



GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE®

Eastern Europe to the Black Sea 2018

14-Day River Cruise Tour

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

POST-TRIPS

Prague, Czech Republic

OR *Vienna, Austria*

Your Day-to-Day Itinerary

GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE

Grand Circle Cruise Line is the leader in river cruising worldwide—offering American travelers unique experiences at unbeatable value aboard our privately owned fleet of 46- to 162-passenger ships. With each River Cruise, you'll enjoy unmatched discoveries, leisurely pacing, and the freedom to personalize your trip. Plus, Grand Circle Cruise Line is the only cruise company with expert, resident Program Directors who accompany you throughout your trip, enhancing your exploration with the kind of insight and passion that only a local can provide.

YOUR GRAND CIRCLE PROGRAM DIRECTOR TOUR

During your Grand Circle vacation, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site local Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director throughout your trip. He or she is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. You will also be supported along the way by local tour guides, who lead you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, based on what we've learned from past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

He or she will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need.

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements*
- » **Accommodations** for 10 nights aboard a private river ship with wireless Internet access now in all common areas and cabins, and 2 nights at the Sheraton Bucharest or similar
- » **ALL meals:** Daily breakfasts, 10 lunches, 11 dinners—including 5 meals in local restaurants—plus onboard soft drinks as well as house beer & wine
- » **7 included tours** with personal headsets and 5 **Exclusive Discovery Series events**—Danube-Black Sea Canal transit & discussion · *Life Under Communism* · Gypsy Women discussion · School visit · Home-Hosted Lunch
- » **Local Program Directors, a Grand Circle Cruise Line exclusive:** These dedicated experts are with you and your group
- » of 38-45 travelers from beginning to end to provide insider's knowledge and the perspective that will enrich your experience
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » **All port charges:** a value of \$145 per person
- » **Baggage handling** for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- » **5% Frequent Traveler** credit on your next trip—an average of \$262
- »
- » *Airport transfers are only available for travelers arriving and departing to/from the same airport and on the same arrival/departure dates as the main trip

WHAT THIS TRIP IS LIKE

PACING

- » 13 days, with 10 nights aboard a private river ship, and a two-night hotel stay
- » Return flights often require departing in early morning
- » Air travel time will be 11-20 hours and will have at least one connection

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- » Walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities

- » Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- » Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- » We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- » Uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slippery in wet or colder conditions
- » Travel by 140- to 162-passenger river ship, and 49-seat coach
- » Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary

CLIMATE

- » Daytime temperatures range from 58-82°F during cruising season
- » June-August are the warmest months
- » March and November weather can be unpredictable and change quickly

Eastern Europe to the Black Sea 2018

Experience an unmatched confluence of cultural traditions and explore five Eastern European nations—Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania—on a Danube to the Black Sea cruise that showcases Old World villages and legendary capital cities. For many Americans, life beyond the former Iron Curtain was long shrouded in mystery. But today, young democratic nations, embracing life after communism, have opened their arms to Western visitors. Revel in regal Budapest, “Queen of the Danube” ... sample local Croatian flavors during a Home-Hosted Lunch ... and witness the lower Danube’s stunning gorges and mighty Iron Gates as you cruise continuously to the Black Sea. We’ve also **added an extra night in Bucharest** to give you additional time to explore this regal, Old World capital city.

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

Transylvania, Romania

3 NIGHTS PRE-TRIP

Experience the Transylvania region of Romania—a castle-dotted landscape whose well-preserved, Old-World character evokes an era of bygone, macabre figures both mythical (Count Dracula) and actual (Vlad the Impaler) from the historic resort town of Sinaia, known for centuries as the “Pearl of the Carpathians.”

Prague, Czech Republic

4 NIGHTS POST-TRIP

Discover Prague, the “City of 100 Spires” known for its many hilltop neighborhoods, where rows of steeples stand out against the horizon. Wander about the capital city’s twisting cobblestone streets and old neighborhoods, where ancient houses crowd each other along narrow lanes. Experience the museums and cathedrals that make Prague stand out as one of Europe’s finest cities.

Vienna, Austria

3 NIGHTS POST-TRIP

Explore Vienna, Austria—a magnificent, culture-rich hub that retains the grace and charm that has helped it stand out among great European cities for centuries. This is a city of museums and music, art and architecture, and famous people from a storied past. Walk the streets where Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Freud strolled about on their daily business. Once the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna came to symbolize the splendor of an age, one recaptured by wandering among the city’s Baroque palaces and other stunning architecture.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Fly from the U.S. to Bucharest, Romania.

