



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB
BELGRADE

IWC QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

BRIDGES

SPOTLIGHT ON IWC
CHARITY BAZAAR: What to
Expect

FEATURED MEMBERS:
Andrea Pavukova
Sabine Keiser

ZOOM IN ON SERBIA:
Unveiling Serbia's Hidden
Fortresses



OCTOBER 2024

ISSUE NO.3

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COVER IMAGE by Katarzyna Lason
from left to right: Barbora Kuchtová, Luzia Sebesta Schmid, Valerie Lane, Sabine Keiser, Rachel Stewart, Jinsook Shin, Gloria Gaber, and Julia Kretzschmar.

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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Dear IWC Members and Readers,

Welcome to the latest issue of Bridges magazine! With less than two weeks to go until our annual Charity Bazaar, we're excited to welcome you all to this special event. To get a taste of what's in store, be sure to check out the teaser on page 5. Help us spread the word and join us in celebrating the festive season while supporting vulnerable women in Serbia.

On page 9, we're delighted to introduce Andrea Pavukova as the new IWC President. Andrea shares her vision for the year ahead, and we look forward to an exciting journey together. We also feature our former member, Sabine Keiser, who led the IWC's Book Club. Sabine has relocated to Turkey with her family, and we wish her all the best.

In this issue, we also explore Serbia's hidden fortresses (page 13), a project by photographer Svetlana Dingarac that has evolved from a solo endeavour into a significant initiative raising awareness of cultural sites and inspiring us to use our unique skills to drive meaningful change in our communities.

A huge thank you to all our contributors, especially Daniela Vivacqua, Katarzyna Lason, and Liliana Andrade, for their hard work in making this issue possible. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed creating it!

Warm regards,

The Editorial Team

Bridges Magazine

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear IWC Members and Readers,

As I step into the role of President, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your trust and support. My journey to Belgrade has been filled with rich experiences, and the warmth of this community has made my transition smooth and rewarding.

My vision for the IWC is rooted in fostering connections and empowering each other. I believe that by celebrating our diverse backgrounds and talents, we can create an environment where every member feels valued and inspired to contribute.

In this issue of Bridges magazine, we have the opportunity to reflect on our shared commitment to making a difference. The stories within these pages serve as testament to our collective efforts, highlighting the impact we can have in our communities.

As we gear up for the upcoming Charity Bazaar, let's remember that our events are more than just gatherings; they are opportunities to strengthen our bonds and amplify our impact. Together, we can build a community that not only uplifts our members but also enriches the broader society.

I look forward to an inspiring year ahead!

Warm regards,

Andrea Pavukova

President, International Women's Club

CHARITY BAZAAR



SAVE THE DATE

01 DECEMBER 2024
10:30 AM - 5:30 PM

HYATT REGENCY
BELGRADE

TICKET: 500 RSD

FREE entry for children
aged 0-14



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FOR
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JOIN US FOR THE 2024 INTERNATIONAL CHARITY BAZAAR!

DATE: 1st December, 2024

TIME: 10:30 AM - 5:30 PM

LOCATION: Hyatt Regency Belgrade



**GET READY FOR A DAY OF FUN, CULTURE, AND GIVING BACK!
THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB (IWC) INVITES YOU TO OUR 21ST ANNUAL CHARITY
BAZAAR, WHERE YOU'LL ENJOY AN EXCITING MIX OF INTERNATIONAL BOOTHS, DELICIOUS
FOOD, AND VIBRANT PERFORMANCES—ALL FOR A GREAT CAUSE!**



WHAT TO EXPECT:

Embassy Participation: Discover unique country stands showcasing traditional crafts and products from around the globe, thanks to the participation of Belgrade-based embassies.

International Food Court: Savour flavours from around the world! Our food court will feature mouthwatering dishes that will transport your taste buds on an international journey.

Multinational Cultural Program: Enjoy performances that celebrate our diverse community, with dance and music from local and international artists.

Raffle Prizes: Win fantastic prizes donated by embassies, local and international businesses — every ticket purchased helps support vulnerable women in Serbia.

Children's Entertainment: Bring the whole family! We'll have activities to keep the little ones entertained while you shop and enjoy.

WHY WE'RE HERE:

Every ticket sold, every raffle ticket purchased, and every item bought goes directly to support selected Serbian NGOs focused on empowering vulnerable women.

Last year, we raised €36,000 from our bazaar, funding projects that tackle issues like gender-based violence, extreme poverty, and inequality. With your help, we aim to make an even bigger impact this year!

“We haven't had this many applications for funding since 2016,” said Christina Czettel, Head of the IWC Charity Committee and this year's Raffle Coordinator. “It shows there's a real need for support in these areas.”

The theme of women's empowerment is more relevant than ever, and we're proud to support initiatives that uplift women in Serbian communities.

A BIT OF HISTORY:

IWC Charity Bazaar began as a humble initiative by a small group of women two decades ago, and has grown into a major multicultural event, raising a total of some 700,000 euros to support people in need. Last year, we welcomed around 2,000 visitors and showcased products from 29 different countries, all to benefit vulnerable women in Serbia. This year, we expect even more participation and excitement.

TICKET INFORMATION:

Join us for **500 RSD** and celebrate the holiday season while supporting a meaningful cause. Children under 14 can enter for free.

Raffle tickets can be purchased at the event for **250 RSD**.

JOIN US!

Mark your calendars and get ready to make a difference! Together, we can empower women and change lives. We can't wait to see you at the bazaar!

For inquiries or to get involved, don't hesitate to get in touch with us at bazaar@iwc.rs.





