

TRAIN : The Danube Express

JOURNEY : Christmas Markets Of  
Central Europe (Eastbound)

Eastbound Journey Duration : Upto 8 Days

### **Day 1 MUNICH**

Arrivals day in Munich, where you will be met and transferred to the five-star Sofitel Munich Bayerpost for a two-night stay. An elegant, modern hotel in the historic setting of Munich's former Bavarian Royal Post Office, the hotel is perfectly located in the vibrant heart of the city. Just a five-minute leisurely stroll takes you to Karlsplatz Stachus, which leads onto one of the city's most popular shopping streets, Neuhauser Strasse; and at the other end of this street is Marienplatz, in the Altstadt (Old Town).

Tonight, enjoy a welcome reception dinner in the elegant surroundings of this contemporary design hotel.

### **DAY 2 MUNICH**

Electrified by the indescribable buzz of yuletide cheer, Christmas in Munich is truly magic. One of the most famous of all the city's Christmas markets is located on Marienplatz in the heart of the city. This centuries-old market, which had its beginnings in the 1600s, is a fresh mix of old and new – keeping to older Bavarian traditions, with mouth-watering Brätwurst and freshly roasted chestnuts, presented alongside decadent sweet treats and intriguing electric creations. Watching over, a majestically illuminated Christmas tree casts a charismatic glow over the bustling square – perfectly adding to the festive feel.

This afternoon you will get to know Munich's unique Haidhausen district. Haidhausen has developed from a working-class quarter into a popular residential area. When strolling along the narrow streets with small shops and green courtyards, it almost feels like being in a village in the middle of the city. Haidhausen has always been extremely important for Munich's beer tradition. The

area's former inns, dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries, have now been lovingly restored.

We will also visit the charming and cozy Christmas market at Weißenburger Platz. The day ends in a typical Bavarian inn where we can taste different kinds of beers and enjoy traditional Bavarian White Sausage with Pretzel.

### **DAY 3 MUNICH TO SALZBURG**

Mid-morning, you will be transferred to Munich railway station to enjoy a drinks reception before boarding the *Golden Eagle* Danube Express. Marking the beginning of your voyage of a lifetime, a Bavarian inspired-Oompah brass band will perform as the train departs from the station, and our cabin attendants will be there to escort you to your private en-suite cabin.

As our train weaves its way out of Munich we take lunch in the Restaurant Car as we enjoy the spectacular Bavarian scenery unfolding before our eyes as we head across the border into Austria for our first stop this afternoon in Salzburg.

Like a picture from the pages of a fairy-tale, Salzburg perfectly captures the charming cosiness of the festive season. The city sits snugly in the northern foothills of the Alps, set against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks, cut in half by the curves of the Salzach River. The Christmas markets, Advent concerts and local traditions continue to charm visitors in the magical city of Mozart.

This afternoon we explore the heart of the city, starting at Mirabell Palace. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the baroque 17<sup>th</sup> century palace is easily one of the most stunning landmarks in the city and made famous in more modern times as a location used in *The Sound of Music*. A short distance from the palace on Market Square (Marketplatz) we will see the former Mozart Residence, now a museum. From here we will cross the Makartsteg bridge into the Old Town and walk along the Getreidegasse, Salzburg's most famous street which is renowned for its wrought-iron trade signs and the birthplace of Mozart.

The rest of our evening in Salzburg will be spent at the Salzburger Christkindlmarkt, one of the most beautiful and oldest Christmas markets in the world, which is held on Domplatz and Residenzplatz. Its unique location in the middle of the World Heritage Old Town of Salzburg, the traditional stalls and its long history make the Salzburg Christmas market something very special. The Christkindlmarkt offers incomparable holiday ambiance – bells ring out from onion-domed churches, the scent of fresh pine mingles with the aroma of cinnamon-sprinkled mulled wine in the crisp winter air, and cheerful groups huddle around festive market stalls.

### **DAY 4 SALZBURG & VIENNA**

Following a leisurely breakfast onboard our private train, we make a visit to the

DomQuartier, a unique cultural highlight in the heart of Salzburg. Over 400 years ago, the powerful prince archbishops began to transform the wealthy city of Salzburg into a baroque jewel and an urban masterpiece was created, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Residenz and cathedral area, complemented by the Benedictine monastery of St. Peter can be experienced as a continuous tour. The terrace above the Cathedral Arches reveals stunning views of the Salzburg historic district as well as the mountains surrounding the city. A special view to end our time in Salzburg.

A special highlight this afternoon onboard the *Golden Eagle* Danube Express as we traverse the Semmering Pass en-route to Vienna, a stunning feat of engineering with spectacular alpine views to be enjoyed with afternoon tea being served from the warmth of the Bar Lounge Car.

This evening, we will enjoy a private concert featuring the Vienna Supreme Orchestra.

## **DAY 5 VIENNA**

A beautiful city to explore at any time of the year, but wintertime in Vienna is an extra special experience. Exquisitely illuminated with hanging lights of the Christmas markets, Vienna's squares are brimming with culinary treats, handmade gifts, and quaint ornaments. We will explore this beautiful city, with a panoramic tour of the grand boulevard encircling Vienna's historic quarters. From here we will enjoy a traditional 'Fiaker' (horse-drawn carriage) ride through the charming city streets, before sampling the traditional Pirker gingerbread in front of magnificent St Stephen's.

Hofburg Palace has been the heart of power in Vienna since 1279, so naturally it is rich with history that can't be experienced anywhere else. Once the Habsburg's winter residence, this massive palace complex now serves as the workplace and home of the President of Austria. During our visit we'll meet a choir who will provide a short concert of traditional Viennese Christmas folk songs.

After lunch we continue to the Schönbrunn Palace, with a tour included. The palace also provides the perfect backdrop for the Christmas Market and is perhaps the most classically stylish of all the Vienna markets. The exclusive assortment of booths includes traditional handicrafts, pretty Christmas decorations and toys. Sweet, spicy, and hearty temptations are waiting on every corner and enchant the huge square in front of the palace with enticing aromas.

## **DAY 6 VIENNA TO BUDAPEST**

This morning we will visit the Museum of Fine Arts which is the largest art museum in Austria and located right in the heart of the city. Opened to the public in 1891, the main part of the museum's collection is made up of artworks acquired by the Habsburg dynasty. We will also enjoy a trip to the Christmas market situated on Maria-Theresien Platz.

We return to the train for lunch as we wind through whimsical wintery landscapes of Hungary, before arriving at our final stop of Budapest. We stay for two nights at the Four Seasons Gresham Palace.

## **DAY 7 BUDAPEST**

Budapest is an alliance of two cities separated by the River Danube. The old city of Buda and the imposing Royal Palace, dominates the city with stunning views across the Danube to the commercial heart of Pest. Our city tour includes the Royal Palace, St. Mathias Church, and a panoramic view of the city from Gellert Hill. We will also see the Citadel, the Opera House, St Stephen's Cathedral, Heroes Square, and the City Park.

Enjoy the rest of the day at your leisure. Make sure to take the opportunity to stroll through the many Christmas Markets scattered around the city. You may want to visit the historic Great Market Hall with its endless variety of delicious foods and wines or warm up and head to one of the city's famous thermal baths for a rejuvenating Christmas dip.

This evening we enjoy a Farewell Dinner and reflect on the memories made from this wonderful winter escapade across Central Europe.

## **DAY 8 BUDAPEST**

Following breakfast in the hotel you will be transferred to the airport for onward departures.