Day 2 Bucharest, Romania

Arrive today in Bucharest. You are met at the airport by a Grand Circle representative and transferred to your hotel. Depending on your arrival time and hotel check-in policy, you may not be able to check into your hotel room immediately upon arrival at your hotel. Your Program Director will advise you of your check-in status and activity schedule for the day when you arrive.

You have the balance of the day to relax after your overseas flight.

Celebrate your arrival in Romania with a Welcome Drink, and get acquainted with your traveling companions and your Program Director. This evening, enjoy dinner at your hotel.

Dinner

Day 3 Bucharest

If you began your European discoveries early with our optional pre-trip extension in *Transylvania, Romania*, you will join the main group today. This morning, get acquainted with Bucharest on a panoramic tour. This is an old city that has served as the capital of Wallachia and later Romania since 1659. Today, it is noted for its broad, tree-lined boulevards, well-kept parks, and mix of architectural styles that combine Neo-Classical 19th-century structures with monumental 20th-century edifices (the latter built for the most part to satisfy the

late dictator Nicolae Ceausescu). You'll view the *Arc de Triomphe* (commemorating the achievements of World War I soldiers) and drive along Victory Avenue to Revolution Square, where recent events in history are inscribed.

After lunch on your own, enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure. Perhaps you'll visit the majestic Palace of the Parliament, the second largest administrative building in the world—and certainly one of the most impressive. Dive into the controversial history of how the massive palace came to be under the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. After an earthquake devastated the city in 1977, Ceausescu took advantage of the land and recruited 700 architects and around 1.5 million factory workers to complete the project. Ceausescu passed away before the massive undertaking was finally finished in 1994.

Dinner is on your own this evening.

Breakfast

Day 4 Bucharest • Constanta • Embark ship

After enjoying the morning at leisure, we'll gather for lunch in a local restaurant before transferring to Constanta by motorcoach where you'll embark your private Grand Circle river ship, which will be your home throughout your Black Sea cruise.

This evening, enjoy a Welcome Drink and meet your ship's crew. Then, your Program Director will describe tomorrow's discoveries during your first Port Talk. These nightly

events, held throughout your cruise, will give you the opportunity to prepare for the next day.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5 Constanta • Danube-Black Sea Canal transit • Captain's Welcome Dinner

This morning, enjoy a guided tour of Constanta, a Romanian Black Sea port that is the country's oldest continually inhabited city. Dating back more than 2,500 years, Constanta boasts a wealth of fascinating architecture and history. Myth holds that Jason and the Argonauts stopped here after recovering the legendary Golden Fleece. On your included tour, you'll explore the beguiling city center, the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul, the mosaic-paved Roman Edifice of Tomis, the Art Nouveau Constanta Casino, and other highlights of this beloved city.

Following lunch, your Danube and Black Sea River Cruise begins by sailing into the Danube-Black Sea Canal, a 40-mile engineering marvel begun in 1949, but not fully completed until 1987. You'll pass through the canal's lock system and cruise by the inland port towns of Murfatlar and Medgidia.

This evening, celebrate the start of your Eastern European odyssey at the Captain's Welcome Dinner.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6 Ruse, Bulgaria • Optional Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanassi tour

Early this morning, arrive in Ruse, which is situated where the Danube forms a natural border between Romania and Bulgaria.

You may spend your day at leisure exploring Ruse independently, or you could join us for an optional excursion to discover two key Bulgarian historic sites: Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanassi. You'll enjoy free time to make your own discoveries, and you'll enjoy an included traditional lunch in a local restaurant in Arbanassi.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7 Vidin • School visit

This morning, enjoy panoramic views of Bulgaria en route to Vidin.

After lunch, you'll arrive in Vidin, Bulgaria's main port on the Danube. Here we'll enjoy an included walking tour and a visit to Baba Vida, a medieval fortress of two walls and four towers. Baba Vida was the city's main defense in the Middle Ages and also the most important fortress of northwestern Bulgaria. **Please note:** Some walkways at Baba Vida have tough and uneven surfaces and dark passageways.

Then, visit with students at a local school (when in session) supported, in part, by Grand Circle Foundation.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8 Iron Gates • Life Under Communism discussion

You have a day of leisurely cruising, and a good opportunity to observe life along the banks of the Danube from your comfortable deck chair as your Program Director provides insights about the region. After breakfast, enjoy a bridge commentary about the Danube River. Later in the morning, join us in an **Exclusive Discovery Series** discussion on *Life*

Under Communism with your Program Director. Then, after lunch onboard, join the chef in the galley (the ship's kitchen) for a special tour.