FEATURED MEMBER

ANDREA PAVUKOVA

In this issue, we have the pleasure of introducing Andrea Pavukova, the new President of the International Women's Club (IWC) of Belgrade. Andrea talks to us about her journey from Slovakia to Belgrade, the people and experiences that have

shaped her, and what inspired her to get involved with the IWC. She shares her excitement about the club's future, her goals for bringing members closer together, and the importance of supporting IWC's charity initiatives.

Can you share a bit about yourself and your journey to Belgrade?

Absolutely! First, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all IWC members for their support and trust during my election as President. It means a lot!

Like many IWC women, my life has taken unexpected turns. I grew up in a small town under the High Tatras in northeastern Slovakia, in a military family. After training as an economist, I spent some enjoyable years in the insurance industry. My husband's international assignments led us to live abroad for seventeen of the last twenty-three years.

Belgrade is the latest chapter for us. The cultural closeness between Serbia and Slovakia, combined with the warm welcome from everyone I've met, has made us feel right at home. I'm confident that when we eventually leave, we'll take with us beautiful memories and relationships, just like we have from our previous postings.

What inspired you to get involved with the International Women's Club?

When I arrived, I was fortunate to spend time with our former President, Barbora Kuchtova. She introduced me to the IWC and its activities. Barbora is such a warm-hearted person, and I'm grateful for the support she and her husband, Ambassador Kuchta, gave my family and me.

I've always believed in the vital role women play in families and society. Whether we're outspoken or more private about women's issues, our adaptability and human touch make a difference. The IWC embodies these values through its events and engagements, which is why it attracts so many incredible women.

Is there a particular message or theme you want to emphasize during your presidency?

I want to build on the fantastic work of my predecessor and the entire IWC team. We have regular events that are well-supported and recognized beyond the international community in Belgrade. I plan to use these events to promote our goals, foster cultural exchange, and enhance our charity initiatives, like the IWC Charity Bazaar, which is crucial for our presence in the community.

Additionally, I want to strengthen connections among IWC members and empower everyone—especially newcomers—to share their talents and ideas. I believe the IWC can be a space for personal and professional growth for all.

What specific achievements do you hope to accomplish during your presidency?

My true achievement would be creating a safe and welcoming space for all—members, supporters, volunteers, and anyone who interacts with us. In the coming weeks, I'll collaborate with our team and members to gather support for some exciting ideas. We're committed to keeping the IWC visible, united, and growing for the broader community.

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Andrea Pavukova with her family. (Image: Andrea Pavukova)

How do you think your background can benefit the club and its members?

Every member brings something unique to the table, and I want to build on those strengths. My experience in international diplomacy has taught me valuable skills in event organising, relationship building, and collaboration. Together, I'm confident we can continue to succeed as an organisation.

What activities or events are you particularly excited about during your presidency?

I'm really excited about the upcoming Charity Bazaar on December 1. It beautifully combines community, charity, and cultural promotion. We're grateful to partner with the Hyatt Hotel in New Belgrade, which is hosting us again. Everyone is invited!

How do you see IWC's charity initiatives making an impact?

The IWC's charity initiatives are crucial. In 2024, we launched nine initiatives, investing over 4.2 million RSD to support and empower vulnerable women in Serbia. I want to explore ways to grow these efforts to create an even bigger impact. I've seen firsthand how investing in women brings significant returns, and I'm eager to bring more collaborators and funding on board.

Have you had a chance to connect with other members? Any memorable moments so far?

Absolutely! I've had many memorable moments already. Our traditional Morning Coffees are a great way to bond, share advice, and build friendships. Plus, I love meeting fellow members who are part of the Belgrade diplomatic corps; many have become close friends.

But what really brings me joy is our Pilates Class Group. I encourage everyone to participate in our activities—I plan to join as often as I can!

BRIDGES

What's your vision for increasing engagement among members?

Two key words: empowerment and appreciation. The IWC is a club of accomplished women on a mission. If they're willing to share their skills and knowledge, it's our job to create the best conditions for that. Recognizing and appreciating these efforts will keep us united and engaged.

As someone relatively new to the country, how do you feel about fostering a sense of community within IWC?

After just a few months in Serbia, I truly feel grateful to the IWC for how its members have helped me integrate into the community. I've already mentioned Barbora, but I also want to recognize Daniela and all the board members. Having the chance to meet and feel welcomed is essential. While it sounds like big words, it often comes down to simple gestures—just being there for one another as women.

What's been your favourite thing about Belgrade so far? Any local spots you love?

Belgrade is a lovely place, and we truly feel at home. I'm excited to explore the multicultural vibe of Vojvodina and its incredible mix of traditions and languages. In Belgrade, I love the views of the Danube and Sava rivers from Kalemegdan Fortress, and nothing beats a shot of espresso on a sunny Sunday morning on the terrace of one of the many local cafés.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us, especially for newcomers?

I'm grateful for the chance to talk with you and reach out to the readers of Bridges magazine. The IWC is like a bridge among women in Serbia. Whether new or long-standing members, we all have a role to play in our communities. Let's support each other and bring out the best in ourselves. I look forward to every opportunity to connect and spend time together!

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THE IWC IS A BRIDGE AMONG WOMEN IN SERBIA, CONNECTING US THROUGH OUR SHARED EXPERIENCES AND THE UNIQUE TALENTS WE BRING TO THE TABLE.





ZOOM IN ON SERBIA

UNVEILING SERBIA'S HIDDEN FORTRESSES

Photography: Svetlana Dingarac

Story: Marine von Koenig

In today's fast-paced world, where history often fades into obscurity, one photographer is on a mission to shine a spotlight on Serbia's forgotten fortresses, reviving the stories that have long remained in the shadows. Svetlana Dingarac, a passionate artist and cultural advocate, is on a mission to document over 400 mediaeval fortresses scattered across the Serbian landscape—a project ignited by her personal battle with leukaemia.

