Eastern Europe to the Black Sea

RIVER CRUISE TOUR

Plus optional extensions in

Transylvania; Prague; Vienna, Istanbul

LBS/LBP/LBX/LBN/LBV/LVP 2014

Eastern Europe to the Black Sea
Table of Contents

1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS 3
Passport Required 3
Visa Required for Turkey 4
Visas Not Required 4
No U.S. Passport? 4
Requirements for travel to the Czech Republic—Optional Prague Extension 4
Backup Photocopies 5

2. YOUR HEALTH 6
Keep Your Abilities In Mind 6
Health Check and Inoculations 7
Vaccinations 7

3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS 8
Size, Number and Weight Restrictions 8
Luggage Suggestions 9
Airport Security/TSA 9

4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE 10
GCCL Air Travelers 10
Bucharest Air Routing Information 11
Return flights 11

5. MONEY MATTERS 12
How to Carry Your Money 12
Exchange Services 14
Onboard Ship 14
Currency by Destination 15
Shopping 17
U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges 19
To Tip or Not to Tip 20

6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP 21
In General 21
Packing Your Carry-On 22
Clothing Options 22
Travel Gear Suggestions 22

7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION 25

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY 28
In General 28
Regional Electricity 28
Electricity Onboard 29
Smartphones 29
Cell Phones 30
Phone Calling Cards 30
Photo Gear 30

Your GCCL Program Directors 33
Shore Excursions 33
Onboard Activities 33
Onboard Facilities 35
Ship Specifications 36

10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS 37
During Your Land Excursions & Optional Extensions 37
Budapest in Brief 38
Bucharest in Brief 39
Prague in Brief—Optional Extension 41
Vienna in Brief—Optional Extension 43
Istanbul in Brief—Optional Extension 44

11. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY 48

12. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES 55
Books, Maps, and Movies 55
Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites 60

1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passport Required

You need a passport for this itinerary.

Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

- It should be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- It should have the recommended number of blank pages (see below for details).
- The blank pages must be labeled "Visas" at the top. Pages labeled "Amendments and Endorsements" are not acceptable.

Recommended number of blank pages:
This recommendation is based on a "worst case" scenario. On this trip you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration officials you meet. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we opt for a *better safe than sorry* policy, and we recommend these guidelines:

- **Main trip only**: 7 blank "Visa" pages.
- **Optional extension to Transylvania, Romania:** no additional pages needed.
- **Optional extension to Prague, Czech Republic**: 1 additional page.
- **Optional extension to Istanbul:** 1 additional page.
- **Optional extension to Vienna:** no additional pages needed.

Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If not, you could be refused entry into a country. And if that happens, you might be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense**.

If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:
Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778,** or visit their website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

NOTE: When updating your passport, it is worthwhile to check the prices on all the different services that might apply to you. For example, it might be less expensive to renew your passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.

For your safety and convenience your passport will be taken and held by the hotel manager after embarkation and returned to you on disembarkation day. This is standard ship's procedure when crossing borders and during potential controls in our ports of call.

Visa Required for Turkey

Turkey: U.S. citizens holding a U.S. passport need a visa for entry into Turkey. We recommend obtaining an e-visa in advance through the Turkish government's website to avoid last-minute complications. We will send you the necessary visa application forms, instructions on how to fill them out, and the amount of the visa processing fees approximately 100 days prior to your departure. This information is provided by PVS International, a national passport service that we highly recommend.

NOTE: As of January 2014, the Turkish government announced that they will stop their "on arrival" visa program on April 10, 2014. This means that U.S. citizens who arrive in Turkey on or after April 10 must get their visa in advance.

Visas Not Required

U.S. citizens do not need visas for entry into Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, or Austria.

No U.S. Passport?

Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders: If you are **not** a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. For your convenience, we recommend the services of PVS International. Or contact your local consulate.

PVS International
Passport & Visa Services
1700 N Moore Street
Rosslyn Center, suite 310
Arlington, VA 22209
Telephone: 1-800-556-9990
Website: www.pvsinternational.org

Requirements for travel to the Czech Republic—Optional Prague Extension

You will need to bring along very specific documentation, so please read carefully.
The Czech Republic requires that all travelers be able to provide proof of medical coverage, *if asked*. Not all travelers will be asked—in fact, the practice is becoming less common. If you are asked, however, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

- Be for a minimum of 30,000 Euros (about $40,000 US dollars).
- Cover possible medical expenses and hospitalization charges as a result of accidents or unexpected illness while traveling.
- Be valid while traveling in Schengen countries like the Czech Republic. Schengen countries are the European Union countries that have signed the Schengen Agreement—for example, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, etc.
- Include repatriation to the country of your legal residence or the country that issued your passport. In other words, it must cover the cost of getting you back home if you need to return for medical reasons.

I**f you purchased Grand Circle Travel's comprehensive Travel Protection Plan,** all you'll need to bring is a copy of the coverage from Trip Mate (the plan provider) and a paid *Grand Circle* invoice. A copy of the coverage was provided in your Important Information booklet when you first reserved. (It's the blue and white booklet with the tabs.)

Or if you prefer, you can print out a loose-leaf copy of your coverage. Simply go to our website, www.gct.com, and follow the link at the bottom of the page to Trip Mate. This will direct you to the Grand Circle section of their website, where you can print a copy of your coverage. You can also print a copy of your invoice from our website by logging into your my Account.

If you did *not* purchase Travel Protection with Grand Circle you will need to bring some other form of proof of coverage. If your own health insurance meets the requirements above, contact your insurer for a letter stating that you are covered. A certificate of coverage and proof of purchase from a private insurer or another Travel Protection Plan will also suffice, as long as the requirements listed above are met. *Please note that **Medicare cards are not acceptable**, since Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad.*

Backup Photocopies

The smartest security precaution you can take is to make photocopies of your passport's personal information pages, your air tickets, your traveler's check serial numbers (if you're using them), and your credit cards. Also, bring extra passport-sized photos. Make a list of the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, your travel protection plan company (if you have an optional travel protection plan) and medical emergency network. Keep these documents separate from the originals, and they can save you immeasurable time, money, and trouble if your originals are lost or stolen as you travel. In addition, scan these photocopies and email them to your email address; you can then print out replacement copies if necessary.

2. YOUR HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities In Mind

We've worked closely with our local Program Directors and regional associates to identify the aspects of this adventure that you should be aware of, from physical requirements to cultural factors. **Please carefully review the information below prior to departing on this trip.**

Pacing

- 13 days, with 10 nights aboard a private Grand Circle river ship, and a single 1-night hotel stay
- Return flights to U.S. often require departing from ship or hotel in early morning

Physical Requirements

- 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 throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities

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 within a short period of time

Terrain

- Travel over diverse terrain and uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slippery in wet or colder conditions

Transportation

- Travel by 49-passenger coach and 140- to 164-passenger river ship

River Cruising

- Meals will be based on local and international cuisine
- Meals onboard feature a variety of entrée options, including vegetarian

Program Directors

- We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience

Health Check and Inoculations

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential if you want to fully enjoy your trip abroad. Please be aware that this program features a fair amount of walking up and down inclines in towns with uneven or cobblestone streets and at river ports with old-style wooden piers without modern ramps. For your comfort and safety, we recommend this program only to individuals in good physical condition. If you have any doubts, please discuss them with your doctor, and follow his or her advice. If you have difficulty walking or are wheelchair-bound, please consider a different Grand Circle Cruise Line vacation. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling. You may want to have a dental exam before your trip.

If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition. If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your cruise. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name.

Vaccinations

Check with the CDC: To ensure you receive any needed vaccinations we suggest that you check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for your destination. You can contact them at:

Online — if you have access to the Internet, we suggest you visit the CDC's website at **www.cdc.gov/travel**, where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.

By phone— at the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

Consult your doctor: After checking the CDC's recommendations we strongly suggest that you consult your family physician (at least 6 weeks prior to departure) concerning any vaccinations or medications that you may need on this trip. At the time of print there were no specific vaccinations required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS
Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current **standard** is **50lbs for checked bags** and **15 lbs for carry-on bags**.
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (*length+width+depth*). Generally, **62 linear inches is the checked bag limit**; **carry-on limit is 45 linear inches**.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Both extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights. **Note**: Enforcement of published restrictions by countries and airlines is a matter of governmental and corporate policy. Enforcement may include spot checks and may be inconsistently applied. Expect penalties and fines to be imposed immediately, however, when and if enforced. Before you choose to ignore the published restrictions you should ask: *Do I feel lucky?* And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.	

Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?
Absolutely, confirm current restrictions about a week or so before your departure. You should take this step no matter if your vacation has a lower limit then the average international flight or not, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section.

You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage, even on international flights. Others may charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are not included in your trip price**; they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the "Air Travel" section of your *Important Information* booklet.

Luggage Suggestions

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your checked luggage. Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

Consider a daypack or small backpack as your carry-on bag. It will do double duty during excursions and walking trips. A daypack leaves your hands free and distributes its weight onto your back. Packed with daily travel needs (sweater, camera, rain/wind jacket, water bottle, etc.), it will compress to fit the storage space of foreign motorcoaches, and yet still have room for an impulse buy at a local street market.

Tip**:** *Bring a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home – but remember that you may incur extra luggage fees. If you're traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing," i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*

Airport Security/TSA

Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage may change. To avoid inadvertently packing restricted items in your carry-on, we suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website at www.tsa.gov/public, which keeps a current list of restricted items. From the main website click on *Our Travelers*, then *Air Travel*, and then you will see a link for *Prohibited Items*.

Liquids and your carry on: Follow the **TSA's 3-1-1 rule**: Liquids must be in a 3.4 ounce or less (100ml) bottle (by volume); all bottles must be in a 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag; 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin. One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. The 3.4 ounce (100ml) container size is a security measure. Note that this rule is used increasingly throughout the world.

Locking your luggage:
To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, *either* do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. *or* use TSA-approved locks. (These are locks that TSA screeners can open and relock with a special tool, avoiding damage to your luggage or lock if a physical inspection is required. Look for the words "TSA" or "TSA-approved" on the lock's packaging.) Outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend that you lock your luggage as a preventative measure against theft.

4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE

GCCL Air Travelers

U.S. Departure: If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, a GCCL Airport Representative will assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. The Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

Arrival: A GCCL Representative will meet you at the airport **after you exit Customs** and escort you to a private motorcoach for your transfer to the pier or hotel. (Due to airport security measures your GCCL Representative cannot have access to the Immigration or Customs areas, so you will need to clear both on your own). If you cannot identify the GCCL representative upon arrival, please go to the meeting point indicated in the airport. A GCCL representative will be there to assist you as soon as possible.

Important note: *Airport porters are NOT allowed in the customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a complimentary cart, which you then will move through customs. When you exit the airport building, your motorcoach driver will load your luggage onto your motorcoach.*

Delays *Do* Happen – Despite the Best of Plans. In the event your flight is delayed or you miss a connection and must be re-booked, please remember to let Grand Circle know by calling the emergency number provided in your final documents so that we can make appropriate arrangements for your arrival.

U.S. Return: At the end of your cruise or post-cruise extension, you'll be transferred to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCCL Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Please remember to wear your Grand Circle Cruise Line nametag when you return to the U.S., so that you are readily identifiable as a GCCL traveler.

Please note: *If you plan on booking your own international flights or arranging with our air department to arrive/depart on an earlier/later date than standard for your program, airport transfers will NOT be included in your program price. Transfers must be purchased separately, as an optional add-on, and are subject to availability. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Traveler Support team at 1-800-321-2835. For more information, please see your Important Information booklet.*

Flying with a Travel Companion

If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

Lost or Delayed Luggage
Unfortunately, it is possible that the airlines may lose or delay your checked luggage, but luckily most luggage is recovered within 24 hours. Should this happen to you, please report the loss immediately to the airlines; they will not accept a claim after you have left the airport. It will be the airline's responsibility to track your luggage and see that it is delivered to you. Your Program Director can assist you with reporting the loss and with staying in touch with the airlines, but please understand that as the legal owner of the suitcase most airlines will want to work with you directly.

To minimize complications due to lost or delayed luggage, we recommend packing a spare change of clothing in your carry-on luggage. Also, when traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing", i.e. packing some of your outfits into your companion's checked luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.

Bucharest Air Routing Information

Because Romania remains a largely undiscovered tourist destination, air service between the U.S. and Bucharest is limited. As a result, your U.S. flight to or from Bucharest (depending on your itinerary selection) may not be direct and may require a layover of between one and five hours, according to airline schedules.

Return flights

Please note that, on the day of your return flight to the U.S., you may have a wake-up call very early in the morning. Most international flights, including flights direct to the U.S. and connecting through other European cities, depart Eastern Europe at or before 7 am.