Throughout the day, you'll cruise along a stretch of the Danube that was once a raging river pounding through deep gorges. In the 1960s, Yugoslavia and Romania cooperated on a joint venture that raised the level of the Danube with a series of hydroelectric dams called the Iron Gates. The Danube is now placid between the Iron Gates, the craggy two-mile long gorge now underwater. In the morning, you'll pass through Iron Gate II; you'll continue through Iron Gate I later this afternoon.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9 Belgrade, Serbia • Gypsy Women discussion

Early this morning, we'll arrive in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia (and former capital of Yugoslavia), one of Europe's oldest cities, and the center of political and cultural life in the country. Belgrade and the rest of Serbia are just now emerging from many years of repressive rule, with a welcoming spirit for visitors.

Enjoy a full morning in Belgrade, beginning with an included tour around this grand old city, which was built centuries ago along important east-west trade routes and used as a gateway to Western Europe from the Balkans. You'll see the Town Hall, St. Sava Orthodox Cathedral—the largest Orthodox cathedral in the world—and the Kalemegdan fortress. You also explore the Tito Memorial, erected to honor Josip Broz Tito, who held Yugoslavia together as an independent country in the turmoil that followed World

War II and the subsequent Cold War. After your tour, enjoy lunch onboard. **Please note:** *The Tito Memorial is closed on Mondays.*

After lunch back onboard the ship, explore the city on your own—you'll have a shuttle bus to and from the city available for your use. Your Program Director will have suggestions for various local sights and activities for learning and discovery.

This evening, join a local gypsy woman for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** discussion. She'll provide insight into what her day-to-day life looks like, the stigma surrounding gypsy women, and how she's breaking tradition and paving the way for a new generation in this dynamic country. Enjoy tonight's dinner onboard.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10 Novi Sad • Optional Sremski Karlovci tour

After breakfast this morning, enjoy an included tour of Novi Sad, Serbia's cultural hub and second-largest city. The beauty of the city is in its name—*novi sad* in English translates to "new garden." Nestled along a bend in the Danube River, Novi Sad is peppered with myriad historical and cultural monuments, verdant parks, bustling squares, a thriving pedestrian zone, and a history-rich fortress standing tall on the right bank of the river.

After lunch onboard, the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to further discover Novi Sad on your own. Perhaps you'll choose to explore the Petrovaradin Fortress, built between 1692 and 1780 by the Austrians as a defense against invading Turks. Declared a historical monument 200 years later, this partially restored fortress is now a museum.

Delve deep into its strange past, including a twelve-mile network of underground tunnels, a mysterious well with supposed links to black magic, and an iconic clock tower on which the size of the minute and hour hands are reversed.

Or, join us on an optional excursion to Sremski Karlovci, a culture-rich town just ten miles southeast of Novi Sad. Spend the afternoon exploring the town, including visits to a beekeeping museum and a 300-year-old wine cellar.

This evening, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11 Vukovar, Croatia • Osijek • Home-Hosted Lunch • Batina

After docking this morning and passing through customs in Vukovar—site of the worst artillery shelling of the Croatian–Serbian war—you’ll take a short walk through the town and see some of its scars, as well as witness its revival. Then you’ll set out to explore Osijek, the administrative and economic center of eastern Croatia.

Situated on the Drava River, about 15 miles from the mouth of the Danube, the area the city occupies was populated even in prehistoric times, and the Romans erected the first urban settlement. But its advantageous geographical location made it prey to assault throughout the centuries. It was destroyed by the Huns, rebuilt in the Middle Ages, destroyed by the Turks, and rebuilt again in the 18th century. As a result, Osijek boasts an eclectic architectural heritage, which you’ll see on your city tour.

Among the more notable sites are the Tvrdja, a unique urban and military complex that lies in the center of the city and was built between 1712 and 1721 by the new Austrian authorities. Reliving its own cruel history in our era, Osijek was heavily damaged during the Croatian–Serbian war that waged from 1991 to 1995. Now peaceful, the city is experiencing a rebirth of civic pride and cultural and economic achievement.

Following your walking tour, enhance your appreciation for everyday Croatian life as you join a local family for a Home-Hosted Lunch.