"I had to face and accept my own mortality," Svetlana says. "As a result, I started thinking

about what I wanted to leave behind as my legacy. I made a list of ten potential topics for a photo monograph, and fortifications and fortified towns stood out, as they were mostly unexplored at that time." The project, initially expected to take one or two years, quickly evolved into a far-reaching exploration of Serbia's rich history.

Through meticulous research, Svetlana discovered that the number of fortresses far exceeded her initial estimates. What began as a modest endeavour soon revealed an intricate tapestry of cultural heritage dating back to Roman times, with



IMAGES: (above) Svetlana Dingarac, Photo: Rozana Sazdić
(previous page) Koznik, a medieval castle located 10 km northwest of Aleksandrovac in Central Serbia.

many of these sites now in ruins or unmarked by signs. The challenge, she realised, was not just to photograph them but also to tell their stories. “The historical data and folk tales related to them are fascinating and deserve to be remembered,” Svetlana explains.

One particularly poignant aspect of her work is the documentation of fortresses that have been abandoned and neglected. Svetlana’s lens captures not only the beauty of these historical structures but also the narrative of loss and decay, raising questions about the preservation of cultural sites in modern Serbia. “The majority of the sites are under a huge threat from illegal excavators and smugglers, as well as from all sorts of development projects and investors,” she says.

Svetlana’s dedication has not gone unnoticed. The project has attracted attention from various cultural institutions and local archaeologists, who see value in her work in promoting tourism

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and education about Serbia’s hidden treasures. “People are starting to recognize the importance of these sites,” she says, sharing anecdotes of visitors inspired by her exhibitions. Notably, Adam Crnobrnja, president of the Serbian Archaeological Society, praised her efforts. “The website is highly recommended!” he said. “It has an informative-interactive map, information, links to literature,

IMAGE: Medieval Maglič Fortress in the Ibar Gorge Central Serbia

phenomenal photographs, and an exemplary presentation of cultural heritage.”

However, the financial burden of the project is significant. From converting a car into a camper for expeditions to covering the costs of printing and hosting exhibitions, Svetlana has financed her journey largely out of pocket. “I had to solve numerous challenges,” she explains, “how to reach remote locations, where to sleep, and how to minimise travel costs. I decided to buy an SUV and convert it into a camper. Now, I am fully adjusted to living in my car for weeks or even months at a time.” Currently, she is actively seeking support to ensure the sustainability of her project and the preservation of these historical sites.

Svetlana’s work culminates in exhibitions that not only showcase her stunning photographs but also educate the public about Serbia’s fortresses. Her latest exhibition was held at the iconic Kalemegdan fortress in Belgrade. Supported in part by Public Enterprise Belgrade Fortress, it featured over 30 fortresses, some of which had been undocumented or lesser-known, presented alongside detailed historical descriptions and captivating visuals.

The project website, www.tvrdjave.rs, serves as a valuable resource, offering an interactive map of 330 archaeological sites, detailed descriptions, and galleries of over 640 images. The National Internet Domains of Serbia (RNIDS) dedicated funds for the technical support of the site and

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AS THE PROJECT’S FINAL RESULT.**”

the partial translation of its content into English, ensuring that this important work can reach an even wider audience. Svetlana hopes this platform will help raise awareness about the wealth and diversity of Serbia’s cultural heritage and the urgent need for preservation. The site not only informs but also invites contributions, whether through sharing insights, promoting awareness, or providing direct support, ensuring these stories are not lost to time.

Through her lens, Svetlana not only captures images but also ignites a dialogue about the importance of preserving history for future generations. “Considering the number of archaeological sites with the remnants of fortifications in Serbia, I believe this project will last till the end of my life. My wish is to publish a big photo monograph or a series of books as the project’s final result. I also hope my site will become the largest photo- and database of Serbian fortresses, with exhibitions continuing to travel across Serbia and abroad.”

IMAGE: The fortress of Bač, the most important and best-preserved mediaeval fortification in Vojvodina



Svetlana Dingarac's project is more than a photographic endeavour. It is a vital initiative to preserve Serbia's rich cultural heritage amid significant threats. Without active support and engagement, countless historical fortresses may

fade into obscurity, losing their stories and cultural significance forever.

IMAGE: Jeleč, a medieval fortification located in southwestern Serbia, near present-day Novi Pazar



CALL FOR SUPPORT

Support is essential to raise awareness of Serbia's rich cultural heritage through the documentation of its historic fortresses. Contributions can come in various forms—not just financial, but also by promoting the project and spreading the word about its significance.

By highlighting these hidden treasures, we can collectively encourage greater attention to their preservation. Whether through sharing information, engaging with local communities, or assisting in outreach efforts, every action helps underscore the importance of these historical sites. For more information on how to get involved, please visit tvrdjave.rs. Thank you for your support!

FEATURED MEMBER

SABINE KEISER



Sabine with her family (Image: Sabine Keiser)

In late August, as Sabine Keiser packed up her Belgrade apartment, we caught up on her time in the city. At 54, she has had quite a journey—from being a flight attendant with the German Air Force to working as a civil servant and getting involved with the International Women’s Club (IWC). After four and a half years in Belgrade, she was gearing up for her next adventure in Türkiye, where she followed her husband with their two kids. In our chat, she shares her ups and downs as an expat,

her love for volunteering, and what she’ll miss most about her time in Belgrade.

Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your background?

Well, I’m 54 and originally from Germany. I studied English and Spanish, but I followed my dream of becoming a flight attendant, working with a German charter company and the Air Force.

“THERE ARE SO MANY MEMBERS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE IWC, AND I FOUND FRIENDS ALONG THE WAY—SOMETHING I HADN'T ANTICIPATED... I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THE DEPTH OF CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT.”



After spending some time in the U.S. with the military and embassy, I returned to Germany, graduated in public administration, and became a civil servant. I worked in the Ministry of Defense and later in the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development. After having my youngest daughter in Germany, our family enjoyed a fantastic three-year posting in Lebanon.