5. MONEY MATTERS

How to Carry Your Money

The European financial infrastructure is as developed and modern as America's – sometimes even better developed. Currencies vary and banks have different names, but most are allied with global institutions and offer the same services you use daily. You can expect to have ready access to ATMs (to get local currency from your account), to have major credit cards accepted at most popular tourist sites, restaurants, and major stores, and to exchange US dollars for local currencies. There will be localized exceptions and perhaps some limitations on availability and amounts, and don't forget the fees. However, a little forethought can make juggling currencies a fairly painless process.

While there is no need to obtain local currency before your trip, many travelers do exchange $50 to $100 or so into the currency of their first destination. This can smooth your arrival should you run into closed banks/exchanges or broken ATMs. Otherwise, rely on a mix of credit/debit cards and ATM use (for ready access to cash) as the best way to manage your money as you travel. U.S. cash should be mixed into the blend, but it's wise to minimize how much you carry. Just as at home, carrying large amounts of cash can be risky. It's generally wise to have spending money in the local currency rather than to rely on American dollars.

You can exchange money at banks, some hotels, and money exchange offices (to do so, you'll likely need your passport). Be aware, however, that torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills will ***not*** be accepted for exchange. **New** (in terms of use *and* issue date – post 2004) and large bills ($100) will *usually* be accepted by banks and onboard ships; **old** $100 bills (again, in age and condition) will ***not*** be accepted. Money in smaller denominations is much more universally accepted, but even there, new bills are preferred. Note that U.S. currency is not an accepted form of currency in Europe. Your Program Director will advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our website select the region and then click on the country you'll be visiting. A link to the currency converter is included in the menu on the page of each individual country.

Traveler's checks—not recommended: We urge you not to rely on traveler's checks for your personal expenses. They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

U.S. dollars have an advantage over traveler's checks. Cash is more readily exchanged and accepted, and sometimes commands a better exchange rate.

Credit Cards

Though major American credit cards (American Express, Visa, and MasterCard) are accepted abroad, always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase. It is also wise to notify your credit card company that you will be using your cards abroad so that they may remove any security block. When using a major credit card you may receive a different exchange rate than if you pay with cash; inquire about the rate first. Please be aware that credit cards might not be accepted for small purchases or in some restaurants or stores. Note that the Discover credit card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. Keep your receipts in case you have questions about the conversion or exchange rate. Also, keep your receipts as proof of purchase for items to be shipped home.

***TIP**: Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company or bank that you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure.*

You should also double-check what phone number you should call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1-800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

IMPORTANT NOTE: European countries have been phasing in a new type of credit card technology, called a "smartcard" or a "chip-and-PIN" card. These cards have an embedded computer chip instead of a magnetized strip, and the card owner authorizes a purchase by entering a four digit numerical PIN (Personal Identification Number) instead of signing a slip. Some businesses in Europe have already switched to the new system completely; some can process both smartcards and regular cards; and some haven't switched at all.

This new technology is not common in the U.S., so occasionally there may be machines that can't read U.S. cards. Or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. Although it is not common for U.S. credit cards to have PINs (and some providers will not even be able to provide one at all), requesting one prior to your departure is recommended. In some shops you will still be able to sign a slip as usual if you inform the vendor at the point of sale. And if the shop in question requires a smartcard, you can always try a different form of payment, like a debit card or cash. (U.S. debit cards usually have a PIN, so sometimes they work when credit cards don't.) Since there is no way to predict in advance what each shop will do, we recommend that you bring more than one type of payment when you go shopping. For example, a mix of a couple different credit cards, a debit or ATM card, and some cash is ideal—you'll be prepared for anything.

Debit cards: Debit cards are very popular in Europe, and are widely accepted, but will *almost always* require a PIN. Many U.S. banks offer a combined ATM and debit card. Check your ATM card, and if it has a Visa or a MasterCard logo, ask your bank if it can be used as a debit card in Europe. (If there's no logo, then you probably can't use it as a debit card, but your bank will know for certain). If it can be used as a debit card, all you'll need is the same PIN you use at the ATM.

ATMs
When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account, and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits.

Note on ATM use: Many banks have begun imposing a fee ranging from $1 to $5 every time you use an ATM in a foreign city. You may want to limit the number of withdrawals that you make. Your Program Director/Hospitality Desk Representative can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.

Exchange Services

Onboard ship we will break down or change larger U.S. bills into smaller ones (for example, one U.S. $50 bill into U.S. $20, $10, $5, and $1 bills), and change U.S. currency into Euros (for example U.S. $20 into Euro €*XX* — depending on exchange rate). This service is available only for the Euro & U.S. dollar currencies. The daily exchange is **limited to a maximum of U.S. $50 per person**. You can exchange larger amounts at local banks in port towns.

Onboard Ship

Two separate bills will be issued:

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for onboard purchases (drinks at the bar, gift shop purchases, laundry, etc) and is calculated in Euros. You may pay for your shipboard account via credit/debit cards (American Express, MasterCard, and Visa are accepted,) **or** via cash. If you use cash, either Euros or U.S. dollars are accepted

  Note: If you pay with a credit or debit card, you will need to sign a receipt and/or supply a PIN number, depending on the card account requirements (onboard sales terminals accept both.) *Personal checks or Discover card are **NOT** accepted.*

- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for optional tours taken during the trip; it is calculated in U.S. dollars. You may only pay for your optional tour account using credit/debit cards (American Express, MasterCard, and Visa are accepted.)

  Note: Debit cards with MasterCard or Visa logos are accepted for optional tour payments, however the card must allow you to sign for purchases—you will not be able to enter a PIN. You will need to sign an optional tour form as proof of payment. *Cash, Personal checks, PIN-only debit cards, or Discover card are **NOT** accepted.*

Please note: Shipboard and optional tour account payments made by credit card may take up to 3 months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, you will not need a PIN for this payment, but the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "**OPT Boston**" (depending on your credit card company).

Currency by Destination

Hungary

The official currency of Hungary is the forint (ft), made up of 100 fillers. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 500, 1000, 5000, 10,000, and 20,000 forints
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 200 forints

***Note**: Banknotes of all denominations are printed in the same size and they are sometimes similar in color. It's very easy, therefore, to mistake one bill for another. Please pay attention to the numerical value of each bill in your hand every time you make a cash transaction.*

Also note that the 1 and 2 forint coins ceased to be legal tender in 2008. The 200 Forint bill is not accepted except at banks for exchange.

Banking Hours: Banking hours may vary between seasons, but generally banks are open 8 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday. It is more economical to change your money at a bank rather than at your hotel, as the bank's exchange rate is better. Many banks will charge a 1-2% fee for exchanging foreign money. You may be able to get a better rate by using your ATM card, so check with your bank at home before you depart.

Romania

Romania's official currency is the leu (plural lei), and 1 leu = 100 bani. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 1, 5, 10, 50, 100, 200 and 500
- Coins: 1, 5, 10, 20, and 50 bani

The Czech Republic

Czech legal tender is the Czech crown or koruna (CZK.), divided into 100 hellers or haler. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000, and 5000 CZK.
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 CZK.

Note that coinage below the crown (i.e. hellers) as well as the 50 CZK note are no longer in circulation. The Czech Republic is preparing to merge into the Eurozone (in 2020) and you'll find many places in the larger cities accept Euros with no problem. Prices given in CZK and hellers – i.e. Kr. 36.70 – will be rounded to the nearest crown.

Banking Hours: In the Czech Republic, banks are typically open 9 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday. It is more economical to change your money at a bank rather than at your hotel, as the bank's exchange rate is better.

Bulgaria

The Lev is the official currency of Bulgaria. Lev banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 Leva
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 stotinki; 1 Lev

Banking hours: Hours vary from bank to bank. Generally banks are open 9 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday; some banks close for lunch between noon and 1:30 pm. On Saturday, certain branches are also open 9 am – noon (except during July and August). Exchange offices usually are open on Saturdays until 6:00pm.

Austria

The Euro is the official currency of Austria. Euro-banknotes and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: €5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500;
- Coins: €1 and 2 denominations as well as 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents.

Banking hours: Generally banks are open 8 am – 12 noon and 2:30 pm - 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

Turkey

The Turkish lira (TL) is the official currency of Turkey. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 TL
- Coins: 1, 5, 10, 25, 50 kurus and 1 TL

U.S. dollars can *sometimes* be used in Turkey. Some businesses in Turkey will accept U.S. dollars; more will accept euros. This is most common in places/business that cater to tourists. Accepting euros and U.S. dollars is legal, but since they are not the official currency of Turkey, the businesses that accept them can do so on their own terms. This means that they may set their own exchange rate and might not be able or willing to make change for large bills. Generally, you'll be better off using Turkish lira for everyday use, and using euros or U.S. dollars as a backup

Use all your local currency while in Turkey. Turkish liras are worth a lot less outside the country, up to 20% less, so you won't want to take them with you.

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip, though you can if you'd like (since exchange fees may be high in the U.S., change only enough to hold you over for the first few days.) You can change money at banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices. Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills may not be accepted.

Banking Hours

Banks are generally open from 8:30 am to noon and 1:30 to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. They charge a commission—usually 1% to 3% per exchange for traveler's checks. For cash exchanges, you'll get more for your U.S. dollar at one of the privately owned exchange offices. They offer a better exchange rate for cash than banks do. Look for the **DOVIZ** sign.

Shopping

There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during stops at local shops or markets, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. **Grand Circle Cruise Line cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.** If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price. In many countries, there are ways to receive a refund on the VAT (value added tax) that is built into the price of an item. Usually this is available at larger chain shops or for larger purchases; it may entail filling out forms with the shop. Please check with your Program Director or the shop.

By Destination

Budapest

Budapest's main shopping area is Vaci Utca (in Pest's Inner City) and its side streets. Here you will find Hungary's exquisite Herend porcelain, cut glass, fine peasant embroidery and needlework, homespun cloth, carpets, charming carved wood objects and, of course, dolls in national dress. Other excellent buys are recordings of classical and folk music. Prices are fixed (no bargaining).

If you want to see how the locals shop, visit either the Central Market (Vasarcsarnok) on Vamhaz Korut, or one of the large department stores, like the Corvin Nagyaruhaz in Rakoczi Ut (on Blaha Lujza Square), the Skala-Metro (on Nyugati Square opposite the Nyugati Railway Station), and West End City Center (behind the station). Most stores open between 9 and 10 am and close at 6 pm. On Saturdays they close at 1 pm.

Bucharest

Bucharest is renowned for its hand-woven carpets, which can be purchased from several authorized retailers in the city. For real bargains consider crystal, porcelain, ceramics, and china, of which good-quality items can be purchased at relatively low prices in local shops, particularly in the Lipscani district. Local arts and crafts can be purchased at Artizanat stores that specialize in dolls, masks, and embroidered objects made by local craftspeople.

The giant department store Unirea Shopping Center is a leftover from the days of communism, when everything was sold under one roof, and it is worth a look. The main food market in Bucharest is Piata Amzei. It is a bustling marketplace where the locals shop for cheeses, fruits, fishes, and meats.

Prague

Antiques are a lure, and the small shops in Prague delight the collector and window-shopper alike. Basically all antiquities are available for sale except for religious items and items protected by the state (legally listed as cultural monuments). The shop should provide you with accurate information concerning those specific items.

Many shops sell a wide range of crafts and tourist goods, such as Bohemian glass, porcelain, fine quality records, crystal, peasant pottery, wooden toys, and folk carvings; as well as imported goods from the West, including liquor, cigarettes, and everything from tools to transistor radios. Modern arts and crafts are sold at private art galleries.

Long store hours facilitate shopping. Shops are open Monday to Friday, from 8 or 9 am to 6 pm; and Saturdays from 9 am to 1 pm. Shopping malls, shopping centers, and galleries are open Monday through Sunday from 9 am to 8 pm. The majority of supermarkets are also open seven days a week, from 7 am to 7 pm. TESCO stores are open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Vienna

Best buys: Popular buys include glassware, crystal, porcelain, petit point, musical instruments and scores, fur hats, ski wear, and, of course, lederhosen (leather pants), loden-cloth coats, and Sachertorte (chocolate cake). But be forewarned: the quality of Austrian wares is exceptionally high, and so are the prices! The main shopping area in Vienna is around Kaernter Strasse, Graben, and Kohlmarkt; most department stores are on Mariahilferstrasse.

Store hours: Major department stores do business from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday through Saturday. Small shops and boutiques often close on Saturday afternoon.

VAT: In Austria, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 10%-30%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked *Tax Free Shopping* stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or your Program Director for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special *Global Tax Refund* Forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

Turkey

Fashionable clothes can be bought relatively inexpensively, as Turkey has a booming cotton industry. Turkish carpets and flat woven *kilims* (Turkish village rugs) can be found almost anywhere—the design corresponds to the area in which it was made; each region has its own specialty. You'll also find many wonderful items made with hard-beaten copper or brass: samovars, pots, pans, cauldrons, and more. Other crafts for purchase include ornate Meerschaum pipes; green or gold onyx bowls, vases and ornaments; gold jewelry; lace-edged scarves; and beautifully embroidered cotton blouses. Leather shoes, bags, cushions, jackets, skirts, vests, hats, gloves, and trousers are also good buys. Don't be afraid to haggle—the shop owners expect it and often you can get items down to a very reasonable price over a glass or two of tea.