Later this afternoon, transfer by motorcoach to Batina, where you’ll meet your ship. Dinner is onboard this evening.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12 Budapest

After breakfast, you’ll set out to explore Budapest on an included city tour. Budapest is situated on both sides of the Danube River, with Buda (the right bank) to the west and Pest (the left bank) to the east.

In Pest, you’ll see Heroes’ Square, with its Millennial Column set off by equestrian statues of the ninth-century Magyar leaders who conquered this region in the ninth century. The adjoining colonnade displays more statues of kings, dukes of Transylvania, and liberty fighters who influenced the history of Hungary.

As your tour takes you over the Danube bridges into Buda, you can see how the imposing Parliament Building dominates Pest on the opposite side of the river. Then, turn your attention to beautiful and historic Buda. Here, you’ll visit Castle Hill, where a massive castle, including its protective ramparts, has been

designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mostly destroyed during World War II, the Royal Palace has been lovingly restored, approximating its former splendor, and now includes the Hungarian National Gallery.

In your free time, you can also visit the Church of Our Lady, formerly used for the coronations of Hungarian kings. Its popular name of Matthias is in recognition of the Renaissance king who ruled in the 15th century and whose heraldic sign—a raven—is displayed on one of the towers of the church. Dating to the 13th century, the structure is an interesting mix of architectural styles used during reconstruction of the building at different times in its history. Note that during the 150-year Turkish occupation of Hungary, the church served as *Eski Djami* (Old Mosque) for the Turks. Inside the church you can view art of Bertalan Székely and Karoly Lotz, 19th-century Hungarian painters.

After lunch onboard, you'll enjoy free time to relax or explore Budapest on your own.

Budapest offers some particularly fine museums and galleries. The Hungarian National Gallery contains excellent examples of Hungarian art from the Middle Ages on. The collection is comprehensive and somewhat massive, so give yourself plenty of time to enjoy it. Parliament, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Budapest History Museum are also worth a visit.

This afternoon, continue your discoveries in Budapest on your own.

Tonight, dinner is onboard.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13 Budapest • Optional Hungarian Jewish Heritage tour • Captain's Farewell Dinner

Spend the day enjoying the wonders of Budapest on your own. Or, join an optional tour exploring *Hungarian Jewish Heritage*. You'll visit the Great Synagogue, the largest in Europe, designed in a Moorish style but with Byzantine, Romantic, and Gothic elements. Then you'll see the Kazinczy Street Orthodox Synagogue, the center of traditional orthodox Jewish life here; the Emanuel Memorial Tree, a memorial to Hungarian victims of the Holocaust; and the Jewish Museum.

After lunch onboard, the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to make further discoveries on your own in Budapest.

This evening marks the last night of your Danube River and Black Sea cruise. Gather with your fellow travelers to celebrate your Danube River and Black Sea cruise at the Captain's Farewell Dinner.

Please note: Our Hungarian Jewish Heritage optional tour is not available on Saturdays or on Jewish holidays.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 14 Budapest • Disembark ship • Return to U.S.

After breakfast, disembark and transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or travel overland to *Prague, Czech Republic* or *Vienna, Austria* for your post-trip extension.

Breakfast

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with us. We will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form and swiping your credit card at the ship's front desk. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanassi

(Day 6 \$95 per person)

Today, you'll travel by motorcoach to Veliko Tarnovo, the capital of Bulgaria from 1186 until 1394. This cultural center rewards visitors with views of the fortification wall atop Tsarevets Hill, the cobblestoned old city, ancient ruins, and a steep ravine plunging down from two towering promontories. Continue on to Arbanassi, a historical village of Bulgarian heritage. Its 80 houses, five churches, and two monasteries reflect a unique, fortress-like architectural style of the 17th and 18th centuries, when the village flourished. Enjoy free time to make your own discoveries, and savor typical Bulgarian fare at a local restaurant.

Sremski Karlovci

(Day 10 \$60 per person)

Explore Sremski Karlovci, a history- and culture-rich town rich Serbian town considered a political and spiritual capital. Between 1848 and 1849, it was designated the capital of Vojvodina—a self-proclaimed Serbian province—and between 1848 and 1920, it served as the official seat of the

Patriarchate of Karlovci—an office of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Today, Sremski Karlovci is renowned for its Baroque architecture and wine production. During a guided tour, you'll discover a handful of Serbian landmarks, including the Patriarch's Palace and the oldest Serbian grammar school. You'll also visit a beekeeping museum—which also doubles as a wine cellar—where you'll savor samples of locally made wine and honey.