Now, after four and a half years in Serbia, our next stop is Türkiye, before I head back to work.

How long have you lived in Belgrade?

The first half-year was during the pandemic. We stayed six weeks at the Crowne Plaza, then returned to Germany due to lockdown rumours. After two and a half months, we came back, so it's really been four years, considering all the back and forth.

What are some of the challenges you have faced as an expat living in Serbia?

The language was a huge challenge for me since I had no experience with Slavic languages, aside from a couple of Russian classes in school that I found too difficult to continue. During the pandemic, there were no in-person Serbian classes. I didn't want to take online classes, and eventually, it was too late. I regret not learning Serbian. While many say people speak English here, I found that wasn't always true, especially at the market, so I had to rely on supermarkets the entire time I was here.

What motivated you to join the IWC? When did you join?

I joined shortly after arriving but was a passive member for about a year or so, mainly due to COVID. I didn't attend coffee mornings or participate in anything—I was a member on paper, paying my dues but not actively involved. The first coffee morning I attended was when Sonia, the wife of the Pakistani ambassador, became IWC President and hosted the gathering at her residence. From there, I gradually got more involved, but it took some time.

What have been your most memorable experiences as a member of the club?

I always enjoyed the events organised by Zalina Stauch, especially climbing the Kula while it was still under construction.

I had never been part of an IWC before, so I wasn't sure what to expect. My previous experience was with defense attaches' wives clubs and diplomatic clubs, but the IWC was entirely new.

As I got involved, I discovered it was incredibly interesting. There are so many members and activities, and I found friends along the way—something I hadn't anticipated. I expected just coffee mornings and small talk, similar to what I experience at receptions, but I was pleasantly surprised by the depth of connection and engagement.

Can you share some of the benefits you have gained from being involved in the club's activities?

It allowed me to meet people I wouldn't have met otherwise, as I'm usually in the military and German embassy bubbles. Through the IWC, I connected with many different people and tried activities I wouldn't have explored on my own, like several handcrafting classes.

I am a passionate traveller and an avid reader, so I would have visited museums and other places in Belgrade anyway. It was the smaller excursions through the IWC that introduced me to experiences I likely wouldn't have sought out, and those were particularly interesting.

As the coordinator of the IWC's Book Club and Opera and Ballet Lovers, what have been your favourite events or projects?

For the book club, we had all sorts of meetings. At first, we met in bookstores, but I didn't find those cosy, so I switched things up and tried to match locations to the books. We went to an African restaurant for Africa-themed books and a Lebanese place for Arab literature. One of my

...IT WAS THE SMALLER EXCURSIONS THROUGH THE IWC THAT INTRODUCED ME TO EXPERIENCES I LIKELY WOULDN'T HAVE SOUGHT OUT, AND THOSE WERE PARTICULARLY INTERESTING.

favourite meetings was at Hyde Park restaurant, where we discussed Elif Şafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* under the big trees in the yard—it really brought the discussion to life!

Brenda Pedraza also organised some wonderful author sessions—one was virtual with a Mexican author, and another was at Instituto Cervantes.

As for the opera and ballet group, my favorite performance was *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and I loved the ballets, especially *Le Corsaire*. We had some great times at open-air operas at Belgrade Waterfront too! During the opening of the 2021 opera season, we could watch from our balcony, and in 2023, Anna Netrebko performed. Last year, they even had a stunning evening with a dancer flying with balloons—it was amazing!

I was also the walking club coordinator for six months. It was fun, but there weren't any big highlights since we mostly just walked around Ada. The best part was when we took a walk to Zemun and visited a cute local handicraft store. [see Sabine's tips in the sidebar]

What advice would you give to someone who is considering joining the club?

I suggest joining first—go in with an open mind and explore the opportunities available. It will be an amazing experience! Once you get to know people, you can also start volunteering.

How has your experience in Belgrade influenced your personal and professional life?



*Book Club Meeting with Sabine Keiser, May 2024
(Image: Sabine Keiser)*

This experience has influenced me a lot. I hadn't done much volunteering before, but I realised it not only helps others but also enriches me—something I didn't expect at all. I started with the IWC, and then I teamed up with Christina Czettel to volunteer at the Catholic Church of Belgrade, helping kids prepare for their First Holy Communion and later for confirmation. That initial experience really sparked my passion for volunteering. Now, as I move to Türkiye, I'd love to keep it going!

What are your hopes and aspirations for the future of the IWC?

I think it feels a bit elitist in the IWC. It would be nice if it opened up to people from various backgrounds within the international community. There seems to be an invisible barrier. Some people I've spoken to have mentioned they never considered joining because they felt the IWC felt too exclusive for them.

It might also be interesting if the IWC opened up a bit; right now, it feels old school as a women's club where men aren't allowed. With more working women bringing their male spouses, what will those spouses do? They might not be interested in coffee mornings (though I see many Serbian men enjoy having coffee and chatting). But it would be nice for them to have a group to connect with, as making friends in a foreign country can be challenging.

What will you miss most about Belgrade and Serbia?

Oh, I'm definitely going to miss the people, of course. Belgrade isn't tiny, but for a capital, it feels pretty small. I'm moving to a city with 8 million people, so I'll really miss the cultural vibes you get here relative to its size. I'll also miss being able to walk everywhere. And let's not forget the location—it's so central in Europe, making it easy to visit so many other places!

What are you most excited about as you

prepare to move to Türkiye with your husband?

I'm most excited about the 'newness' of it all. I love new experiences; it's just part of who I am. I'm really looking forward to diving into a different culture, especially since it's mostly a Muslim country and I haven't been to many Muslim countries before—just Lebanon, which has a big Christian community. I look forward to exploring more of the country, too. Most people only know Istanbul and the Mediterranean coast, and I'm also excited to travel further east to places like Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.

