

TRAIN : The Danube Express

JOURNEY : Eastern Europe Discovery

Eastbound Journey Duration : Upto 12 Days

Day 1 BUDAPEST

On arrivals day in Budapest, you will be met at the airport, train station or river ship landing stage and transferred to the Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace (or similar) for a two-night stay.

Enjoy a welcome reception dinner in the elegant surrounds of this art nouveau landmark, with its panoramic views across the River Danube, where you can meet your fellow travellers on this highly-anticipated journey.

DAY 2 BUDAPEST

Budapest is 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 Castle District, 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 – stroll along the banks of the Danube, visit the historic Great Market Hall with its endless variety of delicious foods and wines or head to one of the city's famous thermal baths for a rejuvenating dip. Alternatively, you can relax at the hotel and indulge in the hotel's luxurious spa with infinity-edge pool or make use of the state-of-the-art fitness centre.

DAY 3 BUDAPEST

This morning in Budapest is at leisure.

We enjoy a drinks reception at Budapest Nyugati station before boarding the Golden Eagle Danube Express for our afternoon departure.

Settle in to your well-appointed private en-suite cabin and later enjoy a Welcome Dinner onboard as the train makes its way to Poland.

DAY 4 KRAKOW

Once a royal capital with an extraordinary history, and now a lively university town with fashionable bars and restaurants, Krakow is a fascinating city with beautiful

monuments and an exuberant atmosphere.

This morning the train makes a scheduled stop at Oswiecim, the station for Auschwitz-Birkenau where we will make a 2-hour visit to the location of the evocative concentration camp and museum. Declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site we embark upon a deeply moving guided tour which stands as a stark reminder of the horrors that took place here. Today, Auschwitz-Birkenau is preserved as a museum allowing visitors to reflect on the atrocities of the Holocaust and learn of the camp's history.

From here we will continue by coach into the centre of stunning Krakow, where we will enjoy lunch overlooking the beautiful Old Town Square. After lunch we will walk the streets of the Old Town including a visit to Wawel Royal Castle, followed by a panoramic tour of the Kazimierz Jewish district.

DAY 5 WARSAW

This morning we arrive to the Polish capital of Warsaw and where we will appreciate the extraordinary transformation of a place once almost destroyed by war. When you cross the Vistula River and look at the Old Town from a distance, you are struck by how unusual the panorama of the city is – skyscrapers rise above the red roofs of the Old Town. Historical buildings blend in harmoniously with modern architecture, and the city surprises us by revealing its second face.

Our guided tour takes us on a journey through the Old Town and along the Royal Route before heading into the area of the former Warsaw Ghetto. The Old Town boasts a nostalgic charm with its colourful townhouses and the exceptional atmosphere of its narrow streets. The Royal Route connects three former residences of Polish rulers: Royal Castle, Royal Lazienki and Wilanów Palace. We finish our morning at Lazienki Royal Park where we enjoy lunch at the Belvedere Restaurant situated in the park.

After lunch we are privileged to present a private Chopin piano recital at one of the historical palaces in the park before returning to the train for dinner.

DAY 6 MALBORK & GDANSK

This morning we visit Malbork whose castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was the seat of the Teutonic State from 1280. Teutonic Knights originally built a fortified monastery here, later known as the Upper Castle. In the 13th century a huge brick fortress was completed and stands overlooking the River Nogat. The museum houses valuable collections of artistic amber wares, old weapons, and military equipment. We return to the train for lunch and continue our journey through Poland towards Gdansk.

The coastal region of Poland has an important place in Polish consciousness as a key location at the start of World War Two in September 1939. This is also where the famous Solidarity independent trade union movement started in 1980 for the

protection of worker's rights, which later became the symbol of resistance against the government and where the fall of Communism in Central Europe began.

We spend the afternoon exploring the waterfront shipbuilding city of Gdansk. Our visit will include a tour of the remarkable European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk, which presents the 20th century history of the political changes leading to the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union.

DAY 7 BERLIN

Whilst enjoying breakfast on board, we will arrive into Berlin for a full day's programme. After years of division, Berlin has risen once again to become one of Europe's most glamorous capital cities, with superb museums, fine churches, wide boulevards, and a thriving cultural life.

You have the choice this morning to see the city either by bicycle or by bus. Both tours include highlights of both East and West Berlin and the Reichstag, the famous Renaissance style building that once again houses Germany's parliament. After the tour we will enjoy lunch with the stunning views of the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag.

This afternoon our *Freedom of Choice* option includes taking in more of the city's sights including the East Side Gallery Berlin Wall memorial with the opportunity to drive a VEB Trabant, your very own authentic East German vehicle. A unique hands-on experience across the once-divided city of Berlin!

For guests not taking the driving experience option, there will be free time this afternoon to explore one of the city's fine museums or take the opportunity for shopping along the elegant Kurfürstendamm boulevard.

DAY 8 DRESDEN & THE ELBE VALLEY

This morning we arrive in the city of Dresden, located in the region of Saxony. Today we leave the city behind to enjoy a visit to nearby Wackerbarth Castle, nestled in the delightful landscapes of the Elbe Valley. The castle has been a by-word for elegant wines, sparkling wines, and Saxon joie de vivre and now presents the 800-year-old tradition of winegrowing in Saxony in its most stylish form. Here we will have a tour of the vineyard and experience a wine tasting where you will be introduced to three of the estate's own wines.

We return to the train for a late lunch as we head to the Czech Republic arriving late afternoon in Prague, where we will enjoy dinner in a local restaurant and have time to wander through the Old Town in the evening.

DAY 9 PRAGUE

Prague is one of the most beautifully preserved cities in Europe. It spans the Vltava River and is dominated by the 9th century Prague Castle, a stunning sight that can be seen almost anywhere in the city. Our tour takes in the Old Town Square with its many historic buildings and Astronomical Clock, the historic 14th century Charles Bridge and the Jewish Quarter.

Lunch will be served overlooking the architectural treasures of this 'City of a Hundred Spires'.

After lunch we join a vintage tram to travel through the city up the hill to Prague Castle and the gothic St. Vitus Cathedral. The castle and its surrounding architectural gems occupy a hillside overlooking the city and river. From here we will take a relaxing cruise up the river Vltava by private boat with cocktails on board.

DAY 10 SALZBURG

Today we explore Salzburg, starting at Mirabell Palace located in the heart of the city. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the baroque 17th 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.

For more than 400 years Hellbrunn Palace has enchanted its visitors with its 'trick' fountains. The idyllic location in the south of Salzburg served as a summer retreat for the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg. Its baroque exterior conceals an exuberant interior made for entertaining, though the real draws are the whimsical trick fountains (Wasserspiele) in the gardens, which spew water from unexpected places.

DAY 11 VIENNA

This morning we enjoy our final breakfast onboard as we leave Salzburg on a majestic morning's journey over the breath-taking Semmering Pass before our lunchtime arrival into Vienna.

A seductive metropolis of elaborate palaces, renowned coffee houses, classical music and enchanting opera, Vienna is a magnificent city which continues to enthrall. Today's programme will allow you to sample the lively Naschmarkt, home to over 100 food and antique stalls, the famous Schönbrunn Palace, or free time to explore yourself. This evening, we will enjoy a private concert at Palais Auersperg, featuring the Vienna Supreme Orchestra.

DAY 12 VIENNA

Following breakfast on the final morning you will be transferred to the airport for onward flight departures. There is also an option to extend your stay in Vienna for additional nights to explore more of this fascinating city.

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