue:** *Roughing It* by Mark Twain
 - **Travel pet peeves:** People who take too many pictures of themselves and don’t live in the moment.
 - **Next trip:** Hopefully, Norway.
- Shikha.Shah@timesgroup.com

health

How to manage a fatty liver?

Modern living has contributed to a common lifestyle condition called Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD). Even though it sounds like a scary thing to hear, you can manage it — even reverse it — by managing your diet better. The principles of nutrition management in NAFLD include improving quality of nutrition, maintaining a balanced diet and eating correct portion sizes depending on one’s activity profile and body weight. A carbohydrate to protein to fat ratio of 5:2:3 is advisable and so is a Mediterranean or anti-inflammatory diet.

CHANGES YOU MUST MAKE

- Increase intake of complex carbs (grains, veggies, beans) with low

- glycemic index and limit simple carbs like milk, sugar.
- Monitor the amount of oil and ghee used in cooking and at the same time decrease intake of fatty foods rich in saturated fats (butter, mayonnaise).
- Incorporate adequate amount of protein from lentils, low fat dairy, egg whites and Omega 3 rich fish in diet.
- Limit intake of excess salt as

- advised by your clinical nutritionist or physician.
 - Add sufficient amount (at least 3 cups) of dark green, red, orange and yellow vegetables and fruits.
 - Include functional foods such as amla, turmeric, avocado, flaxseeds, sunflower seeds and walnuts in your diet.
 - Have more prebiotic and probiotic rich food items.
 - A combination of aerobic and anaerobic exercises improves insulin sensitivity and decreases cardiovascular risk associated with fatty liver.
 - At least 30 min of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic exercises like brisk walking, swimming, cross training, cycling five times a week.
 - At least 60 minutes of resistance exercises twice a week.
- Hiteshi Dhami, Liver Nutritionist



PICS: GETTY IMAGES

fighting fit



THE PERFECT FAST



by Luke Coutinho
Holistic Lifestyle Coach-
Integrative Medicine

The most common questions we receive regarding fasting, whether intermittent or dry or both is:

- How many hours should I fast?
- What is the perfect fasting window?
- When should I start and stop my fast?

■ Why am I not seeing results even after fasting regularly? Where am I going wrong?

While there are as many perfect fasts as many people doing it, the one that’s closest to the rhythm of nature is the perfect fast.

WHY FAST?

Each of us is a product of nature and we thrive when we act according to the rhythm of nature. The most basic daily rhythm we live by is the sleep-wake cycle or the circadian rhythm which is related to the cycle of the sun. It is what makes us feel sleepy when the sun sets and awake when the sun rises. This also governs the way we eat, digest, live, and secrete right hormones at the right time which makes it extremely important for us to live as close to nature as we can. The more we move far away or challenge nature, the more we open gates to bad health.

Now fasting done in a way that’s in complete alignment with our circadian rhythm is what brings the most beneficial outcomes. Fasting is actually inbuilt in us; nature and humans since centuries have been following it until there was abundance and 24*7 availability of food and electricity. Back in the past, humans started their fast right after sunset — because there wasn’t any electricity or facility to store food — and continued till about sunrise the next day and then stepped out to hunt and fetch food followed by feasting. This

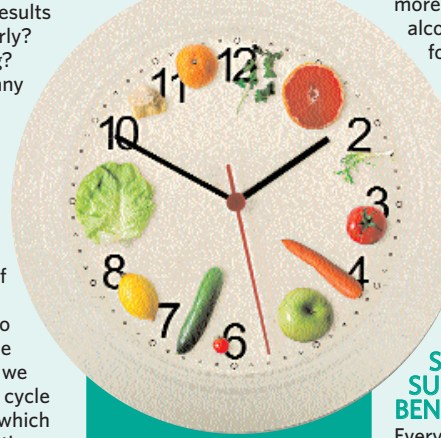
automatically led to a complete 12-hour or more of fasting.

HOW TO FAST RIGHT?

Align your dinner as close to sunset as possible, say by 6:30-7 pm (or whenever the sun sets in your area) and go on till next day’s sunrise (6:30-7 pm), giving a complete 12-hour fasting to your body and allow it to perform functions like repair, recycle, rejuvenate,

circadian rhythm/biological clock of nature.

It’s easy for us humans to abuse fasting and make it a fad. We party late and then decide to start intermittent fasting at 2 am. The next day we have another social event and once again the pattern repeats. This way even if we are fasting, we may not be gaining any benefits because it’s in no way aligned to our circadian rhythm, plus the body needs more time to clean up all that alcohol and far from healthy food. Ideally, our body doesn’t need so much time to clean up and detoxify. It can do everything in a shorter frame of fasting which is 12 hours. The more toxins we add to our system, the longer we may have to fast.



HOW IS THIS SUNRISE TO SUNSET FASTING BENEFICIAL?

Every human being has a built-in biological clock. The time we wake up, sleep, eating patterns, digestion, hormonal secretions work according to our clock. It’s not a physical clock like a watch that dictates how your life should run according to external circumstances like meetings, programmes, social calendars. Our biological clock works according to nature like sunrise, sunset, sunlight, changes in weather.

Once we start respecting our biological clock and live in sync with it, half the things we do today in order to get healthy, lose weight, look good, will automatically happen.

As a beginner, one must start aligning their fasting cycle with this (which easily totals to 12 hours of fasting) and gradually extend to 13 hours, 14 hours, 15 hours and so on till they start to experience true physical hunger. It’s necessary to get fasting right at the grassroots level before one starts to aim for long and extended fasts.

detox, reduce inflammation. This is a nature-made pattern of fasting and not man-made — it’s the most perfect way to fast because it aligns us with the