Store hours: Smaller shops are open Monday through Saturday, 9 am to 6 or 7 pm, and closed on Sunday. This includes the Grand Bazaar and the Spice (Egyptian) Market in Istanbul. Larger shopping malls in major cities—such as Istanbul and Ankara—are open Monday through Sunday from 10 am to 9 pm.

Value Added Tax: A Value Added Tax, called *Katma Deger Vergisi*, or *KDV* in Turkish, is included in the price of many goods and services in Turkey. This tax is not added to your bill; it is already figured into the prices quoted to you. If you buy some big-ticket items in Turkey, such as a leather coat or Turkish carpet, you can recover the 8% or 18% *KDV* if the purchase was made in an authorized shop. To obtain the refund, you must have your purchase receipt stamped by a Customs officer when you leave the country. Within 20 days after your departure from Turkey, you must mail your stamped receipt back to the shopkeeper (so make sure you have the shop's mailing address), who will then either send you a refund check (if you paid cash) or issue a credit to your charge card (make certain your credit card number is clearly marked on your purchase receipt).

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **www.cbp.gov** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511.**

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is $800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than $800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S**. Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the *export* duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the *import* duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

Problem with a Purchase?

The best way to address a problem with a purchase is to not have one in the first place! So don't forget to examine merchandise before paying for it, check contracts or agreements before signing, and review your receipt before leaving the shop. For major purchases, don't hesitate to ask in advance about the return policy—local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up.

But what if you do discover an issue with an item later on? In that case, your best recourse is to contact the vendor directly. For this reason we recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. due to delays in communication, the complexities of international shipping/customs duties, and even cultural differences in how business is conducted.

To Tip or Not to Tip

Sometimes *that* is the question. Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. For those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

Shipboard: Shipboard gratuities to the cruise personnel are not included in the cost of your Cruise Tour. The ships' tipping guidelines recommend a flat tip of $10-$12 U.S. per person, per day, which will be pooled among all cruise staff. For your convenience tips for the crew can be paid with a credit card.

GCCL Program Director: It is customary at the end of your trip to express a personal "Thank You" to the Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director assigned to your group, especially if he/she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend $4-$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for our Program Directors can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated.

Tours & Excursions: During your vacation, you have the opportunity to participate in Included and Optional Tours. Please note that Optional Tours can only be paid with a credit card. A tip to your motorcoach driver (and local tour guide, if one accompanies the tour) is customary, and the following are the suggested amounts: $2 per person for each half-day tour, $3 per person for each full-day tour.

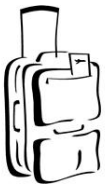
Shipboard: Gratuities to cruise personnel are not included. The ships' tipping guidelines recommend a flat tip of $10-$12 U.S. per person, per day, which will be pooled among all cruise staff. For your convenience tips for the crew can be paid with a credit card.

Port Stops & Land Stays—Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Croatia: During your port stops and land stays, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. Unless service charges are included in your bill, we suggest you leave bartenders and waiters about 5-10% of the check. Taxi drivers already charge foreigners higher "tourist fares," so an additional tip is not necessary (it's often better to take a taxi ordered by the concierge). <u>In these countries, it is acceptable (and welcomed) to tip in U.S. dollars</u>. You might want to bring a supply of U.S. $1 bills for tipping purposes.

Hotels: For your hotel housekeeping staff, if you want to give something extra, a tip worth about $1 per day is sufficient.

Turkey: During the times that you explore independently, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. Some restaurants will automatically add a service charge (*servis ucreti*) of 10% or 15% to your bill. If service is included, the bill may say "service included" (*servis dahil*). Oddly enough, this does not absolve you from the tip. The service charge goes either to the owner (patron) or to the maitre'd. If you choose to tip, leave 10% of the food bill on the table for the waiter, or hand it directly to him or her. Round off taxi fares. If the meter says 5,80 TL, give the driver 6 TL (the minimum fare is 2.70 TL). Turks don't tip taxi drivers unless the driver has performed some exceptional service.

6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP



In General

Travel light. A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe—yet keep your luggage light—we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated pants and shirts, skirts and blouses, or pantsuits that can be mixed to create different outfits.

If you like to hand wash your clothes, consider bringing items made of synthetics, a cotton-synthetic blend, or other material that will dry out overnight. You may also buy clothing designed especially for travel. Also, when traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing", i.e. packing some of your outfits into your companion's checked luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.

Pack casual clothes. Comfortable, low-key apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations and aboard ship. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses and skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes are recommended. Remember that for motorcoach tours and transfers, you may want loose-fitting clothes that are comfortable to sit in for extended periods plus an extra layer in case the coach is chilly. Don't forget to bring appropriate attire for any sports or relaxation activities in which you plan to participate (swimming, jogging, fitness walking, etc.). At dinner, you will not need to don "dressy" clothing; men do not need a tie or jacket and women do not require fancy dresses or high-heeled shoes. You may want one or two "smart casual" outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.

Style hint: Please keep in mind that in this part of Europe it is considered disrespectful to wear shorts, short skirts, or transparent tops when visiting a religious building. Some churches may even refuse entry to travelers in shorts, but casual pants or longer skirts are acceptable.

Bring warm clothing. In early spring, fall, and winter, be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season. In March or November, evenings may even fall into the 30s. Evenings call for a warm outfit and a heavy sweater or jacket. A sturdy windproof shell over a heavy sweatshirt, sweater, or fleece top is ideal for being out on deck at night. For warmer conditions, a mixture of cotton sweaters, sweatshirts, long-sleeved shirts, summery tops, pants, skirts, and walking shorts is recommended.

Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions. On land excursions, dress in layers. You can then easily adjust to any temperature shifts by removing or adding a layer. For possible showers, take a folding travel umbrella and/or rain hat. A waterproof jacket with a hood is ideal. No matter the season, layers are also key for travel by public transportation or for visits to museums and cultural sites, because there may be drafts or the air-conditioning may be chilly.

Good walking shoes are critical. This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. Supportive, waterproof sports shoes are ideal for daytime shore excursions. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. Bring five to seven pairs of socks. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. **Aboard ship, you'll want flat, non-slip shoes with rubber soles.**

Day excursions: On days that include full or half-day bus excursions, please remember to bring drinking water and any needed medications with you.

Packing Your Carry-On

Using a daypack as a carry-on bag for your flights is a smart solution. We **strongly urge** you to pack your carry-on with at least one full change of clothes, your camera gear, medications, changes of socks and underwear, your important travel documents, and other irreplaceable items, in case your checked bags go astray. Store camera gear and important papers in plastic bags to protect them from dirt and moisture. With a daypack you can then remove these items on arrival and load your bag with the gear you'll need on walking tours and excursions.

Clothing Options

The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.

Travel Gear Suggestions

Though it's often fun to do things as the locals do, it can be frustrating when daily necessities or conveniences from home aren't available. To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical constraints of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a transfer motorcoach, a small ship or a day-long trek on a camel. You'll have to distinguish between what you **must** have, what you'd *like* to have, whether you can zip your suitcase closed, and what you can reasonably expect to wrestle through airport hallways and security checkpoints. Consult the following items to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions over borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage.

Do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Also avoid packing glass bottles; use plastic containers instead. Leave at home checkbooks and any credit cards not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose. For more packing and luggage tips, you might want to visit **www.travelite.org**.

Cabin amenities include: shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer, liquid soap, body lotion, shower cap, washcloth, and towels. We have still mentioned some of these items in the checklists below, in case you have preferred brands you want to bring with you on your cruise.

Consider …

- ❑ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- ❑ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ❑ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ❑ Travel money bag or money belt
- ❑ Extra passport-sized photos
- ❑ Moisturizer, lip balm
- ❑ Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- ❑ Pocket-size tissues
- ❑ Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- ❑ Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb
- ❑ Compact umbrella
- ❑ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards (as well the originals)

Other Gear

- ❑ Travel alarm
- ❑ Compact binoculars
- ❑ Toiletry bag with hook and pockets
- ❑ Washcloth
- ❑ Basic sewing kit
- ❑ Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- ❑ Handkerchiefs
- ❑ Electrical transformer & plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” below
- ❑ Reading materials
- ❑ Travel journal/note pad
- ❑ Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or a whirlpool
- ❑ Home address book
- ❑ Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- ❑ Phrase book
- ❑ Water bottle for land excursions
- ❑ Collapsible walking staff
- ❑ Pocket calculator for exchange rates
- ❑ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger (summer)
- ❑ Insect repellent with DEET (summer)

Medicines

- ❑ Your own prescription medicines
- ❑ Vitamins
- ❑ Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- ❑ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ❑ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ❑ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ❑ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ❑ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ❑ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

We can't predict the weather you'll have on your travels – our local weathermen are lucky to get tomorrow right! So, as your departure nears, it's a great idea to visit the My Account feature of www.gct.com for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites (www.wunderground.com is very comprehensive) and tweak your wardrobe accordingly. You'll find historical averages and general information on local climates below – but, given recent weather extremes, it's even more important to consult up-to-the-minute resources.

Austria (Vienna–optional extension): This country has a central European climate: variable weather reigns, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Afternoons average about 60°F during early spring, and about 70°F later in the season. Summers are typically sunny and warm, though you should be prepared for a few cloudy and wet days. Evenings can get quite chilly too. Autumn weather comes early to this region of the world, so by November it can be on the brisk side, with daytime temperatures in the mid to high 40s, and evenings that dip into the 30s.

Bulgaria: The climate of Bulgaria is temperate continental, with very warm summers, cold winters, and four distinct seasons. Spring and fall are quite comfortable but can bring rainy days. The regions in southern Bulgaria feel a Mediterranean influence, and winters here are milder. Winters are also somewhat warmer along the coast of the Black Sea, although winds blowing down from Russia can chill the area. But during the summer the coast of the Black Sea enjoys more moderate temperatures than inland Bulgaria and pleasant breezes from the coast. Cities along the Danube, like Ruse and Vidin, have hot summers and cold winters, plus humidity can be quite high.

Croatia: The climate of Croatia varies depending on whether you are on the coast or inland. Along the coast of the Adriatic Sea and on the offshore islands, the climate is rather Mediterranean, with warm, sunny summers and mild winters. Inland, the climate is typically Eastern European, with warm summers and cold winters. Much of inland Croatia is either hilly or mountainous, and the winter snows will linger much longer at the higher elevations. Because the area we visit on this trip is inland, summers can get very hot and early spring, fall, and winter can be quite chilly.

Czech Republic (optional extension): The climate of the Czech Republic is similar to that of Austria and Germany, but is perhaps a bit cooler in all seasons. In spring, variable weather reigns: some years it's warm, in others it's cool. Summer days can still be brisk, though there are spells of very warm weather. Temperatures start to fall in early autumn, and winter weather begins settling in by mid-October. In general, you can expect spring temperatures to average in the low 60s, summer in the low 70s, and fall in the 50s. The daily weather in the Czech Republic is especially unpredictable—it is common to experience sun, rain, and wind all in the same day.

Hungary: The country of Hungary is completely landlocked, and its inland position cuts it off from the moderating influence of the Atlantic Ocean. Seasonal weather, consequently, is more prone to extremes. Summers can be very hot and winters absolutely frigid. If you're traveling during the peak of summer, be prepared for some high temperatures, though it could also be comfortable and pleasant. As fall approaches, some days may be on the cool side, but stints of warm weather still occur; by late October, the air is usually brisk, and evenings chilly.

Romania (optional extension): Romania's climate is temperate, with few extreme weather conditions. Mid-summer is generally quite hot, especially in the lowlands, where summer is usually dry. Spring and fall bring delightful, sunny days and comfortable temperatures. The mountains receive more precipitation than the Danube delta, with brief showers and occasional thunderstorms in the Carpathians. Winters bring cold temperatures and abundant snowfall, along with a cold wind known as the *crivat* that blows from Russia. Summer temperatures in Bucharest can reach into the 90s. During your stay in Sinaia, a mountain pass town, temperatures can fluctuate by 40 degrees or more. It can be in the upper 70s in the afternoon in July and August … but the ***average*** high is around 50 degrees.

Serbia: Serbia has varied weather within three climatic areas. The Adriatic-Mediterranean climate near the coast is the warmest and mildest, with long, hot summers and short, rainy winters. A continental climate prevails on the Pannonian plain and central hills, with warm and dry summers and moderately cold and snowy winters. The third climate zone includes the higher altitudes, which have a mountainous climate, with short summers and very cold, snow-filled winters. Summers in Belgrade can be very hot, with temperatures in the 90s and high humidity.

Istanbul (optional extension): Situated in the Marmara region, Istanbul tends to be hot and slightly humid in high summer (late July to early September), with very little cloudy weather or rain and temperatures in the 70s or 80s. From May to early July, and again from late September to November, the weather tends to be moderate, with some rain but mostly clear days and pleasant temperatures in the 60s and 70s. In the winter (mid-December to mid-March) it's rainy and cold, with some snow; average afternoon temperatures are in the low 40s.