Do you have any tips for other spouses of diplomats who are adjusting to a new country and culture?

Yes, learn the language. Don't limit yourself to Belgrade—explore the country! Serbia has a lot to offer that you might not expect. I hadn't heard much about it before I arrived, but I've discovered many interesting places. That's basically it!

SABINE'S BELGRADE TIPS:

3ANGLE Photo by Sonja Žugić:

A must-visit for unique finds. Don't miss 3ANGLE Photo, a charming store by photographer Sonja Žugić, offering stunning photographs of Belgrade that make for excellent souvenirs, with prices starting at around 60 euros. The shop is located on the first floor of the Design District, above Prince Cafe.

Opening Hours: Mon-Sat, 11AM - 4PM

Belgrade Design Hub:

This shop features a variety of local goods, including beautiful flowers from Novi Sad and distinctive crafts. It's

located on Gračanicka Street, No. 9.

Contact: +381 (0)62 617560

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/belgrade.design.hub>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100092430486825>

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri, 12 AM - 8 PM;
Sat, 12 AM - 5 PM

Finally, Sabine recommends trying **Serbian Bernet**, a unique dessert wine known for its sweet and aromatic flavour, often infused with various herbs and spices. Reportedly served on the iconic Titanic, this rich wine pairs wonderfully with desserts or cheeses, making it a must-try during your time in Belgrade for an authentic taste of local culture!

PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS FROM KATARZYNA LASON

STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

Images by KATARZYNA LASON





Here, capturing a laser show adds complexity to the city landscape. The fast movement of the laser across water droplets, coupled with a dark background, causes the laser light to blur, creating an interesting effect. This photo was taken with an iPhone 11.

Street photography is an excellent school for those who want to learn the art of photography. You don't need to travel to the other side of the world to capture compelling shots; all it takes is stepping outside your home and seeking inspiration in your surroundings.

A street photographer hits the streets like on a hunt, searching not only for visually striking locations but also for situations and everyday scenes. Even small details we notice on the street can tell a fascinating story.

Any time of day is good for photography, and any light can serve as a source of inspiration. Modern buildings look interesting in harsh midday light, creating a striking contrast of light and shadow. On the other hand, the soft afternoon light enriches the colors of tenement houses and is ideal for photographing people.

A STREET PHOTOGRAPHER VENTURES OUT LIKE A HUNTER, SEARCHING NOT ONLY FOR VISUALLY STRIKING LOCATIONS BUT ALSO FOR SITUATIONS AND EVERYDAY SCENES.

(previous page) In street photography, it is crucial to find the right angle to capture a moment, from which the interesting interaction between two elements is shown in its fullest potential. This photo not only captures a beautiful temple but also a contrasting moon emerging from behind the clouds, creating a mysterious scene. The photo was taken on the go with an iPhone 11. To achieve a better view of the moon, use a camera on a tripod with a longer exposure.



Street markets offer many opportunities to capture beautiful shots. The most interesting part of this photo is the contrast between the lighting and the people in the background. Although the photo was taken with a Nikon FM2 manual camera using film, a similar shot can be taken with a phone by simply reducing the exposure.

Walking through the city allows you to better understand what inspires you the most. Do you notice small details more often, or are you more captivated by architecture? Perhaps you would prefer to photograph people and their everyday lives.

SOMETIMES IT'S WORTH STOPPING FOR A MOMENT, AS EVEN IN A SEEMINGLY UNINTERESTING PLACE, THE 'THEATRE' OF STREET LIFE MAY SUDDENLY REVEAL ITSELF

Sometimes it's worth stopping for a moment, as even in a seemingly uninteresting place, the 'theatre' of street life may suddenly reveal itself. Interesting coincidences, unusual lighting, or a funny situation may present themselves, just waiting to be captured.

Henri Cartier-Bresson, the French pioneer of street photography, famously said that the "decisive moment," when we can capture a brilliant shot, comes to us rather than the other way around. Nowadays, we always have a phone or camera with us, allowing us to take pictures as we notice intriguing situations on the street. All it takes is heightened awareness and, of course, comfortable shoes.

When walking on the street, it's important to have quick reflexes to capture interesting and funny moments. There isn't always time to set up the perfect parameters, so the scene itself becomes the most important element, as shown in this photo. When photographing people on the street, there are rules regarding consent. If the person's face is visible, you must ask for their permission. This photo is easy to capture with a phone.



WELLNESS COLUMN
BY DANIELA VIVACQUA

PLANTING AND HARVESTING IN LIFE

Images: Daniela Vivacqua



Welcome back! In the last two issues, I wrote about the power and importance of a pause, and I hope you had the chance to practise and experience some pause during this hot summer. This year, I did not have a traditional vacation; I spent the last five months planting and harvesting medicinal plants in Piedmont, in northern Italy.

I have been reflecting on what I experienced and how powerful and important it is to connect with nature on a deeper level. I will share a bit of it with you in this column. My daily routine was quite demanding, as agriculture is a tough activity involving lots of squats, forward bends, heavy lifting, and constant walking over long distances. To avoid the heat, I organized my work into two shifts: one starting very early in the morning until 10 AM and another after 6:30 PM until 9 PM. During the rest of the day, I had plenty of time to

study new things, listen to music, distil lavender, organise the house, practise and teach yoga, nap, or simply do nothing.

I seeded, planted, transplanted, cured, and harvested many different medicinal plants—each with its own scent, texture, colour, behaviour, and properties. Plants, like humans, have their own personalities. I observed the minuscule cherry tomato seeds I planted in February growing into beautiful plants, yielding sweet, reddish tiny fruits. The lavender I planted two years ago exploded into light purple bouquets, attracting countless butterflies and bees that happily hovered above them, finding nourishment. The everlasting curry plant spread its powerful spicy scent, with young, tiny 2 cm seedlings growing to 20 cm in just four months. The roses bloomed in various colours, sizes, and shapes.