Hungarian Jewish Heritage

(Day 13 \$55 per person)

Join us for an optional tour exploring Hungarian Jewish Heritage. The journey begins at the Great Synagogue, the largest in Europe, with its Moorish design further enhanced by Byzantine, Romantic, and Gothic elements. You'll also visit the Kazinczy Street Orthodox Synagogue, the Emanuel Memorial Tree, and the Jewish Museum.

PRE-TRIP

Transylvania, Romania

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 3 nights
- » Daily breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » Included tours with personal headsets: Peles Castle · Brasov
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Experience the Transylvania region of Romania—a castle-dotted landscape whose well-preserved, Old-World character evokes an era of bygone, macabre figures both mythical (Count Dracula) and actual (Vlad the Impaler) from the historic resort town of Sinaia, known for centuries as the “Pearl of the Carpathians.”

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on your flight to Bucharest, Romania. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

Day 2 Bucharest, Romania

Arriving in Bucharest, you'll be met at the airport by a Grand Circle representative and transferred to your hotel. Your Program Director will advise when you may check-in and your activity schedule for the day.

The remainder of the afternoon is yours to relax after your overseas flight, or venture out on your own explorations.

Get better acquainted with your traveling companions over a Welcome Drink. This evening enjoy an included dinner at your hotel.

Please note: If you choose this optional pre-trip extension, Days 2 and 3 of this extension correspond to Days 2 and 3 on your main program.

Day 3 Bucharest • Sinaia

After breakfast this morning, enjoy a guided tour of Bucharest. This is an old city that has served as the capital of Wallachia and later Romania since 1659. Today, it is noted for its broad, tree-lined boulevards, well-kept parks, and mix of architectural styles that combine Neo-classical structures with monumental 20th-century edifices (the latter built for the most part to satisfy the late dictator Nicolae Ceausescu).

You'll view the *Arc de Triomphe* commemorating the achievements of World War I soldiers and drive along Victory Avenue to Revolution Square, where recent events in history are inscribed.

This afternoon, enjoy lunch and then transfer to Sinaia, one of the most popular resort destinations in Eastern Europe.

With its sub-Alpine climate and its protection by the surrounding mountains, visitors to Sinaia have long been convinced of its ideal location for recreational mountain sports. The atmospheric pressure is low, the air is free of allergens and pollutants, and the water is rich in minerals. Some people even believe that the sunshine feels different here. This combination of natural curative factors and geographic beauty has helped make Sinaia “the Pearl of the Carpathians”—the historically favored destination of Romanian royalty and a region rich in palaces, luxury hotels, fine dining, and wonderful skiing.

Spend the rest of the afternoon exploring Sinaia as you wish. Tonight, enjoy dinner in a local restaurant.

Lunch, Dinner

Day 4 Sinaia • Optional Bran Castle tour

Before its most famous landmark, Peles Castle, was constructed, Sinaia was a quiet monastery settlement in the Prahova Valley. Afterward, it quickly became a booming resort town—with help from the subsequent creation of a direct train line from Bucharest. With the king in Sinaia to avoid the heat of the nation’s capital in summer, the nobility swarmed to this mountainside city.

The day is yours to relax and to explore this exquisite resort community on your own. Perhaps you’ll visit Sinaia Monastery. Founded by Romania’s Prince Mihai Cantacuzino after a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai, this 17th-century abbey, in turn, lent its name to the town. Admire the gold mosaic paintings and gold-plated thrones in the Great Church here, as well as its collections

of religious icons, books, and porcelain. You might also pay a visit to the Sinaia Casino, built in 1912 and inspired by the glamorous casinos along the *Cote d’Azur*.

Or come with us on an optional tour to Bran Castle, often referred to as Dracula’s Castle. Prince Vlad Tepes, the son of Vlad Dracul and the person who inspired Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel *Dracula*, used this castle as headquarters for his incursions into Transylvania. This 15th-century ruler became known as “Vlad the Impaler” for his practice of impaling enemies of the kingdom, which was greatly threatened by the Ottoman Turks at the time. Stoker’s work of fiction drew inspiration from this bloody practice, the family name, and the castle-dotted mountain landscape of Transylvania.

The castle was built in 1377 to protect nearby Brasov from invaders and also served as a customs station. In 1920, the people of Brasov, who owned the castle, offered it as a gift to Queen Maria of Romania, and the castle soon became her favorite residence. After an included lunch, you return to your hotel, arriving in the late afternoon.

