



A Guide to the Serbian Mentality

Momo Kapor

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Belgrade author and painter Momo Kapor has spent many years studying the mentality of his countrymen. The fruit of this literary research is this book, a book that will help you grasp the essence of the Serbian people and their way of life. This longtime columnist for the distinguished Serbian daily Politika and the monthly magazine JAT Review, published by JAT Airways, has compiled the best and most interesting of his articles for this book, which is richly illustrated with his own drawings. This book's readers will learn, through a self-ironic and humorous tone typical of books by George Mikes, Efraim Kishon and Art Buchwald, what Serbs like and dislike, whom they admire and despise, what they eat and what they drink, how they spend their free time, what they dream about and what they believe; in a word, book is about what constitutes a Serb from the inside.

A Guide to the Serbian Mentality Details

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Lorena says

I couldn't be more impressed how differently Momo Kapor presents his small native land to the foreigners.

He doesn't illustrate the cathedrals, churches, museums, boulevards or fountains, which are considered to be the first attractions for every tourist.

But when it comes to the fact that Šajkaša cap could be used even for drinking water from a pond and could define the character of a man by the way he wore it, the fact that people drink tea only when they are sick and have a small portion of Rakija when they simply have a toothache, when you see nowadays women walking in the street and smoking in the same time, full of confidence, when you see people kissing each other three times in the cheeks not just because they haven't seen each other for a long time, and when you are a guest in a Serbian family they won't let you go without being sure that your stomach can't handle anymore food from their diverse cuisine, when you listen to the older people saying continuously that old days were the best ones and today is chaos, you realize something:

The architectonic style of the buildings, the cuisine, folk music, and traditional garments of a country can be influenced by certain circumstances and they may change time after time. What remains unchangeable is the people's soul. It is generally what distinguishes them as a part of a certain land and nature.

Rick says

Fun and enjoyable exploration of stereotypes of Belgraders and Serbian people in general. Innocent and good-natured, but still enforcing stereotypes.

Adriana says

Easy and fun read. Particularly interesting if you are in Serbia. I read it while in Belgrade and it was useful not just as a guide to the Serbian mentality but also as an accurate tourist guide to hidden gems in the city.

Dusan Jolovic says

Citah ovo dok sam u SAD. Imao sam primerak na srpskom. Kapor veoma lako probudi nostalgiju u coveku, jer pise lako i ubada u centar stvari koje treba spomenuti. Ove price su sakupljene iz JAT revije cini mi se, koje je on pisao za ovaj avio magazin. Neke od njih sam vec procitao u knjizi Magija Beograda. Ne bih bas rekao da je ovo srpski mentalitet, ovde je naglasak na Beogradu. Ali ga on tako dobro opisuje, neke stvari kojih vise nema i koje su se promenile jer vreme diktira nove trendove. Ali zanimljivo je da moze da se vidi da se neki trendovi vracaju - pise kako su gramofonske ploce zamenili CDovi. Ali ipak danas zbog hipstera i

retro stvari, ploce se vracaju i prodaja raste.

Kapor je takodje dovoljno ziveo/putovao po Americi, da moze da napravi neka poredjenja sa Americkim nacinom zivota i njihovom kulturom sto je super. Cela ova knjiga ce biti veoma zanimljiva da je citaju neke generacije za 50tak godina da vide kako se nekada zivelo i koje su brige Beogradjana bile :) Inace, toliko je jela spomenuo u knjizi da je mogao i kuvar posle ovoga da sklopi

Claude says

Very funny to read, especially if you know Belgrade and Serbia, if you have lived here for a while and you know what he's talking about, else you'll probably not get all the jokes. ;)

Lesley Botez says

A bit heavy on the food and drink more than the Serbian character.

wanderer says

I bought this book in Belgrade on a whim, and I'm glad I did. Approximately half of this book bored me and half of it charmed me- charmed me enough to give it four stars anyway. I admire the author's ability to poke fun at his country and brag about it at the same time. Many of the traits he mentioned are also true of Romania and other Eastern European countries.

Martin Boyle says

I was given this book by a Serbian friend and colleague - it was meant to help me navigate my way in Serbia as a different sort of guide book. It certainly encourages me to want to visit the country again.