Weather Conditions and River Depths

Throughout the river cruise season, weather conditions affect river depths, and water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary. When river depths rise or fall during your River Cruise, Grand Circle Cruise Line Cruise Line will be required to adjust your itinerary for your safety and to adhere to the current governmental and nautical requirements. Though we strive to adhere to our planned itinerary, we may not always be able to follow it exactly as planned. Therefore the sequence of ports visited and the days on which included features and optional tours occur may vary.

Here is the data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations:

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?

***Average* highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.**

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Bucharest, Romania										
High	50	62	72	79	82	82	75	63	47	38
Low	33	42	51	58	60	59	52	43	33	27
Belgrade, Serbia (the former Yugoslavia)										
High	54	64	74	79	84	84	75	65	52	42
Low	39	47	55	60	64	64	56	48	40	32
Budapest, Hungary										
High	51	60	70	75	79	79	71	59	45	38
Low	35	41	51	56	59	59	52	43	34	28
Osijek (for Vukovar), Croatia										
High	52	59	69	75	79	77	72	60	46	39
Low	38	45	54	60	62	61	55	45	36	31
Sinaia, Transylvania (optional extension)										
High	23	30	39	45	49	50	42	37	28	32
Low	12	20	29	35	39	39	32	26	18	12
Vienna, Austria (optional extension)										
High	50	61	70	75	80	80	70	60	47	40
Low	38	46	55	59	63	64	57	48	39	33
Prague, Czech Republic (optional extension)										
High	46	54	64	69	72	73	65	54	41	36
Low	32	36	45	51	54	53	48	39	32	28
Istanbul, Turkey (optional extension)										
High	51	60	69	78	82	82	76	67	57	50
Low	40	47	54	62	66	67	61	55	47	42

Please note: The data cited here reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. A 60 degree ***average*** high temperature means that days may be as warm as 80 or as cool as 40 – but it's most likely you'll encounter temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range.

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY

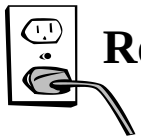
In General

Smartphone, tablet, digital camera/camcorder, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't exist even five years ago. The usefulness of digital devices is enormous: smartphones can keep you connected and offer up-to-the-minute information via your cell plan or a local Wi-Fi connection. With a tablet (or smartphone) you can store multiple country guidebooks, access maps and connect to the internet in a small, lightweight device. (***Tip****: you can download* ***this*** *document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader, many of which can display PDF files.)*

Compact and lightweight, digital camcorders and cameras take high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit. For robust use a laptop may be effective; for occasional use it's wiser to rely on Internet cafes or a tablet and hotel Internet access rather than shoulder the heft and size of a laptop.

To use these devices you should first consider the services available at your destinations. You'll encounter a range of electrical standards, varied plug configurations to access the local current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and differing technological standards.

You'll need to assess your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices. Finally, it's smart to read the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, power and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. Thorough preparation is the best guarantee that your devices will work up to their potential.



Regional Electricity

The standard U.S. electrical system — 110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system — is rare elsewhere. The overwhelming choice for the rest of the world is 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple receptacles, while others won't. Europe is largely standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. We suggest that you bring *dual* voltage appliances (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances are inexpensive and need only plug adapters.

If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) in addition to plug adapters. Regional transformer/adapter kits can often be found at hardware or online stores but transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave those larger items at home.

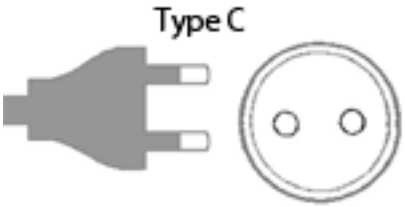
Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Turkey all use the Type C "*Europlug*" and receptacles (Types C & F) that accommodate, and use 230 V and 50 Hz current.

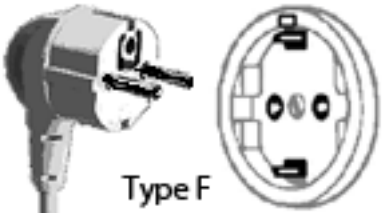
Electricity Onboard

River Aria, Adagio and Concerto

Cabin bathrooms are equipped with an 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with European-style outlets.

Please note: On all ships, a limited number of transformers and adapter plugs are available at the ship's reception desk for occasional use. If you need these items for the duration of the cruise, we recommend you bring your own.





Even though you'll only need a Type C and F plug adapters on this trip, it may be a good idea to invest in an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, this item will ensure that you are prepared for your current trip as well as future vacations. If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, and MP3 player for instance – it's also handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressor and USB-style port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without the use of device-specific plugs.

Smartphones

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

Cell Phones

If you want to use a standard cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check with your service provider (www.verizon.com, www.t-mobile.com etc.) to see if your phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you're better off renting an international phone. The websites www.travelcell.com and www.globalcellularrental.com have good information on rentals. Or, consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

Phone Calling Cards

If you don't carry a phone, you can use a prepaid calling card to call the U.S. with minimal additional charges. Besides the prepaid long distance charges, you might have a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at a hotel. Check with the reception desk prior to using it to avoid unexpected charges.

Calling cards purchased locally are usually less expensive than those purchased in the U.S. and are more likely to work with the local system. Note that dialing a U.S. 1-800 number outside the continental United States will incur costly long distance fees, since 1-800 does not work outside the U.S.

Photo Gear

For many people, capturing the highlights of their travel experiences in photographs or movies and sharing them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the journey. Remember, however: some individuals and cultures and are less tolerant of photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs. And in some places you may be charged for photography at specific sites, or restricted from any photography at all.

Digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel companions—and many do dual duty by recording movies *and* still images. Fist sized camcorders can capture HD movies and high quality still photos; cameras the size of a deck of cards are great for snapshots and casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can record your whole trip with a small, lightweight package.

But you must remember the batteries. Recharging batteries is sometimes impossible, cameras can drain batteries *very* quickly, and replacements may be unavailable. Whether you need standard or proprietary batteries, it's good to have spares. Be sure your charger will work with the local electrical system, and bring more than enough memory cards—they may be hard or impossible to find. Memory cards are small, thin and light: you can never have too much storage.

Compact cameras are impractical for distant subjects. Some models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is good for middle distances. For distant subjects a *megazoom* (with a zoom lens of at least 300mm) or a single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with up to a 300mm telephoto lens are good choices. With a DSLR you can use multiple lenses, though your gear can quickly get complex, weighty and cumbersome. Cameras or lenses that need a tripod are impractical for travel photography. A single mid-range telephoto lens coupled with a small, fast prime lens (for low light/no flash situations) is an effective, flexible and compact kit. Consider mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILC), which combine small bodies and multiple, small lenses with high quality for both still and HD movie images.

If you use a DSLR or MILC camera, protect the lenses with a UV filter and bring lens caps, covers, cleaning paper and a waterproof bag (a heavy duty Ziploc-style bag is good) to protect your gear. Be sure your camera has a flash that you can turn off, and if it's detachable, remember to pack it. (At many sites and museums, flashes are ***not*** permitted.).

Consider disposable cameras, as well. They are inexpensive and capable of acceptable photos as long as the light is not too dim or bright. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so pose no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

9. GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES

M/S *River Adagio,* M/S *River Aria, M/S Concerto*

Our private fleet of custom-built river ships—with designs incorporating suggestions from Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers—offers a host of amenities to make you feel right at home. Each ship is designed to carry a moderate number of passengers, ensuring an intimate shipboard atmosphere, plus the ease of maneuverability that's so important when entering small river ports. Amenities on each ship include a restaurant with panoramic windows and wraparound promenade, sun deck with lounge chairs, a whirlpool, library, sauna, bar, lounge, dance floor, and small souvenir shop. *Note: the M/S* Bizet *does not offer a fitness center, whirlpool, or sauna.*

By owning our ships, we can assure that you'll be sharing this unique travel experience with only like-minded Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers. You'll find your ship to be an intimate haven that's especially conducive to camaraderie. We'll all be together for the joint celebrations, such as the Welcome cocktail party, where you'll experience the gala ambiance of a larger group. At other times, such as when we venture ashore, we'll break into smaller groups with individual Program Directors to allow for more intimate and personal discoveries.

Included features of all Grand Circle Cruise Line European river ship cabins:

- A layout of at least 150 square feet
- All outside cabins
- Individual climate control (heat and air conditioning)
- Twin beds that ship staff convert into daytime couches
- Storage space under beds of 57 inches x 22.8 inches x 11.8 inches (length x width x height)
- Sufficient closet and dresser space
- Color TV, including CNN programming and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Direct-dial international telephone
- Hair dryer
- Desk
- Private bath with shower

Cabins on the Serenade deck have small balconies with sliding doors; those on the Sonata deck have large picture windows; cabins on the Cantata deck have two picture windows, and Prelude Deck cabins have a square window, placed high in the cabin. For safety reasons, cabin windows do not open.

An important word: While our fleet features larger-than-usual riverboat cabins, please keep in mind that these ships are river vessels, not large ocean cruise ships. Riverboat cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

Your GCCL Program Directors

During your exclusive Grand Circle Cruise Line Cruise Tour, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from four onsite Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Directors. Your Program Directors are fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. They are supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle Cruise Line, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable.

Your Program Directors 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. You will be in the company of a Program Director throughout your cruise (and during the optional Transylvania, Vienna, or Prague land extensions if you take them).

Shore Excursions

Included on your Cruise Tour are many sightseeing tours. Other optional tours are available for purchase. Your Program Director will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card.

Onboard Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, such as folklore and local music entertainment, theme dinners, organized discussions, group activities that relate to the region (may include a language lesson), and talks on upcoming ports of call.

Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, floor-to-ceiling windows, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes a breakfast buffet, lunch, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with dinner are two complimentary drinks (choose from house wine, draft beer, or soft drink) per guest, per meal. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase. Passengers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately €10 (Euro) per bottle, charged to your passenger account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available at meals and from the machine in the reception area.

Open-table, single-seating for all meals: Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

Dining times: Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

Early riser breakfast: 6:00-7:00 am
Breakfast: 7:00-9:00 am
Lunch: 1:00-2:00 pm
Dinner: 7:00-9:00 pm

Special diets & celebrations: Special diets, such as low-cholesterol or vegetarian, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship.

Dress code: The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

Non-smoking policy: The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times. Smoking is not allowed onboard our European river ships, except on the sun deck or in the designated smoking lounge.

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available at around 1:00 pm. The restaurant will open at 12:30 pm and serve a light lunch. On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the sun deck until disembarkation.

Dock and Landing Etiquette

River waterways are simply not big enough to support large landing docks such as those built on ocean shorelines. It is common for river ships to tie up alongside each other at some piers—particularly in ports where docking area is restricted. While we try to arrange the most convenient mooring available in each port of call, outboard boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore. Also, due to the location of the docks and navigational regulations the ship will dock on both sides during any given itinerary regardless of the direction of the cruise. In other words, the side your ship will dock on can vary throughout the cruise.

Onboard Facilities

Headsets

During the cruise portion of your trip, complimentary headsets will be provided on all of your included and optional tours so that you can better hear your Program Director or local guide.

Elevator/Chairlift

Each ship has an elevator and chairlift service to the sun deck from the deck below (or you can use the staircase to the sun deck, which has one flight of ten to twelve steps). The elevator does not provide service to or from the Prelude deck. The staircase to/from the Prelude deck features about six stairs, with a banister to hold on to. The chairlift is a single-seat transport that slides up the staircase banister.

Wi-Fi Access

Limited Wi-Fi service is available for free in the lounge, library, reception and bar areas on board these Grand Circle Cruise Line ships: *Concerto*, *Harmony*, *Melody*, *Rhapsody*, *Adagio*, *Aria*, and the *Bizet*. Wi-Fi service is not available in individual cabins, restaurants or other common areas. If you want to use the Wi-Fi connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do **not** rent or loan these devices. To use the Wi-Fi service, please visit Reception after you board for access information. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong 3G-cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration.

Laundry and Linen Service

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Bed linens are changed once a week (twice during the 14-night cruise); towels are changed daily.

Lounge/Bar

The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, with soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors for sale. Prices are in Euros.

Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck with lounge, library, and lounge with bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, with soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors for sale. Prices are in Euros. A fitness center with an exercise bike and walking/running treadmill is available on each ship.

Drinking Water

Tap water aboard ship is safe for drinking. Bottled water is also available. There are two ice machines onboard.

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. In addition to an emergency call button in all cabins, ships also feature fully staffed reception desks, 24 hours a day. The reception desk or Program Director can assist you with contacting a doctor or a local hospital. For the most part, medicines will require a prescription and may be sold under different brand names that you are used to. Therefore we recommend bringing a copy of your prescriptions with the generic drug name in case you need an emergency refill.