Breakfast

Day 5 Sinaia • Peles Castle • Brasov • Optional Azuga Wine Cellars tour

After breakfast, join your Program Director for a tour of Peles Castle.

Set dramatically in the hills above Sinaia, this 160-room palace, built in German Renaissance style, was completed in 1914 for the first Hohenzollern king of Romania, Carol I. The castle was the king’s attempt to imitate the styles of his former homeland, creating a Bavarian setting in the mountains of Romania. The castle’s sculpture terraces,

art displays, and historic armories make it one of Romania's most important and beautiful museums. The palace is ornately decorated, inside and out, with intricate woodcarvings and paintings of scenes from Wagner's operas. Fortunately, as you'll see, it is one of the best-preserved royal palaces in Europe.

Then travel to Brasov, where a tour will introduce you to this fascinating city. Continuously settled since the Bronze Age, the region that is now Brasov has been enriched by people of many heritages—the Romans, the Saxons, and the Hungarians among them—as well as by the traders from all over Europe and beyond who arrived in this long-thriving economic center. You'll see some outstanding medieval architecture in Brasov, which is not far from the geographic center of Romania and is the largest city in the Transylvania region. **Please note:** *If Peles Castle is closed, we will instead visit Pelisor Castle.*

After lunch on your own, you have some time on your own to discover Brasov. Perhaps you'll visit the Black Church. Built between

1384 and 1477, it is the largest Gothic church in Romania and one of Eastern Europe's finest. Seeing this famed and ancient church, you might feel as if you've stepped back into the Middle Ages.

The evening is yours to spend as you wish.

Or join us for an optional excursion to the famed Azuga Wine Cellars. We'll begin with a walk through the wine cellars, where an excellent sparkling wine is produced and bottled, pause for a wine-tasting, and then tour the small wine museum. We then sit down to dinner in a dining room across the courtyard from the wine cellars.

Breakfast

Day 6 Sinaia • Bucharest

After breakfast, join your fellow travelers on Day 3 of your *Eastern Europe to the Black Sea River Cruise Tour*.

Breakfast

OPTIONAL TOURS

Bran Castle

(Day 4 \$95 per person)

Bran Castle is often referred to as Dracula's Castle. Prince Vlad Tepes, the son of Vlad Dracul and the person who inspired Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, used this castle as headquarters for his incursions into Transylvania. This 15th-century ruler became known as "Vlad the Impaler" for his practice of impaling enemies of the kingdom, which was greatly threatened by the Ottoman Turks at the time. Stoker's work of fiction drew

inspiration from this bloody practice, the family name, and the castle-dotted mountain landscape of Transylvania.

You'll see the interior and exterior of Bran Castle, which was built in 1377 to protect nearby Brasov from invaders and also served as a customs station. In 1920, the people of Brasov, who owned the castle, offered it as a gift to Queen Maria of Romania, and the castle soon became her favorite residence. This optional tour includes lunch.

Azuga Wine Cellars

(Day 5 \$85 per person)

Join us for an optional evening excursion to the famed Azuga Wine Cellars. We'll begin with a walk through the wine cellars, where an excellent sparkling wine is produced and bottled, pause for a wine tasting, and then tour the small wine museum. We then sit down to dinner in a dining room across the courtyard from the wine cellars.

POST-TRIP

Prague, Czech Republic

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 4 nights
- » Daily breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » Included tours with personal headsets: Prague • Bratislava
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Discover Prague, the “City of 100 Spires” known for its many hilltop neighborhoods, where rows of steeples stand out against the horizon. Wander about the capital city’s twisting cobblestone streets and old neighborhoods, where ancient houses crowd each other along narrow lanes. Experience the museums and cathedrals that make Prague stand out as one of Europe’s finest cities.

Day 1 Budapest, Hungary • Bratislava, Slovakia • Prague, Czech Republic

While most of your fellow travelers on *Eastern Europe to the Black Sea* depart today, you can sit back, relax, and enjoy the changing landscapes as you ride for most of the day in a comfortable motor coach on your way to Prague. Add another country to your list with a stop for lunch in Slovakia’s quirky and charming capital, Bratislava. As you travel along, your Program Director will give you a briefing on your upcoming days in Prague.

Prague’s regal beauty spreads on both sides of the winding Vltava River, connected by 16 picturesque bridges. Like Rome and San Francisco, the city is built over a series of hills, and its varied architecture spans many centuries.