Planting everlasting curry plant.



The weeds, growing like crazy all around and getting out of control (literally!), became a lesson in survival, allowing me to observe how plants and herbs interacted. Despite the overwhelming number of weeds invading the herb fields, there were still opportunities for all to grow in that “chaotic” nature. All kinds of insects found plenty of food, and even though they sometimes destroyed flowers, fruits, and leaves, they taught me about the beauty and importance of nature’s balance

After these five months, I found myself in a very deep place—grounded and peaceful. It was a profound healing process, and it made me reflect on how powerful it can be to simply do some gardening or establish a true connection with nature.

Dr. Vasant Lad, an Ayurvedic doctor, wrote about the manifestation of consciousness in plants in his beautiful book “Yoga of Herbs.” He says, “True humanity, which is a humane feeling for all life, is the heart of all life. Plants and animals sometimes show this sense of caring more than certain humans, who have become hardened in their isolated sense of humanity. It is only when we come to look upon all things as human that we are capable of a truly humane existence. Such a lesson is taught to us by plants and herbs, whose existence is still grounded in the unity of nature, through which we may return to understand ourselves better.”

As I mentioned in my first article, in the spirit of nurturing our well-being, we must understand that we are meditative beings by nature. During my five months of “simply being myself,” I gained so much. As Dr. Lad says, “Plants bring us love, the nourishing power of the sun, which is the same energy of the stars, of all light... . Our feelings, then, are our own inner plants, our own inner flowers. They grow in accordance with our perception of the nature of all life.”

I closed the season in Italy by producing beautiful lavender essential oil, and now I am here in Belgrade, collecting and preparing seeds from the cherry tomatoes I brought with me, to be planted



Image: Daniela Vivacqua

I FOUND MYSELF IN A VERY DEEP PLACE—GROUNDED AND PEACEFUL. IT WAS A PROFOUND HEALING PROCESS, AND IT MADE ME REFLECT ON HOW POWERFUL IT CAN BE TO SIMPLY GARDEN OR ESTABLISH A TRUE CONNECTION WITH NATURE.

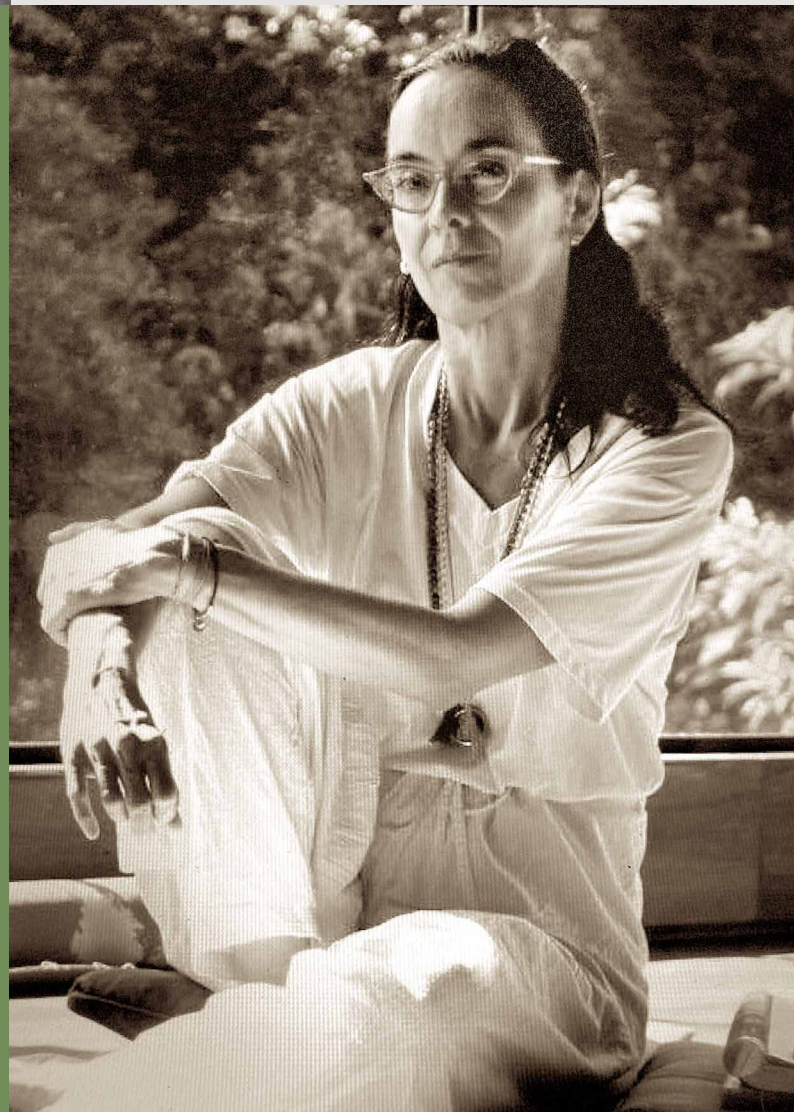
in 2025. It made me reflect upon what I have been planting in my life—the seeds of my choices in the face of life’s challenges—and my harvests. And so I take full responsibility for everything that has happened and continues to happen in my life. This may sound like a heavy burden, but indeed, it is liberating. Our ability to respond (=responsibility) through life constantly demands new tools to support self-growth, and this will be the subject of my column in the next issue.

P.S.: If you need any extra explanation, support, or simply would like to share your thoughts about this article, please email me at reiyogastudio@gmail.com.

Daniela Vivacqua, Msc, Hatha Yoga Instructor,
Yoga Nidra Instructor, Restorative Yoga Instructor,
Digestive health Yoga Therapist.