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

Smoking is not allowed anywhere inside our Grand Circle Cruise Line European River Ships, including in individual cabins. The only area on the ship where smoking is permitted is outside on the Sun Deck.

Ship Specifications

	Entered service	*Length*	*Width*	*Passenger capacity*	*Crew members*	*Decks*	*Cabins*	*Elevator*	*Chairlift to sun deck*
M/S *Adagio*	2003	412	38	164	34	3	79	yes	yes
M/S *River Aria*	2001	410	38	164	40	4	82	yes	yes
M/S *River Concerto*	2000	366	38	140	34	4	70	yes	yes

10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

During Your Land Excursions & Optional Extensions

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Cruise Tour. If you expect to explore in depth on your own, we recommend that you consult one of the many available book-length guides to your destinations. If you have one or two specific sites, museums or features that you're interested in, an Internet search is the ideal way to get-up-to-date information and details. And of course your Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director or Hospitality Desk representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.

Drinking Water

Unless you know that your stomach is particularly sensitive to changes in diet/water, tap water in Hungary and the Czech Republic is perfectly fine to drink. For all other stops, it is best to drink bottled water.

Internet Access and Email

Internet cafés are available in many of the cities you visit on your Cruise Tour; however it prices for use may vary. While sailing Internet access may be unavailable, depending on locks, bridges, and regional remoteness. Internet access will be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities.

Language

Generally your Program Director will provide you with language reference materials or may even lead a quick language lesson. We encourage you to try a few words for fun; even just "please" and "thank you" will take you a long way towards better interactions with the locals.

Cultural Insight

History and politics: Traveling inside the Iron Curtain would have seemed an impossible dream just a couple of decades ago; today it is a reality. In the years since the collapse of the communist system the former Eastern Block countries have struggled to regain their independence. Almost 50 years of totalitarian rule left difficult political, economic, and cultural legacies, but enormous amounts of energy have been invested in rebuilding for the future. Today the Eastern European nations are proud of what they have achieved and are eager to engage visitors on the subjects of politics and history. We encourage you to ask questions, but don't be surprised if not everyone agrees!

In particular, the countries of the former Federative Republic of Yugoslavia have their own story to tell about the not-too-distant civil war. Again, please feel free to ask questions, but also understand that for some the war was very traumatic and they may not wish to discuss it in detail.

Religion: The religion in Eastern Europe is predominantly Christian, either Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. Since religion was largely suppressed during the communist era, many are returning to their religious roots with a new enthusiasm. The most important religious holidays are Christmas and Easter. Fasting for 40 days before Easter Sunday is a popular tradition, especially in the countryside. The fast is broken with a big meal on Easter, usually lamb with a lot of vegetables and side dishes. An interesting difference between the two major branches of Christianity in this part of the world: whereas Catholic priests are forbidden to marry, Orthodox priests are expected to. It is common for an Orthodox priest to marry within his parish, thus cementing his relationship with the community.

Visiting a home: A handshake is an appropriate greeting for a first-time meeting. Longtime friends or family may kiss on the check. Men introduced to a woman for the first time should wait to see if she offers her hand. If not, a friendly "hello" and a smile will do.

It is considered polite to give a small gift to the host or the hostess, but it is not required. A small album with photos of your hometown would be a useful icebreaker and would be an appropriate gift. Exchanging e-mail addresses is a common practice, especially if you wish to send a photo taken with the host or hostess from your visit. You may be repeatedly offered food or drink, even if you decline.

A common welcome drink is the famous (and potent) plum brandy, widely known as "slivovitz". Many people still make this at home themselves. After a meal, it is considered polite to offer to clear the dishes and/or complement the chef. Offers of tea or coffee are common, sometimes even in shops or businesses.

Budapest in Brief

City Layout and Details

Budapest is divided by the Duna (Danube River) into a right and left bank. Of the city's three main districts, two—Buda and Obuda—are found on the west bank; Pest is on the east bank. Most of the major shopping venues, the House Parliament, the National Museum, Museum of Applied Arts, and Museum of Fine Arts are located in Pest. Buda, on the west bank, is the site of Castle Hill, Fishermen's Bastion, Matthias Church, and the National Gallery. In essence, Pest is the hub for dining, shopping, banking, and nightlife; and Buda contains the historical and cultural part of the city. The main shopping street in Pest is Vaci Utca, now a pedestrian zone, which runs parallel to the Danube and is every bit as elegant as the Merceria in Venice or the Faubourg-St.-Honore in Paris.

Cuisine

Hungary has a tasty national cuisine all its own. Many dishes are seasoned with paprika, which appears on restaurant tables beside the salt and pepper. Although paprika originated in Central America, the peasants of Szeged have been growing it since the early 18th century and it's now as important to Hungarian cuisine as the tomato is to Italian cuisine.

Hungarian goulash (*gulyas*) is a thick beef soup cooked with onions and potatoes. What we think of as goulash is here called *porkolt*, meat stewed with onions and paprika. If sour cream is added to *porkolt* it becomes *paprikas*. Pork is the most common meat dish. Cabbage is an important vegetable in Hungary, either stuffed in the Turkish fashion (*toltott kaposzta*) or made into a thick cabbage soup (*kaposzta leves*).

Other delicacies include goose-liver sandwiches and paprika chicken (*paprikas csirke*) served with tiny dumplings. Fisherman's soup (*halaszle*) is a rich mixture of several kinds of boiled fish, tomatoes, green peppers, and paprika. It's a full meal in itself. Balaton Lake pike (*sullo*) is generally served breaded and grilled. Noodles with cottage cheese and tiny cubes of crisp fried bacon (*turos csusza*) go well with fish dishes. Hungarian cream cheese (*korozott*) is a mixture of sheep cheese, paprika, and caraway seeds. Strudel (*retes*) is a typical layered pastry filled with apple, cherry, cabbage, curd, or cheese.

Some dishes for vegetarians to request are *rantott sajt* (fried cheese), *rantott gomba* (fried mushrooms), *gomba leves* (mushroom soup), *gyumolcs leves* (fruit soup), *sajtos kenyer* (sliced bread with melted cheese), and *turos czusza* (cottage cheese).

Drinking Water

Tap water in Hungary is safe to drink, though it may not always be tasty. Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, shops, and restaurants.

Local Transportation

The public transportation system in Budapest—a metro (subway), buses, streetcars, and trolley buses—is economical, efficient, and simple to use, but closes down around 11:00 pm. Certain trams and buses run on a limited schedule all night. A day ticket (*napijegy*) allows unlimited travel on all services within the city limits. You can also buy tickets for single rides from metro stations or tobacco shops. You can travel on all trams, buses, and on the subway with this ticket, but you can't change lines. Bus, streetcar, and trolley bus tickets must be validated onboard by punching the ticket into the onboard machine. Metro tickets are validated when they are run through the turnstile. Don't get caught without a validated ticket: spot checks are frequent, and you can be fined if you don't possess one.

Bucharest in Brief

City Layout and Details

Once known as the Paris of the Balkans, before World War II and decades of communism wore the sheen off the city, Bucharest has refurbished itself in recent years and now welcomes visitors to its broad boulevards, small cafés, and historic monuments. Away from downtown, Bucharest is a sprawling metropolis with identical, somewhat drab neighborhoods that make it easy to get lost. The Intercontinental Hotel towers above everything else and is a good marker for locating downtown. The twelve-story Palace of Parliament, built during the reign of Nicolae Ceausescu, houses the president's office, the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate, the central committee, and all the state ministries. Guided tours through this monumental, 3,100-room complex are available.

The Calea Victoriei is Bucharest's main street and most famous thoroughfare, but you may want to start at the Princely Court, the palace that was home to the 15th-century ruler who was the real-life evil inspiration for Bram Stoker's creepy classic *Dracula*. Here you can still see the thick fortress walls that were originally built from river stones. The huge cellars cover such a large area that surrounding shops and restaurants are often attached to the complex through a below-ground maze. South along Calea Victoriei is the Strada Lipscani, a four-block area of artisans, crafts, and shops that showcase the old Bucharest.

Bucharest has a mixed architectural heritage. Exposed to numerous invaders over the centuries it lacks much of the classic Renaissance feel that older European cities display. The older sections of Bucharest, such as Strada Lipscani, give a glimpse of Bucharest's eastern influences with their narrow streets and crowded bazaars. Late 19th-century influences tended toward the French with the result that Bucharest seems a near modern European capital city, at least in places. In particular, the Calea Victoriei between Revolution Square and Victory Square is worth a look.

The Curtea Veche Church, a 16th-century structure, is next to the Princely Court, and nearby is the Hanul Manuc, a 19th-century hotel that remains a fine place to stop. The Stavropoleos Church, built in 1742, is a good example of the Byzantine influence in the city. The History Museum has a wonderful collection of ornaments, gold, and precious stones. Revolution Square and the palace of the Republic are reminders of the days of the country's last communist dictator, the tyrannical Nicolae Ceausescu.

The streets in Bucharest beyond Victory Square lead out of town. Note the French influence exhibited by the Arc de Triomphe, which honors the Romanian dead from World War I. The Village Museum on Soseaua Kiseleff is full of good examples of pastoral Romanian architecture through the ages. A nearby lake and park are good spots for relaxing or even hiring a boat for a small excursion.

Cuisine

Romanian cuisine was rather famous before the country fell behind the Iron Curtain, when the food became as drab as everyday life under communism. Today, however, Romanian cuisine is inching its way back to sumptuousness.

Breakfast: Romanian breakfasts are large and varied, with cold meats, cheeses, eggs, and skinless sausages. Pork or chicken in aspic is called *piftie* and often served.

Soups: A national favorite is the hearty soup called *ciorba.* This is a sour soup made from fermented bran, vegetables, parsley, dill, and beef or chicken. Try it with a bit of sour cream and green or pickled pepper, and the taste will grow on you. For the more adventurous, try Ciorba de burta, a tripe soup made with sour cream, vinegar, and garlic sauce. Or a rich bean soup with vegetables and smoked pork. This is usually eaten with onions and vinegar or lemons to balance the richness.

Main courses: Pork stuffed with ham and cheese under a sauce, and beef stuffed with mushrooms, bacon, peppers, and a tomato puree are both popular. *Sarmale* is a spicy dish of cabbage leaves stuffed with meat. *Mititei* is small, skinless, grilled sausages made of a mix of minced pork, lamb, beef, and spices. If ever a meal could be considered truly Romanian, it would be mititei with mustard and a cold beer!

The Danube carp cooked on a spit is a well-known treat. Other Danube fish, like zander, pike, perch, and catfish are delicious served grilled with a light garlic sauce and polenta. Rainbow trout from the Carpathians are also served grilled, usually with a potato salad as a side dish.

Cheeses: Sheep's milk cheese is very popular and typically served with polenta (in the summer and autumn) or with a vegetable salad.

Desserts: Pastries and doughnuts, usually with a cheese filling, are excellent and a matter of some local pride.

Wines: Romania is a wine producing country, specializing in reds and dry and demi-sec whites.

Drinking Water

The quality of water in Romania varies greatly. Expect to drink only bottled water, sold in hotels, restaurants, and food shops.

Local Transportation

Most sights are concentrated in the city center. Bucharest's public transit network consists of a metro system, trams, and buses. There are four subway lines with tickets sold from kiosks inside the station. Buses and maxi taxis (minibuses that stop on request) are readily available up to 11 pm. There are five maxi taxi routes in the city and tickets can be bought onboard. You can hail a taxi on the street, but it is easier to have your hotel call a dispatcher. If you choose to use a taxi at a taxi stand or one you hail on the street, *definitely agree on a price beforehand!* In general, transportation is quite cheap in Bucharest.

Prague in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout and Details

Prague, an ancient and historic city, is the capital of the Czech Republic (made up of Bohemia, Moravia, and part of Silesia). The city, located at the crossroads of Europe, is both ancient and modern and possesses a palpable energy. Getting around Prague can be a bit tricky—many of the streets are small, narrow cobblestone paths that seem to wind about endlessly. But the "city of 1,000 spires" is one of the most beautiful you will ever see.

Prague is really a series of five historic towns welded together to form one great city. The river Vltava slices through Prague, giving the city its distinctive bridges. Hradcany, the castle district, is on the river's west bank with Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral nearby. Below this section lies Mala Strana (the Lesser Quarter), with buildings dating back to the 13th century. Petrin Hill to the south offers wonderful views out over the city. On the east bank of the river is Stare Mesto (the Old Town), with its large central square. Nearby is Josefov, the former Jewish ghetto. Nove Mesto (New Town, though parts of it go back to the 14th century) stretches around parts of Stare Mesto and historic Wenceslas Square. The Charles Bridge, a city landmark, stretches over the Vltava and links much of the city.

Ruzyne Airport is in the western suburbs of the city. The Prague Information Service offers good information about Prague and is located in Old Town Square. The Tourist Office (Cedok) at Na Prikope is also a good place for information and maps.