You’ll arrive at your hotel in Prague around dinnertime. You can ask your Program Director for suggestions as to where to dine on your own tonight.

Lunch

Day 2 Prague • Optional Charm of the Czech Countryside tour

After breakfast and an orientation briefing, enjoy a tour of the city—a great way to get acclimated and identify the places you may wish to revisit on your own.

You’ll discover the *Stare Mesto*, Prague’s Old Town, with its many wonderful Gothic and Baroque buildings. See the famous 15th-century astronomical clock at the Old Town Hall. Every hour, crowds assemble below to watch Christ and the twelve Apostles

appear at two little windows above the clock face, followed by the skeleton of Death tolling the bell.

After lunch on your own, you can return to your hotel—joining your Program Director on Prague’s subway system—or spend the rest of the day at leisure, exploring Prague at your own pace. Perhaps you’ll return to Wenceslas Square to take in the collections of the National Museum.

Or, join an afternoon excursion to the Czech countryside. Settled since the Middle Ages, the Kokorinsko region is perhaps best known for its hops fields and small breweries (in the nation with the highest beer consumption per capita in the world). The town of Cicovice, a historical village in Bohemia, will transport you back in time with the largest collection of genuine 17th- and 18th-century timber architecture in the Czech Republic.

Breakfast

Day 3 Prague • Optional Sychrov Castle tour

Perhaps you’ll contrast your discoveries of historic Prague from the previous day with its more modern aspect at the Dancing House, whose unusual contemporary architecture is framed by the Vltava River. Or visit the Mala Strana, the eighth-century market town that today is a quaint neighborhood of cobbled streets, boutiques, and Baroque churches and palaces.

As it was during the zenith of the Bohemian kingdom, Prague still ranks as the thriving center of the country, with an artistic community reminiscent of Paris in the 1920s. This evening, you might seek out some of Europe’s best jazz venues, excellent opera, or innovative theater groups.

Or you might want to join our optional tour of Sychrov Castle, the 18th-century residence of a noble family returned to its former glory by an extensive reconstruction and restoration of the manor house’s exteriors and interiors, as well as of the nearby park.

Breakfast

Day 4 Prague • Optional Terezin tour

Continue your independent explorations of Prague this morning. You might take in St. George’s Church, with its tenth-century towers and the elegant Royal Gardens with their marble monuments.

Or join our optional tour for a sobering visit to Terezin, site of the World War II concentration camp of Theresienstadt. Located less than 40 miles northwest of Prague, this entire town, bordered by an 18th-century fortress, was turned into a concentration camp by the Nazis. This powerful experience also includes a visit to the Ghetto Museum.

After lunch on your own, take advantage of your afternoon at leisure to revisit favorite haunts, catch up on your travel journal, or explore a new side of this endlessly spellbinding city.

Join us for a Farewell Drink followed by an included dinner at a local restaurant. Take some time to share the memories of your trip with fellow travelers.

Breakfast, Dinner

Day 5 Prague • Return to U.S.

After breakfast, you are transferred to the airport for your flight home.

Breakfast

OPTIONAL TOURS

Charm of the Czech Countryside

(Day 2 \$95 per person)

Join us for a charming optional excursion to the Czech countryside. Settled since the Middle Ages, the Kokorinsko region is perhaps best known for its hops fields and small breweries (in the nation with the highest beer consumption per capita in the world). The town of Cicovice, a historical village in Bohemia, will transport you back in time with the largest collection of genuine 17th- and 18th-century timber architecture in the Czech Republic. During this optional tour's included dinner, sample beloved Czech beer and Bohemian cuisine, and learn more about traditional music and dance.

turned into a concentration camp by the Nazis. This powerful experience also includes a visit to the Ghetto Museum.

Sychrov Castle

(Day 3 \$110 per person)

On this optional excursion, you'll visit Sychrov Castle, the 18th-century residence of a noble family. During the last ten years or so, an extensive reconstruction and restoration of the manor house's exteriors and interiors, as well as of the nearby park, has returned the Castle of Sychrov to its former glory. After a welcome drink, enjoy an organ concert in the palace chapel, followed by a guided walk through the grand manor, featuring magnificent woodwork and lush interiors. Relax over dinner before returning to the hotel in the late evening.