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CULINARY CLUB WITH LILIANA ANDRADE

DISCOVERING MEXICAN COOKING IN BELGRADE





Meet Liliana Andrade, a passionate advocate for Mexican cuisine, proudly representing the rich culinary traditions of her homeland, the Yucatán Peninsula. With her deep-rooted family background in gastronomy, she's on a mission to bring the diverse flavours and cultural heritage of Mexico to Serbia through her project, **México Lindo y Qué Rico**.

When she's not teaching languages or interpreting, Liliana is busy blending her passion for food and culture. She's organised memorable events, like the first-ever Day of the Dead festival in Novi Sad, where people could experience the magic of Mexican traditions. Plus, she's showcased her culinary talents at various festivals and contributed to the recipe book, *Recetario Café Latino Belgrado*, which features 52 delicious recipes from across Latin America, all while supporting important humanitarian causes.

Recently, Liliana received an exciting accolade as a winner in a contest organised by the Mexican government for her recipe in the upcoming book *México en Tu Mesa*. This recognition underscores her dedication to preserving the essence of authentic Mexican cuisine while celebrating its rich flavours in her new home.

We asked Liliana, who was recently appointed as the coordinator of the IWC's new Culinary Club, to

share her tips on cooking and enjoying Mexican food in Serbia, and we're thrilled to present her insights to you. Enjoy exploring the delicious world of Mexican cuisine with her!



MEXICAN CUISINE ISN'T JUST FOOD; IT'S A RICH TAPESTRY OF HISTORY AND CULTURE RECOGNISED BY UNESCO AS AN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Mexican cuisine isn't just food; it's a rich tapestry of history and culture recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. This means it deserves to be known and cherished by everyone, not just those from Mexico. With a vast array of flavours, colours, and cooking techniques influenced by both indigenous and colonial histories, Mexican food offers an unforgettable culinary experience.

In Serbia, there's a growing appreciation for Mexican gastronomy. However, it's crucial to distinguish between authentic Mexican dishes and what's commonly served as Tex-Mex. Many restaurants around the world mislabel their offerings as "Mexican," but what they're actually serving often includes dishes like chili con carne and nachos, which don't represent the true essence of the cuisine. Real Mexican food is diverse, with iconic dishes such as pozole, tamales, and mole, originating from the country's 32 states. Unfortunately, these authentic flavours are often hard to find outside of Mexico.

In researching the current state of Mexican cuisine in Serbia, I explored various restaurants



and conducted polls among friends from Mexico and Serbia. The consensus? Authentic Mexican options are limited, with many places offering Tex-Mex menus instead. However, a few gems, like La Taqueria and La Chona, come highly recommended for their attempts to stay true to traditional recipes. The challenge of sourcing authentic ingredients further complicates things. Many essential items, like specific chilies or fresh corn tortillas, can be hard to find.

So, how can you navigate these culinary waters? First, look for specialty stores that carry Mexican ingredients, such as dried chilies and masa for tortillas. Some local shops are starting to stock more international items, making it easier to recreate authentic dishes at home.

Another way to experience genuine Mexican flavours is through home cooking. Mexicans often

find that the best way to enjoy their cuisine is by preparing it themselves. So, if you're lucky enough to get an invitation to a Mexican friend's house, take it! You'll likely enjoy a meal prepared with love and tradition.

Additionally, consider joining cooking classes focused on Mexican cuisine. These not only provide hands-on experience but also allow you to learn about the stories behind the dishes, enhancing your understanding and appreciation of this vibrant culinary culture.

Exploring the world of Mexican cooking in Serbia may have its challenges, but the rewards are worth it. Embrace the opportunity to learn, taste, and share, and you'll discover that authentic Mexican cuisine is within reach!



KEY STAPLES OF MEXICAN CUISINE

Corn: The foundation of many dishes, from tortillas to tamales.

Beans: A versatile ingredient used in various forms, including refried and black beans.

Chillies: Essential for flavour; varieties include jalapeño and habanero.

Herbs: Fresh cilantro is commonly used for its aromatic qualities.

WHERE TO FIND INGREDIENTS IN BELGRADE

Metro Cash & Carry: Cilantro (also sold in Mercator), Jalapeño, Habanero chilli peppers, plantains.

[Meksička Tortiljara:](#) Corn tortillas and dough.

[Centli - tiendita mexicana:](#) Specialises in corn & flour tortillas, dried chilli peppers, sauces.

[México Lindo y Qué Rico Novi Sad:](#) A local store providing fresh ingredients like pickled cactus paddles, dried chilli peppers, tomatillos, corn leaves for tamales, refried beans, corn flour (Maseca and Pan), etc. ([order form](#))



JOIN THE CULINARY JOURNEY

For those eager to dive deeper into Mexican cooking, consider joining the IWC Gastronomy Club's workshops, where you can explore authentic recipes and culinary traditions. Whether you're a seasoned cook or a beginner, there's always something new to learn about the vibrant world of Mexican gastronomy!

Feel free to join a cooking class or visit local Mexican restaurants to experience these flavours firsthand. Discover the joy of cooking and sharing authentic Mexican dishes right here in Serbia!



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WITH A VAST ARRAY OF FLAVOURS,
COLOURS, AND COOKING TECHNIQUES
INFLUENCED BY BOTH INDIGENOUS AND
COLONIAL HISTORIES, MEXICAN FOOD
OFFERS AN UNFORGETTABLE CULINARY
EXPERIENCE.