Prague is a lovely city for walking, so be sure to stroll the Royal Way, which takes you by some of the city's architectural treasures, including Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral. In Hradcany stop to see the Strahov Monastery and the Summer Palace. If you are a fan of classical music you'll want to stop in at the Smetana Hall in Obecni Dum. The Museum of the City of Prague in northern Nove Mesto is an impressive and interesting stop. Wenceslas Square in Old Town and Josefov in Stare Mesto both offer excellent walking and sightseeing opportunities.

Cuisine

The foods of the Czech Republic are hearty and rich, with flavors influenced by German cooking, and they tend toward meaty dishes accompanied by sauces and gravies. The three items that are nation-wide favorites are pork, dumplings, and cabbage.

Thick soups offer some of the strongest flavors on a typical menu, with garlic, onion, and fish soup being among the tastiest. Pork as a main course is often a seasoned brisket that is breaded and fried. Another mainstay is *svickova*, slices of oven-braised beef served with a rich sauce of sour cream and cranberries. Restaurants also may offer baked chicken, smoked hams, and wild game, such as rabbit, duck, or venison. As the country is landlocked, fish usually comes from freshwater fish farms and includes perch, trout, and carp. Seafood such as shellfish or shark is sometimes offered at restaurants, but is usually fairly expensive.

Accompanying almost every meal is the ubiquitous dumpling, or *knedlik*. The lighter dumplings are made from wheat flour, while the hearty and denser version is created using potato flour. The rolled dough is boiled and served in slices with a gravy or sauce. The vegetable that graces most dinners is the *zeli*, or cabbage. The cabbage is often cooked in a lightly sweetened sauce. Condiments include fruit chutney, horseradish, mustard, and tartar sauce. Vegetarian main courses may be quite difficult to find, but dishes of root crops such as carrots, turnips, beets, and of course potatoes are plentiful. For cheese lovers, there's *smazeny syr*, a delectable breaded cheese, fried until its center is creamy.

You can top off your meal with sweet delights. Desserts offered are thin pancakes with fillings of chocolate, fruit, or marmalade. And in case you didn't have your fill of dumplings with the main course, you can savor one for dessert. The chefs fill them with apricots, cherries, or strawberries and sprinkle them festively with powdered sugar.

While in Prague, don't miss the opportunity to sample some of the delightful beers born of the region's fields of cultivated hops. Pubs are an integral part of the Czech neighborhood life, and the nation brews some of the best beer in the world. In the town of Plzen, the brewing of beer dates as far back as the founding of the town, in 1295. Plzen is internationally known for its award-winning Pilsener Urquell, and there are numerous other local beers that perfectly accompany the region's hearty dining. To conclude your culinary explorations, you might consider capping the night with a taste of *Becherovka*, a unique herbal liqueur from the Karlovy Vary area.

Drinking Water

Tap water in the Czech Republic is safe for drinking. You can also buy bottled water in hotels, restaurants, and food shops.

Local Transportation

Subway: Prague's modern subway system—the Metro—is easy to use and spotlessly clean. It provides the simplest and fastest means of transportation, and most new maps of Prague mark the routes. Subways run daily from 5 am to midnight, with trains every two minutes during peak hours, slowing down to every ten to fifteen minutes by late in the evening. There are several lines, each a different color, which intersect at various points in the city center, and the route plans are easy to follow. Once inside the Metro, acquaint yourself with these words: *vystup* means exit, and *prestup* means connection. For the Metro, punch the ticket in the station before getting on the escalators.

Tram/Bus: You'll probably stick to the Metro, but a bus ride can be a good way to see some of the city, especially if you want to venture farther out. You must validate your ticket by punching it in the onboard machine (watch the locals and copy them). Your ticket is valid for 75 minutes from the time it is punched. Tickets can be purchased at a newsstand or in metro stations, but cannot be purchased onboard. The same tickets are used for both buses and trams; you can switch from one to another without using a new ticket as long as you stay inside the 75-minute limit.

Taxi: These are not recommended, as some drivers try to take advantage of tourists and inflate the price, possibly by driving miles out of the way. If you must take a taxi, it is best to use the hotel's taxi service—it is a little more expensive than taxis found at taxi stands but it is more reliable. Another choice is to ask the hotel to contact AAA Taxi for you (or call them at **233-113-311**)—AAA Taxi is also dependable and they speak English. If you choose instead to use a taxi at a taxi stand or one you hail on the street, *definitely agree on a price beforehand!*

Vienna in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout and Details

Vienna's "Ring," once the location of the city walls and today a broad boulevard in the inner zone (the oldest part of the city), encircles most main sights. In the center is Stephansplatz, site of the city's famous St. Stephen's Cathedral. Just a short walk away is the Hofburg (the Habsburgs' official residence), the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Art History Museum), and the Staatsoper. The pedestrian thoroughfare, Kaernter Strasse, is the city's major shopping venue; it runs from Stephansplatz past the Staatsoper to Karlsplatz. The "Ring" itself is two and one half miles long and 187 feet wide. Constructed in the mid 19th century to protect Vienna from outside threats, the Ring encircles the Old City. All sites inside the Ring are part of the First *Bezirk* (or 1st precinct, designated by the #1010 in addresses). The remainder of the city is also sectioned into precincts.

Cuisine

Viennese cuisine is the culmination of various ethnic influences, including Bohemian, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovenian, German, and Italian. Wild game, fish, poultry, and beef dishes are also popular. The following are some local specialties.

Soups: *Griessnockerlsuppe* (clear soup with semolina dumplings), *Rindsuppe* (beef broth), and *Gulaschsuppe* (Hungarian goulash soup).

Main courses: Familiar dishes are *Bauernschmaus* (a combination of many varied sausage~~s~~ and pork items with sauerkraut and dumplings), *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef with vegetables), *Wiener Schnitzel* (breaded veal or pork cutlet), *Schweinebraten* (roast pork), *Backhendl* (fried and breaded chicken), and *Gulasch* (stew). *Nockerl* are little dumplings, usually served with sauce.

Desserts: Vienna's *Apfelstrudel* (apple strudel) is probably the best in the world. *Palatschinken* are light, sugared pancakes; *Kaiserschmarren* is a diced omelet, served with jam and sprinkled with sugar.

Coffee: Austrian coffee, of which there are at least 20 varieties, is delicious and not to be missed. Introduced 300 years ago by the Turks during their unsuccessful attempt to conquer Vienna, coffee has become an art form, served in veritable institutions known as the Viennese coffeehouses. Among the many kinds of coffee are *kleiner Schwarzer*, a small cup without milk; the *Melange*, large cup with foamy milk; *Mokka*, strong black Viennese coffee; *Kapuziner*, same as *Melange* but topped with whipped cream; and *Tuerkischer*, Turkish coffee boiled in a small copper pot and served in tiny cups.

Drinking Water

Vienna's ice-cold water comes from a natural underground reservoir in the mountains and is famous for its clean taste and purity. It is very safe to drink. Bottled water is also sold in most restaurants and grocery shops.

Local Transportation

Vienna is divided into 23 numbered districts. Most sights are concentrated in the city center, the 1st District, which is largely a pedestrian zone and easily reached by public transportation. Many 1st District attractions are within walking distance of one another. You can walk from one end of the Old City to the other in about 30 minutes. Even the walk from the Ring to either train station is only a half hour or so. Beyond this central hub, districts proceed from the 2nd on up to the 23rd.

Vienna's transit network consists of five U-Bahn (subway) lines, trams, buses, and several rapid transit and commuter trains. A single ticket (good for the tram, bus, S-Bahn, or the U-Bahn) permits as many transfers as you need to reach your destination as long as you keep moving in the same direction. It can be purchased from machines found in U-Bahn stations, ticket booths, or from conductors. Instead of single tickets, you may prefer to purchase the *Vierfahrtenstreifenkarte*, a strip ticket that allows four rides. These must be purchased in advance, either from ticket booths at the Karlsplatz or Stephansplatz U-Bahn station, or from automatic machines at all U-Bahn and train stations. There's also a 24-hour ticket available. Lastly, the Vienna Card, which is valid for 72 hours, allows you to travel on all modes of public transportation and gives you a discount in a great many museums.

Note on Ticket Validation: You must validate all tickets yourself by inserting them into machines at the entryway of S-Bahn and U-Bahn platforms or on buses and trams. When entering streetcars, look for a blue box with a white "E," which is for validating tickets.

Istanbul in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout

European Istanbul is divided by the Golden Horn, a freshwater outlet, into two principal regions: the Old City, which is south of the Golden Horn, and Beyoglu (BEHY-oh-loo), which is north of it and more modern. Two bridges span the Golden Horn—the Ataturk and the Galata—and serve as the major thoroughfares that connect these two different sections of town. Ferries also run between them, and are a primary transportation mode for locals who live on one side and work in the other.

The Old City was part of the site chosen by Constantine the Great for his capital, and contains most of the historic sights of Istanbul. Here you'll find the Blue Mosque, Saint Sophia, Topkapi Palace, Hippodrome, and Grand Bazaar. Istanbul University is also located in the Old City.

Modern Beyoglu is home to most of the city's luxury hotels, banks, hospitals, and consulates. This district's central hub is Taksim Square, from which many avenues branch off and lead to various sections of the new city. *Cumhuriyet Caddesi*, a wide, tree-lined road, offers sophisticated nightclubs and fancy restaurants. *Istiklal Caddesi* (Independence Avenue), the main street in Beyoglu, is now a pedestrian mall. Leading off Istiklal Caddesi are numerous atmospheric side streets and alleys that are fascinating to explore. The 19th-century palace of Dolmabahce is situated at the edge of Beyoglu, on the shores of the Bosporus.

Cuisine

Turkish cuisine is thought by many to rank with French and Chinese as one of the world's great basic cuisines. The ingredients are often very simple, but are prepared with such care and finesse that the result is incredibly tasty. In brief, traditional Turkish cuisine is based on lamb and fresh vegetables. You'll find lamb, beef and chicken (but very little pork, which is forbidden to Muslims), and seafood is popular, too – particularly in Istanbul. However, lamb is the foundation.

Most of our travelers find the food in Turkey to be excellent. When you consider that the Ottoman Empire once stretched from the very gates of Vienna, across the Mediterranean and North Africa, and all the way to central Asia, you can begin to grasp the complexity and subtlety of Turkish cuisine. Turkey is also one of only seven nations on earth to produce a food surplus, so there is an abundance of fresh and wonderful fare. We generally eat in small local restaurants or at our hotels.

For breakfast you might want to try Turkish yogurt. The breads are fresh and tasty, too. Turks usually serve their tea black and very sweet; and the coffee served is generally Turkish style, strong and black in a small cup.

A big meal usually starts with *mezes*, a selection of all sorts of appetizers and salads. Don't pass up the *böreks*, which are pillow-shaped turnover pastries filled with cheese, meat, parsley, and herbs. *Dolma* is the name for grape leaves stuffed with rice, nuts and currants. There may also be soup (*çorba*), such as lentil with rice and lemon, or creamy tomato soup.

Lamb, chicken, and beef are the basic meats, often served as *shish kebab* with rice *pilav* on the side. Fish and shellfish are wonderful; do try the *barbunya* (red mullet) and *kilic baligi* (swordfish). Pasta means pastry – not noodles – in Turkish. The Turks are notorious for having a sweet tooth, which will become obvious if you bite into a honey-soaked piece of *baklava* pastry.

Vegetables are on an equal footing with lamb. Many of the best Turkish dishes consist of excellent fresh vegetables cooked with just one or two condiments and a bit of diced lamb for flavor. Fruit—and Turkey abounds in excellent fruit—is readily available with any meal.

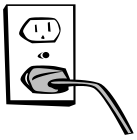
Vegetarianism is not prevalent in Turkey. If you merely want to minimize consumption of meat, you'll have no problem as Turkish cuisine has many dishes in which meat is used merely as a flavoring, not as a principal element. However, if you want to avoid meat completely, you'll have to choose carefully. A good dish to try is *menemen*, tomatoes topped with eggs and baked; it is fairly spicy. Eggplant, cheeses, pilafs and yogurt are good supplements. Note that many of the bean dishes such as *nohut* (chick-peas, garbanzos) and *kuru fasulye* (fava beans) are prepared with lamb as a flavoring.

Restaurants (*restoran*, *lokanta*) are everywhere, and most are inexpensive (approximately U.S. $6 to $8 per person for a meal). Specialties include *patlican salatasi* (pureed eggplant, perhaps mixed with yogurt); *palamut* (a darkish, full-flavored tuna) and *levrek* (sea bass); *karisik izgara* (a mixed grill of lamb); and *dolma* (stuffed vine leaves): the hot ones (*etli*) have ground lamb in them; the cold ones are made without meat, and seasoned with olive oil (*zeytinyagli*).

Turkish desserts are rich. They tend to be very sweet, soaked in sugar syrup. Many are baked, such as crumpets, cookies or shredded wheat, all in syrup. Baklava comes in several varieties: *cevizli* is with chopped walnut stuffing; *fistikli* is with pistachio nuts; *kaymakli* is with clotted cream. *Krem karamel* is the Turkish version of flan, and *sutlac* is a milk-and-rice pudding. As an alternative to sweet desserts, Turkish fruit can't be beat. Try *kavun*, a delicious, fruity melon.