Terezin

(Day 4 \$80 per person)

Join our optional tour for a sobering visit to Terezin, site of the World War II concentration camp of Teresienstadt. Located less than 40 miles northwest of Prague, this entire town, bordered by an 18th-century fortress, was

POST-TRIP

Vienna, Austria

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 3 nights
- » Daily breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » Included tour: Vienna • Schoenbrun Palace
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Explore Vienna, Austria—a magnificent, culture-rich hub that retains the grace and charm that has helped it stand out among great European cities for centuries. This is a city of museums and music, art and architecture, and famous people from a storied past. Walk the streets where Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Freud strolled about on their daily business. Once the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna came to symbolize the splendor of an age, one recaptured by wandering among the city's Baroque palaces and other stunning architecture.

Day 1 Budapest, Hungary • Vienna, Austria

After breakfast, say farewell to your fellow travelers on *Eastern Europe to the Black Sea*. You will then be transferred via coach to your hotel in Vienna this morning. Enjoy lunch en route on your own and arrive early this afternoon.

This afternoon, you can join a guided tour of Vienna—featuring some of its most well-known historic sites, including the *Ringstrasse*, one of the many achievements of the Emperor Franz Joseph. In 1857, the Emperor ordered the demolition of the ancient city walls, which were no longer needed as fortifications and which were impeding the growth of the city. In their place was constructed an elegant 2.5-mile-long

boulevard, encircling the Innere Stadt. The Neo-classical buildings along the *Ringstrasse* bring together all the greatest architectural styles in an exuberant celebration of all that seemed possible during the Industrial Revolution.

Your stroll continues along the city sidewalks, passing by the well-known Imperial Palace, home to many generations of the Habsburg family, and the renowned Spanish Riding School.

The balance of the day is free to relax. Or, you may take advantage of your included 24-hour public transit pass to explore on your own.

Your evening is free to dine on your own and spend as you wish. Ask your Program Director for suggestions.

Day 2 Vienna • Schoenbrun Palace • Optional *Musical Vienna* tour

You have the day at leisure to relax or travel as the locals do and take public transportation to the majestic Schoenbrun Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, for an audio-guided tour. Explore this regal 16th-century estate, which is owned by the Habsburg family, to trace its vast history.

You might want to visit the Imperial Apartments at the Hofburg Palace. Formerly the residence of the Habsburg rulers, the Hofburg contains the 19-room state and residential apartments of Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elisabeth, which are open to the public. In an impressively staged exhibition, the Sissi Museum seeks to give the visitor an understanding of the myths and reality surrounding the figure of Empress Elisabeth. The Imperial Silver Collection is a fascinating museum containing the porcelain, glass, and silverware once used at the imperial table.

Spend the evening as you wish. Or, join us for an optional *Musical Vienna* tour. Sit back and let the strains of classical composers carry you off to the former glory of this imperial city.

Breakfast, Lunch

Day 3 Vienna • Optional *Best of Vienna* tour

The morning is yours to spend as you please. Or, you may choose to join us for our *Best of Vienna* optional tour to get to know three completely different faces of Vienna.

Your afternoon is also free to explore independently. This evening, join your fellow travelers for a Farewell Drink at your hotel. Afterwards, spend the remainder of your final evening in Vienna as you wish. This evening, enjoy dinner in a local restaurant.

Breakfast, Dinner

Day 4 Vienna • Return to U.S.

After breakfast, you are transferred to the airport for your return flight home.

Breakfast

OPTIONAL TOURS

Musical Vienna

(Day 2 \$90 per person)

Vienna without music wouldn't be Vienna. You may want to enjoy an unforgettable optional evening in one of Vienna's famed concert halls. You'll hear enchanting performances of some of the most wonderful melodies of classical Austrian music. **Please note:** Tickets are subject to availability.

Best of Vienna

(Day 3 \$100 per person)

Uncover three distinct sides of Vienna on a full-day option tour. Begin by visiting the world-famous *Wiener Staatsoper* (Vienna State Opera), built by the Emperor Franz Joseph and inaugurated in 1869 with a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The building was almost completely destroyed in the 1945 bombings, but was rebuilt and presented its

second opening in 1955 with Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Then stop at the *Naschmarkt*, a spectacular multicultural marketplace that dates back to the 16th century. Located along and above the Wien River, this is part marketplace and part bazaar with stalls and vendors offering everything from exotic fruits and vegetables to sidewalk art. Finally, visit famous Prater Park, an old-fashioned amusement park, where you'll enjoy a thrilling ride on the *Riesenrad*, its giant Ferris wheel.

Please note: *When the Vienna State Opera is not available, a visit to another musical venue will be included.*