A TASTE OF HOME: **CACTUS SALAD RECIPE**

This easy-to-make cactus salad, a recipe from Liliana's grandmother, can serve as a starter, snack, or side dish. Cactus paddles (nopalitos) are a staple in Mexican cuisine, known for their nutritional benefits and high fibre content. In addition to salads, they can be enjoyed in juices, soups, and stews.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

150 g pickled cactus paddles* (nopalitos)
2 diced tomatoes
1 diced white onion
1 serrano or jalapeño pepper* (optional)
Juice of 1 lemon
Fresh cilantro*, to taste
2 tbsp olive oil
Salt and black pepper, to taste
1/3 tsp oregano
Crumbled fresh cheese (optional)

** You can find cactus paddles and chilli peppers at México Lindo y Qué Rico NS. For cilantro (and chilli peppers), visit Metro or any large green market, such as Kalenić.*

INSTRUCTIONS

Drain the pickled cactus paddles in a strainer.

In a bowl, combine the cactus paddles with diced tomatoes, onion, cilantro and chilli peppers.

In a small bowl, mix lemon juice, olive oil, salt, black pepper, and oregano. Add to the cactus mixture.

Stir gently to combine.

Garnish with crumbled fresh cheese, serve and enjoy!

IWC BOOK PROJECT



Back in 2020, when IWC activities were hampered by the global Covid pandemic, our Executive Board and the Charity Committee came up with the idea to publish a book that would show Belgrade through the unique perspective of the city's expat community and help the groups' fundraising and charity efforts.

It was met with an enthusiastic response from the members, partners and friends, and in 2021, the book became reality, featuring twenty three contributions from a diverse group of authors sharing their love and appreciation for Belgrade.

Order the book on the [IWC website](#) or purchase it at a next IWC morning coffee*.

*The price of one copy is RSD 2.000.- (excluding delivery fees). 100% of the proceeds from the sale of the book go to support IWC charity efforts.

“HERE, IN THIS BOOK, IS THE EVIDENCE OF DOZENS OF ITS HIDDEN FACES, DISCOVERED BY THE EYES OF ITS PROMINENT FOREIGN RESIDENTS WHO HAVE COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD; IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS, THEY HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE MILLENNIAL CITY, BE IT DUE TO ITS SECRET TREASURES OR NOTORIOUS LANDMARKS. COMING FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND CONTINENTS, CULTURES, ETHNICITIES, THIS GROUP OF WORLDLY PEOPLE SHARES UNANIMOUS ATTRACTION OF BELGRADE'S PERSISTENT PRIDE, UNIQUE STYLE AND VERY PARTICULAR SPIRIT.”

BRANKO ANĐIĆ
DORČOL-BORN WRITER, JOURNALIST, LITERARY TRANSLATOR,
PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

IWC UPDATES

ANDREA PAVUKOVA ELECTED AS NEW IWC PRESIDENT



On October 18, the IWC Board announced that Andrea Pavukova has been elected as President, effective immediately. The board extends its appreciation to all members who participated in the voting process, which saw a fantastic turnout of 120 votes—an impressive 85.71%. The results were unanimous: Andrea received 120 votes in favor, with no votes against or abstentions.

Andrea Pavukova comes from a small town under the High Tatras in Slovakia. She is married to a Slovakian career diplomat and is a mother of a daughter who is currently finishing her medical degree and an ambitious 16-year-old son. She has lived in Ankara, where her husband's diplomatic career started, and has since lived in Washington DC and Brussels. Andrea has graduated in Economics and Business Management from the University in Bratislava.

She loves spending time with her loved ones, cooking delicious and nourishing meals, and exploring new places and cultures, and she is a true film lover. Andrea states that she finds the women of IWC very inspiring, open-minded, and great-hearted and that it would be an honor to hold such an important position in the club. Inspired by the welcoming spirit of the IWC, Andrea is dedicated to empowering women and enhancing the club's charitable initiatives.

On page 9, you will find an interview with Andrea, in which she shares her journey and vision for fostering collaboration among the diverse women of the IWC, building lasting relationships, and expanding their impact within the community.



IWC UPDATES

IWC ACTIVITY GROUPS

Our activity groups reflect the diverse interests of our members and our commitment to creating a welcoming space for women from various nationalities and cultures. For the latest updates on each group's activities, be sure to check our WhatsApp community.

Book Club with Ursula Meyer-Wiefhausen

Culinary Club with Liliana Andrade

Cultural Group with Sonia Punin

Fashionistas with Jelena Isakov

Hiking Group with Izabela Bonte

Ladies Who Lunch with Aleks Gulan and Yinnet Titolo

New Members with Dušica Stocklin and Marine von Koenig

Pilates with Nađa Hadžistević

Social Group with Dušica Stocklin and Marine von Koenig

SWAG with Katarina Silevski

If you are interested in starting a new group, contact **Jessica Sanchez** at office@iwc.rs, and she will guide you through the set-up and promotion process.

NEW MEMBERS

Seda Arkan (Canada, US, Türkiye)

Solongo Batdelger (Mongolia)

Claudia Calzaretti (Italia)

Ruth Graf (Austria)

Anna Harutyunyan (Armenia)

Tanya Janić (Canada)

Vesna Jugović DaVinca (Serbia)

Leyla Khasiyeva (Azerbaijan)

Milena Kovačević (Serbia)

Réka Kovács-Szekeres (Hungary)

Jelena Lazarević (UK)

Miroslava Mášová Šefranková (Slovak Republic)

Maria Miron (Romania)

Nataša Ostojić (Serbia / Switzerland)

Suzana Perić (Germany)

Lucie Sedliaková (Czech Republic)

Yinnet Titolo (USA, Dominican Republic)

Mira Tosić (Serbia / USA)

Mirella Verhage (Netherlands)

Please extend a warm welcome to the newest IWC members and help them feel at home in our diverse and supportive community.

BRIDGES

Bridges is a quarterly magazine highlighting developments in the International Women's Club (IWC).

For more information about IWC, please visit <http://iwc.rs>

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