Drinking Water

The water in most parts of Turkey is considered safe, but as an added safety precaution against possible stomach upsets, we recommend you drink only bottled water.



Electric Current

The electric current in Turkey is 220 voltage AC, 50 cycles. If you bring small American appliances, you will need an electric-current transformer and a set of international plug adapters to operate them at hotels. Plugs are of the European variety with two round prongs, but there are two sizes in use. The most common is the small-diameter prong. The large-diameter, grounded plug is also in use, and plugs for these won't fit the small-diameter outlets. Transformer/adapter kits can usually be found at your local hardware store.

Local Transportation

Metro: Istanbul's ambitious plan to have a modern rapid-transit system is well under way. The system runs from about 6 am to a little past midnight. The fare is less than US$1.

The Tunnel was the first underground railway line opened in 1875. Still today this short line is important for urban transportation. Trains operate every 3.5 minutes and a trip takes about 15 minutes. The line runs from *Karakoy* to *Tunel* upper station and is linked to Taksim Square by a vintage tram.

The Light rail line was built in 1989, and runs from Aksaray towers in the western suburbs, to Yenibosna. It has a total length of 18 km with 16 stops. *Aksaray, Emniyet, Ulubatli, Bayrampasa, Sagmacilar, Kartaltepe, Otogar, Esenler, Terazidere, Davutpasa, Merter, Zeytinburnu, Bakirkoy, Bahcelievler, Atakoy, Yeni Bosna.*

The Modern tram line was built in 1990 and runs through the older parts of the city.

The Full metro line was built in 2000 and runs from Taksim to 4 Levent. It has a total length of 7 km with 6 stations. Taksim, Osmanbey, Sisli, Gayrettepe, Levent, 4 Levent. Recently a new line was opened which runs from Kabatas to Taksim Square and vise versa.

Taxi: Thousands of yellow taxis throng Istanbul's streets. Most are powered by clean-burning natural gas, and all have digital meters, which the drivers are required by law to run. That doesn't, however, mean they always do. If your driver doesn't start the *taksimetre*, or tries to haggle the start of the trip instead of running it, just point to the meter emphatically and say **Taksimetre!** (TAHK-see-MEHT-treh). This will ensure you are charged the correct price.

Turks don't tip taxi drivers, they round up the fare. If it ends up being US $4.75, a Turk will round it up to $5. In many cases if the fare is US $5.25, the driver will require only US $5, and not bother with the change. As a foreigner, your driver may assume you'll give a tip, but you needn't unless the driver provides some special service, such as helping with lots of heavy luggage.

11. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

Austria—optional extension

Area: 32,382 square miles
Capital: Vienna
Languages: German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
Ethnicities: Austrians 91.1%, former Yugoslavs 4% (includes Croatians, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosniaks), Turks 1.6%, German 0.9%, other or unspecified 2.4%
Location: Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
Geography: Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
Population: 8,221,646 (2013 estimate)
Religion: Roman Catholic 74%, Protestant 5%, Muslim 4%, none 12%, other 5%
Time Zone: Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
01/06	Epiphany
04/21	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day / May Day
05/29	Ascension Day
06/09	Whit Monday
06/19	Corpus Christi
08/15	Assumption of Mary
10/26	National day
11/01	All Saints
12/08	Immaculate Conception
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	St. Stephen's Day

Bulgaria

Area: 42,811 square miles
Capital: Sofia
Language: Bulgarian is the official language. English is usually understood in major hotels and restaurants but it is infrequently used in other settings. **It is important to note that in Bulgaria, nodding the head means "no" and shaking the head means "yes."**
Location: Bulgaria lies on the Black Sea in southeastern Europe, on the eastern part of the Balkans, with beautiful beaches on its coastline, the mountainous Balkan Range inland, and the fertile plains of the Danube in the north. Its borders touch Romania, Greece, Turkey, the Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia. Within the two great valleys of this country are nestled small villages where carts, not cars, are the main form of transportation.
Population (2013 estimate): 6,981,642
Religion: Eastern Orthodox 59.4%, Muslim 7.8%, Other 1.7 %, Jewish 0.8%, None 3.7%, and unspecified 27.4 %
Time zone: Bulgaria is on Eastern European Time, which is seven hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 7 pm in Sofia. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.
Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01 New Year´s Day
03/03 National Holiday Bulgaria
05/01 Labour Day
05/20 Othodox Easter
05/21 Orthodox Easter Monday
05/06 St George's Day
05/24 Bulgarian Education and Culture Day Sep 09/06 Unification Day Bulgaria
09/22 Independence Day Bulgaria
12/24 Christmas Eve
12/25 Christmas
12/26 Second Day of Christmas

Croatia

Area: 21,851 square miles
Capital: Zagreb
Government: Presidential/parliamentary democracy
Language: Croatian (Hrvatski), with Italian, German, and English also spoken by some.
Location: Croatia is situated between the Pannonian Plain and the Adriatic Sea in southeastern Europe. irregularities of its Adriatic coastline have created over 1,000 islands. The region in the north of Croatia is a highland area with a mountainous climate.
Geography: Croatia is located in Southeastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. The terrain of Croatia is geographically diverse; flat plains along Hungarian border, low mountains and highlands near Adriatic coast, coastline, and islands.
Population (2013 estimate): 4,475,611
Ethnic groups: Croat 89.6%, Serb 4.5%, other 5.9% (including Bosniak, Hungarian, Slovene, Czech, and Roma)
Religion: Catholic Roman Catholic 87.8%, Orthodox 4.4%, other Christian 0.4%, Muslim 1.3%, other and unspecified 0.9%, none 5.2%
Time zone: Croatia is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

Holidays

01/01 New Year's Day
01/06 Epiphany
04/21 Easter Monday
05/01 Labor Day / May Day
06/19 Corpus Christi
06/22 Day of Antifascist Struggle
06/25 Statehood Day
08/05 Homeland Thanksgiving Day
08/15 Assumption of Mary
10/08 Independence Day
11/01 All Saints
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 St Stephen's Day

Czech Republic—optional extension

Area: 30,451 square miles
Capital: Prague
Language: Czech is the official language.
Location: Landlocked in Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic comprises the ancient provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, with a mountainous rim on the German border to the west. Other countries that share borders with the Czech Republic are Austria and Slovakia to the south and Poland to the northeast.
Population (2013 estimate): 10,609,762
Religion: Roman Catholic 10.4%, Protestant 1.1%, other and unspecified 54%, none 34.5% (2011 estimate)
Time zone: The Czech Republic is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 6 pm in Prague.

Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01 New Year's Day
04/21 Easter Monday
05/01 Labor Day / May Day
05/08 Victory in Europe Day
07/05 Saints Cyril and Methodius
07/06 Jan Hus Day
09/28 St. Wenceslas Day
10/28 Independent Czechoslovak State Day
11/17 Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day
12/24 Christmas Eve
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Hungary

Area: 35,919 square miles
Capital: Budapest
Languages: Hungarian (Magyar) is the official language.
Ethnicities: Hungarian 92.3%, Roma 1.9%, other or unknown 5.8%
Location: Hungary is located in central Europe
Geography: Hungary is a landlocked country that has borders with seven countries: Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia to the east; Serbia-Montenegro and Romania to the south; Ukraine to the northeast; and Slovakia directly to the north. Most of Hungary is a fertile, rolling plain lying east of the Danube River, and drained by the Danube and Tisza Rivers.
Population: 9,939,470
Religion: Roman Catholic 52%, Calvinist 16%, Lutheran 3%, other 14%, unaffiliated 15%
Time Zone: Hungary is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Budapest.

Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01 New Year's Day
03/15 1848 Revolution Memorial Day
04/20 Easter Monday
05/01 Labor Day
06/08 Whit Monday
08/20 Hungary National Day
10/23 1956 Revolution Memorial Day
11/01 All Saints
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 Boxing Day

Romania

Facts & Figures
Area: 91,699 square miles
Capital: Bucharest
Languages: Romanian is the official language. Hungarian and German are also spoken.
Ethnicities: Romanian 89.5%, Hungarian 6.6%, Roma 2.5%, Ukrainian 0.3%, German 0.3%, Russian 0.2%, Turkish 0.2%, other 0.4%
Location: Romania's location is sometimes described as being in central Europe or sometimes a southeastern Europe.
Geography: The Carpathian Mountains cross the northern half of Romania and connect with the Transylvanian Alps near the central region of the country. Northwest of this mountainous arc is the Transylvanian plateau, and the great plains of Moldavia and Walachia lie to the southeast. The Danube River forms the southern boundary with Bulgaria, and then flows north and then east through Romania, entering the Black Sea through its large delta just south of Ukraine.
Population (2013 estimate): 21,790,479
Religions: Eastern Orthodox 87%, Protestant 7%, Roman Catholic 5%, other (mostly Muslim) 0.9%, unaffiliated 0.1%
Time Zone: Romania is seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Bucharest.

Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01	New Year's Day
01/02	Day after New Year's Day
04/20	Orthodox Easter Day
04/21	Orthodox Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day / May Day
06/08	Orthodox Pentecost
06/09	Orthodox Pentecost Monday
08/15	St Mary's Day
11/30	St. Andrew's Day
12/01	National Holiday
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	Second Day of Christmas

Serbia

Area: 29,913 square miles
Capital: Belgrade
Language: Serbian is the official language. Albanian is also spoken.
Location: Serbia is a landlocked country in central and southeastern Europe, covering the central part of the Balkan Peninsula and the southern part of the Pannonian Plain. Serbia borders Hungary to the north; Romania and Bulgaria to the east; the Republic of Macedonia and Albania to the south; and Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the west.
Population (2013 estimate): 7,243,007
Religion: Serbian Orthodox 85%, Catholic 5%, Muslim 3%, Protestant 1%, other 2%, unknown 4%.
Time zone: Serbia is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of North American Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time goes from the last Sunday of March to the last Sunday of October.

Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01	New Year's Day
01/02	Second Day of New Year's Day
01/07	Christmas Day, Orthodox
02/15	Statehood Day of the Republic of Serbia
04/18	Orthodox Good Friday
04/20	Orthodox Easter Day
04/21	Orthodox Easter Monday
05/01	Labor holiday
05/02	Labor holiday second day

Turkey

Area: 302,535 square miles
Capital: Ankara
Government: Republican parliamentary democracy
Languages: Turkish is the dominant language in the Turkic language group, which also includes such lesser-known tongues as Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Azerbaijani.
Location: Turkey occupies the Asian peninsula of Anatolia (Asia Minor) and a tiny corner of the European peninsula of Thrace. These two regions form a land bridge, which is interrupted by a narrow waterway called the Bosporus. To the west, Turkey is bordered by the Aegean Sea, Greece, and Bulgaria; to the east, by Georgia, Armenia, and Iran; on the north, by the Black Sea; and to the south, by the Mediterranean Sea, Syria, and Iraq. While most of Turkey is in Asia, because of her membership in the Council of Europe she is regarded as a European country.
Geography: Turkey is relatively big (larger than Texas) and has a varied geography. Many visitors come to Turkey expecting to find mostly dusty deserts, palm trees, and camel caravans, when in fact its diverse landscape also includes lots of craggy snowcapped mountains, gentle hills, broad lakes, cool pine forests, and miles of white beaches.
Largest City: Istanbul
Population (2013 estimate): 80,694,485
Religion: Turkey is officially a secular state, although 99.8% of the people are Muslim (mostly Sunni)
Time Zone: Turkey goes by Eastern European time: two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, or seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. When it is noon in Turkey, it's 5 am in New York, and 2 am in Los Angeles. In the warm months from late March through late September, Turkish clocks are turned ahead one hour for daylight saving time.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day
04/23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day
05/01 Labor and Solidarity Day
05/19 Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day
08/30 Victory Day
10/29 Republic Day

The Danube River

The Danube River is the second-longest river in Europe and the only major European river to flow from west to east. It rises in the Black Forest region of Germany and flows in a generally easterly direction for a distance of 1,766 miles before emptying, on the Romanian coast, into the Black Sea. This legendary river not only shaped the destinies of all the countries that line its banks, but influenced the whole continent as no other European river ever could.

The Danube river basin is more than 300,000 square miles and includes parts of Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldavia, and Ukraine. The river is ancient and full of history, passing through the cities of Ulm, Regensburg, and Passau in Germany; Linz and Vienna in Austria; Bratislava in Slovakia; Budapest in Hungary; Belgrade in Serbia and Galatzi and Brãila in Romania. Canals link the Danube to the Main and Rhine, providing a commercial route between the Black and North Seas.

The strategic location of this great river was recognized centuries ago by Roman emperors who sought to control it. Ruins from that period now perch on banks above the river, reminding you of the Danube's multifaceted past. Even today, the Danube continues to be one of Europe's greatest assets, in part because it provides a water link between the four national capitals on its banks: Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, and Belgrade. Back in the heyday of river transport, other great cities grew up along the Danube's banks too, serving as ports for the various cargo being carried on the river, namely salt, wood, and ores. These same products now are transferred on the railroad and highways, which run alongside the Danube's course.