It is a collection of series of articles written for a newspaper and a magazine. It took me several months to read - you do not want to read from one article to the next, it would make too rich a diet.

There is a warts-and-all approach to the telling, almost as if Kapor at times is laughing at his compatriots. But if he is, his laughter is not malicious. He is a sympathetic guide helpfully pointing out the unusual, explaining the background, but never sneering. The Guide is a set of sketches (and accompanied by the author's drawings, too) that serve as a lamp that excites curiosity in a country and a people I had very little knowledge of.

In reading this book, I was reminded of a couple of books in a similar style by a Belgian journalist (Jean d'Osta) that helped me to understand Brussels better when we lived there, and to learn to love the city. This is a wonderful way of discovering a place.

I do look forward to exploring Serbia, and not just to test my understanding of the Serbian mentality.

So thank you, friend, for the thoughtful gift: I enjoyed and will treasure it.

Molly says

I'm so glad I read this before my trip to Serbia!

Tamara says

A bit exaggerated at times, but he really captures the Serbian (or maybe the Belgrade) spirit, or what we believe is our spirit. I really liked the fact that it's a book of essays rather than one long story, makes it easier to read and really enjoy the tidbits of serbian culture. Would like to have read it in Serbian, but the English version is good as well...

Bojana Lalic says

This book is a real gold. Everyone who have ever been in Serbia or known any Serbs should read this book. So accurate and fanny.

Linda says

This book was recommended to me in an English language bookstore in Belgrade several years ago, and I've finally gotten round to reading it. It is a basically light-hearted and enjoyable collection of essays and illustrations by author and columnist Momo Kapor. Though its title refers to the Serbian mentality, the book is really a love note to Belgrade in particular. Having made many visits to Serbia over the years, I had expected the book to strike more chords of recognition as I read through the essays, but I did feel like a foreigner reading about another place. Perhaps I would have appreciated it more personally had I lived in Serbia for an extended period. However, I did enjoy it very much as an experience of appreciating someone else's love for his home and culture. And the illustrations are wonderful.

Sugar Pill says

Knjigu sam ?itala na engleskom jer sam u njoj pisala anotacije za prijateljicu iz Finske, kojoj ?u da je poklonim. Kapor na vrstan na?in opisuje srpski mentalitet i svaku njegovu dobru i lošu komponentu. Volela bih da ovu knjigu pro?itam i na srpskom, a da onda o njoj dam detaljne utiske jer je mogu?e da mi je zbog prevoda ponešto i promaklo. Ipak je srpski bogatiji od engleskog i prevodom se dosta gubi.

Carlos says

I don't usually like books about places, especially countries. They tend to praise as unique things that happen everywhere. Also, I can notice some kind of soft nationalism that I don't like.

Unfortunately, and inevitably I'd add, you find this in the pages of *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality* . However, Momo also takes the stereotypes, the obsessions of the Serbs making fun of them and, by extension, of himself. *Naravno*, these are the best pages of the book.

The book is formed by tens of short chapters in which the author explains with humor a particularity of the Serbians and, therefore, the most, if not all, Western Balkans people. It is a book to glance over and read little by little.

You won't learn much about Serbia, but I don't think that's the intention of Momor. If you happen to have some friends from the region you will find amusing most of the book, as it can be summed up as *smijemo je jer istino*.

Liudmila says

Trying to get warm, we popped into a bookstore located on one of the central streets in Belgrade and, of course, I had to roam through a shelf with English books. 'A Guide to the Serbian Mentality' was hidden behind books by Serbian authors but I am very glad that I dug a bit deeper and found it. It's a collection of short stories written by the Serbian author Momo Kapor and compiled into this illuminating book about the main traits of the Serbs, in particular about the Belgrade citizens. Written in a rather poetic manner, each chapter has been a feast of laughter and a reminder of my personal experience in the city and at some of its iconic places. Besides, I really liked that the book is illustrated with the author's drawings which make this book an even more compelling read. I would recommend this book to every single person who is interested in Serbian mentality and who would like to discover Belgrade through a literary work rather than through a guidebook.