There is no question that few river voyages can match the romantic appeal of a journey down the Danube. Here is the heart of the lilting Strauss waltzes, of myth-laden castles, Old World villages, and rolling vineyards. As you sail along this twisting river, stopping at fascinating ports, you'll gain an understanding of the art, music, and culture of a fabled region with a history that stretches back more than 3,000 years.

12. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Maps, and Movies

If your local store or library doesn't stock the books or movies below, the Internet offers a wide variety of options for finding older or rare stock – try AbeBooks (abebooks.com), Alibris (albris.com), Amazon (amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble (bn.com) — or any of the smaller websites. Of course, this selection is not meant to be comprehensive, and is offered as a starting point for your research.

The Improbable Voyage by Tristan Jones (Travel Account)
In 1985, former Royal Navy skipper Tristan Jones embarked on a 2,307-mile voyage across Europe, traveling from the North Sea to the Black Sea via the Rhine and Danube Rivers. Battling ice and cold, life-threatening rapids and narrow gorges, German bureaucrats and Romanian frontier police, Jones made his way through eight countries and emerged triumphant, albeit penniless, at the Black Sea. His spirited account of his adventures gives readers a vivid glimpse of the quality of life along Europe's oldest water routes—and of life on the Danube toward the end of the Cold War era.

Danube by Claudio Magris (Travel Account)
This highly regarded descriptive travel book follows the river as it flows from its source in Germany to its mouth in the Black Sea, with wonderful descriptions of the scenery en route.

Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends by Lonnie R. Johnson (History)
A panoramic history of central Europe that provides a comparative analysis of the key events that have shaped Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia. The author abandons the Cold War convention of defining central Europe in the bipolar terms of East and West, and emphasizes the underlying continuities in the region's history.

Black Lamb and Gray Falcon by Rebecca West (History)
First published in two volumes in 1941 (in the U.S.), this description of a journey through Serbia and Montenegro (then Yugoslavia) in 1937 is widely recognized as a masterpiece. The landscape and people of Yugoslavia, its history, cultures, religions, and politics are brilliantly observed.

The Lower Danube River by Spiridon G. Focas (History)
A 697-page historical examination of navigation on the Danube River Valley in central Europe. Published by the East European Monographs in 1987.

Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture by John Lukacs (History)
In 1900, Budapest was culturally and physically the fastest growing city in Europe. The author mixes scholarship and an impressionistic writing style to bring alive the intellectual, artistic, and social exuberance of the city during this era.

Transylvania — Optional Extension

In Search of Dracula by Raymond T. McNally (History)
Examines the fictional vampire who made Transylvania world-famous, and traces the history of the legend and its roots in the historical Transylvanian figures of Vlad Dracul and his son, Vlad the Impaler.

Prague — Optional Extension

Hastening Toward Prague by Lisa Wolverton (History)
Published in September 2001 this book examines the power and society in the medieval Czech Lands, where kings and rulers set the stage for conflicts that would still raise issues centuries later.

Vienna — Optional Extension

The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey by Gordon Brook-Shepard (History)
The author, a noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Habsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

The Habsburg Monarchy 1618-1815 by Charles W. Ingrao (History)
This comprehensive history of the Habsburg Empire reveals how the uniquely different personality traits of each Habsburg monarch often influenced the historical events of the time.

A Nervous Splendor-Vienna 1888/9 by Frederic Morton (History)
Morton's popular history brings to life Freud, Mahler, Archduke Rudolph and other famous Viennese.

Bulgaria—Optional Extension

Balkan Ghosts, A Journey through History **by** Robert D. Kaplan (History)
Both old-fashioned literate traveler and journalist, Kaplan in this articulate report brings together the history, art and culture of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece with recent events to paint a portrait of the region in the 1980s. Updated with opinion pieces written in the 1990s.

Turkey—Optional Extension

Birds Without Wings by Louis De Bernieres (Literature) A sweeping historical drama that weaves together the lives of an Anatolian family, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the rise of Ataturk. Highly recommended.

Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds by Stephen Kinzer (History) Contemporary life, culture, and politics in Turkey, from a former New York *Times* Istanbul bureau chief.

Harem: The World Behind the Veil by Alev Lytle Croutier (History/Culture) A fascinating glimpse of harem culture, especially at Istanbul's Topkapi Palace. This book was originally published in 1991, so it may not be in stock at your local bookstore, but it can still be found online.

The Fall of Constantinople, 1453 by Steven Runciman (History) Regarded as one of the best accounts of the conquest of Constantinople and final days of the Byzantine Empire. Originally published in 1965, but subsequently republished.

The White Castle and My Name is Red by Orhan Pamuk (Literature) Two moving historical novels by the winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature. *The White Castle* is tells the tale of a seventeenth-century Italian scholar who becomes enslaved in the service of an astronomer, while *My Name is Red* describes the events surrounding the murder of a miniaturist during the height of the Ottoman Empire.

Guidebooks:
Your Program Director will be happy to provide recommendations and suggestions during the trip, so a guidebook is not a necessity. But a good one can be invaluable as a one-stop reference, so for those travelers who have asked for suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Since different guidebook series each have their own target audience and structure, it is well worth your time to browse your local library or bookstore to find the one(s) you like best. To get you started, here is some general information on the most popular series:

Culture Smart! – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.
DK Eyewitness – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.
Fodor's – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.
Frommer's – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.
Insight – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.
Lonely Planet – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.
National Geographic – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.
Rough Guides –For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

Maps:
Most hotels will provide maps free of charge at the reception desk or in your room. These maps are usually sufficient for our travelers, but if you plan on any independent exploration, you may wish to consider purchasing a map before your departure. This can be especially useful in a country that doesn't use the Roman alphabet as the hotel maps may only be printed in the local language.

Some recommended map series include: Rand McNally international maps (especially the StreetWise series), Insight's FlexiMaps, and Rough Guide's destination maps. We suggest that you visit your local bookstore or library to get a better sense of which type of map is best for your needs before making a purchase.

Suggested Movies
Here are few of our favorite movies that are about, or set in, or from the region you'll be traveling. Most are available at movie rental stores and websites—or even your public library. Sometimes films produced outside of the US may be hard to find, but they are usually available online. Lists are highly subjective –if your favorites are missing, start a chat with fellow travelers and you'll likely find even more treasured movies to share.

Austria

The Sound of Music
Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* is one of the most popular movie musicals of all time. Based on the true story of the Trapp Family Singers, this 1965 classic tells the heartwarming story of a woman who leaves an Austrian convent to become a governess to the children of a naval officer widower. Filmed in the picturesque rolling hills of Salzburg, Austria, this melodic masterpiece has it all—spectacular scenery, old-fashioned family values, romance, comedy, and adventure.

Czech Republic

Divided We Fall
In this 2000 comedy drama from director Jan Hrebejk, a couple from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia agrees to hide a Jewish teenager in their home. During this time, Josef and Marie Cizek's marriage begins to show signs of strain as a result of the political tension and Marie's inability to become pregnant. The situation worsens when an acquaintance of theirs becomes a Nazi collaborator and asks them to house a Nazi clerk. *Divided We Fall* is a reminder of the kinds of choices made by millions of people during times of devastation.

Closely Watched Trains
This 1966 film is about a boy working at a train station in German-occupied Czechoslovakia during World War II. Oblivious to the war around him, the young boy embarks on a journey of sexual awakening and self-discovery—revealing just how the film's subtle comedic flair complements its dramatic underpinnings. Perhaps the pinnacle of all Czech New Wave films, this film offers great insights into the country's unique cultural identity.

Romania

The Death of Mr. Lazarescu
In this Romanian dark comedy from director Cristi Puiu, a 63-year-old man with a history of excessive drinking starts to feel ill and calls an ambulance for help. Mr. Lazarescu continuously tries to get assistance as his health starts to deteriorate fast. This 2005 cynical medical drama reveals Mr. Lazarescu's unpleasant journey from one hospital to the next.

12:08 East of Bucharest
A glimpse of Eastern Europe after that Cold War is presented in this 2006 drama comedy. It's been sixteen years since Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown, and one Romanian newsman wants to put the nation's revolution on the air after the fact. This satirical gem from
director Corneliu Porumboiu revolves around the idea of bringing ordinary citizen on air to discuss how their lives have changed post-Communist rule.

California Dreamin'
The 2007 film *California Dreamin'* is about a railway chief who delays a NATO train during the war in Kosovo in 1999. Based on a true story, the film takes you on a five-day cultural collision between the Romanian villagers and the Americans aboard the halted NATO train. From director Cristian Nemescu, this film brings forth a powerful political message while delicately balancing the comedic elements of the cultural clash.

Bulgaria

Mila from Mars
Bulgarian director Zornitsa Sophia makes her debut with this 2004 drama. Arguably the most-awarded film in Bulgaria's recent cinematic history, the film follows a pregnant teen who escapes from a dangerous man to a remote village in order to give birth to her child. Haunted by her troubled past, 16-year-old Mila struggles with embracing the present, and is frightened of the unknown and what will become of her future.

Stolen Eyes
This 2004 drama by Bulgarian director Radoslav Spassov pulls no punches in depicting a black period of recent Bulgarian history—the late 1980s. The film tells a story of an impossible love between a Turkish woman, Ayten, and a Bulgarian man, Ivan. The unlikely pair first meets at the "regeneration process," (when ethnic Turks' names were forcibly changed to Bulgarian ones.) Although they have many cultural differences, they gradually overcome their animosity and are drawn toward each other. The question is—will the people around them accept their choices?

Letter to America
In the 2001 Bulgarian drama from director Iglika Trifonova, a boy named Ivan is denied a visa to the United States and therefore cannot stay by the side of his dying best friend, Kamen. Ivan decides to take a journey to the Bulgarian countryside where he documents his experiences using the camera that was given to him by Kamen. After spending some time there, Ivan writes her a very special letter, detailing all the places he visits and people he meets along the way.

Serbia

Fuse
A 2003 comedy drama film by Bosnian director Pjer Žalica. Two years after the Bosnian civil war, a small town that is plagued by corruption, prostitution, and organized crime must quickly organize a democracy when it's announced that U.S. President Bill Clinton will be paying a visit. Meanwhile, Zaim, a retired police chief experiences alcoholic visions of his dead son, Adnan. One of Adnan's siblings attempts to sort out his brother's death and bring peace to the household.

The Professional
This 2003 film is about a surprising confrontation between two men—Teja, a passionate opponent of the Milosevic's regime and manager of a big publishing house, and Luka, a former agent of the Serbian Security Service and now taxi driver. We learn that Luka was given the mission to shadow Teja for the past ten years and report on his behavior and actions. The award-winning comedy/drama offers a touching yet irresistibly funny glimpse into the lives of these two men.

Turkey

Topkapi starring Melina Mercouri, Maximillian Schell, and Peter Ustinov (1964, color) A heist film about the theft of a jeweled dagger from the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul.

Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul (Fatih Akin, 2005, color) A Turkish documentary about the music scene in Istanbul that was screened at the Cannes Film Festival.

Midnight Express starring Brad Davis and Irene Miracle (1978, color) Based on the real experiences of an American tourist who was caught smuggling hashish out of Turkey. This is a famous film that has been referenced and parodied many times, but the harsh prison scenes can be hard to take.

Istanbul starring Errol Flynn and Cornell Borchers (1957, color) A suspected jewel thief returns to Istanbul and finds the woman he loved might still be alive.

Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites offer a wealth of information:

Visit the Grand Circle Community website for a world of travel news and information:
www.gct.com/community

Government websites:

International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)
www.cdc.gov/travel
U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel
Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.
www.tsa.gov/public
National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information
www.travel.state.gov

General travel information websites:

Travel books
www.amazon.com
www.barnesandnoble.com
World weather
www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages
www.travlang.com/languages
Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.
www.travelite.org
Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe
www.cybercafes.com
Electric current and plug types
www.kropla.com/electric2.htm
Foreign exchange rates
www.oanda.com/converter/classic
ATM locators
www.mastercard.com/atm for **Cirrus ATMs**
www.visa.com/pd/atm **for PLUS ATMs**

Country information:

www.hungarytourism.hu **Hungary**
www.czechtourism.com **Czech Republic**
www.croatia.hr/ **Croatia**
www.romaniatourism.com/ **Romania**
www.brasovtravelguide.ro/ **Brasov, Transylvania**
www.bulgariatravel.org/ **Bulgaria**
www.serbia-tourism.org/ **Serbia**
www.sacr.sk/ **Slovakia**
www.visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**
www.danube-river.org **Danube River**
www.welcome-vienna.com **Vienna**
www.turkey.org **Tourist attractions, Turkish culture, calendar of events, today's news, etc.**
www.kultur.gov.tr **Turkey Ministry of Tourism**
www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html