# Old World Prague & the Blue Danube

**RIVER CRUISE TOUR** 

Plus optional extensions:

Berlin & Dresden, Germany
Budapest, Hungary
Highlights of Poland: Warsaw & Krakow

# Old World Prague & the Blue Danube Table of Contents

| I. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS       |    |
|---|----|
| Passport Required                             |    |
| Visas Not Required                            |    |
| Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?            |    |
| Requirements for the Czech Republic           |    |
| Backup Photocopies                            | 6  |
| 2. YOUR HEALTH                                | 7  |
| Keep Your Abilities In Mind                   | 7  |
| Health Check                                  | 8  |
| Vaccinations                                  | 8  |
| Prescription Medications                      | 8  |
| 3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS & AIR TRAVEL           | 9  |
| Luggage Limits                                | 9  |
| Luggage Suggestions                           | 10 |
| Airport Security/TSA                          | 10 |
| Air Inclusive Travelers                       |    |
| Airport Transfers                             | 11 |
| 4. MONEY MATTERS                              | 12 |
| How to Carry Your Money                       |    |
| ATMs  |    |
| Debit Cards                                   |    |
| Credit Cards                                  |    |
| Chip-and-PIN Cards                            |    |
| On Board Ship                                 |    |
| Exchange Services                             |    |
| Shopping                                      |    |
| U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges |    |
| Problem with a Purchase?                      |    |
| Tipping Guidelines                            | 21 |
| 5. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP                      |    |
| In General                                    |    |
| Packing Your Carry-On                         |    |
| Travel Gear Suggestions                       | 23 |
| 6. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION               |    |
| By Destination                                |    |
| Weather Conditions and River Depths           | 26 |
| Climate Charts                                | 26 |
| 7. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY                      | 28 |
| In General                                    | 28 |
| Regional Electricity                          | 28 |
| Electricity On Board                          | 29 |
| Smartphones                                   | 29 |
| Cell Phones                                   | 30 |
|   |    |

| Phone Calling Cards                                  |    |
|--|----|
| Photo Gear   |    |
| 8. GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES | 32 |
| Aboard Ship  |    |
| Ship Specifications                                  | 36 |
| Your GCCL Program Directors                          | 36 |
| 9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS                           | 37 |
| Budapest in Brief                                    |    |
| Prague in Brief                                      | 38 |
| Vienna in Brief                                      |    |
| Berlin in Brief—Optional Extension                   |    |
| Dresden in Brief—Optional Extension                  |    |
| Krakow & Warsaw in Brief—Optional Extension          | 45 |
| 10. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY                         | 46 |
| 11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES                             | 52 |
| Books, Maps, and Movies                              |    |
| Suggested Movies                                     | 54 |
| Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites             |    |
| •  |    |



# **Passport Required**

U.S. citizens need a passport for this itinerary. Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If you are refused entry, you may be required to return to the U.S. immediately, which would be at your own expense.

#### Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

- It should be in good condition
- 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:

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. We recommend these guidelines.

- Main trip only: You will need 2 blank "Visa" pages in your passport.
- Pre- and/or post-trip extension: No additional blank pages are needed for any of the extensions.

#### 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 <a href="https://www.travel.state.gov">www.travel.state.gov</a> 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.

# Visas Not Required

For U.S. citizens, a visa is not required for entry into Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, or Poland. If you are staying longer than 90 days in any of these countries, you should check with their embassy or consulate for the applicable regulations.

# **Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?**

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about possible visa requirements. For your convenience, we recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at 1-800-556-9990 or <a href="https://www.pvsinternational.org">www.pvsinternational.org</a>.

# **Requirements for the Czech Republic**

You will need to bring additional documentation for the Czech Republic, so please read carefully. The Czech Republic has a rule that all travelers must be able to provide proof of medical coverage, *if asked*. Not all travelers will be asked—in fact, most travelers won't—and even some local officials are unaware of this rule. But occasionally, travelers are asked at passport control in Prague or by medical personnel. And if that happens to you, we want you to be prepared.

Specifically, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

- Be for a minimum of 30,000 Euros (about \$38,000 US dollars).
- Cover possible medical expenses and hospitalization charges while traveling.
- Be valid 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 evacuation or repatriation coverage—it must cover the cost of getting you back home if you need to return for medical reasons.

The good news is that Grand Circle's Travel Protection Plan DOES meet these requirements. So what type of documentation you should bring depends on if you purchased Travel Protection with us or not.

If you purchased our Travel Protection Plan: All you'll need to bring is a copy of the coverage from Trip Mate (the plan provider). You can download and print a copy of your coverage for this purpose. Go to our website, <a href="www.gct.com/tpp">www.gct.com/tpp</a>, and follow the links marked "Visit the Trip Mate, Inc. Website". This will direct you to the Grand Circle section of their website, where you can print a copy of your coverage.

If you did <u>not</u> 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 or proof of purchase from a private insurer or another Travel Protection Plan will also suffice, as long as the requirements listed above are met. However, 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.



# **Keep Your Abilities In Mind**

We've worked closely with our local Program Directors and regional associates to identify the aspects of this trip 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**

- 12 days, with 8 nights aboard a private Grand Circle river ship; and 1 hotel stay
- Return flights to U.S. often require departing from ship or hotel in early morning hours

#### **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 each day, including stairs

#### 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**

• Throughout the River Cruise season, weather conditions and tides affect European river depths; water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary

#### Cuisine

- Meals will be a mix of local specialties and familiar American standards
- Meals on board feature a variety of entrée options, including vegetarian

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**

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential if you want to fully enjoy your trip abroad. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your international itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the "Keep Your Abilities in Mind" on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- 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.

# **Vaccinations**

At time of writing, there were no required vaccinations for Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, or Poland. (That is, none of those countries require proof a specific vaccination in order to enter.) However, your doctor might feel that there are some basic vaccinations that you should have updated before you travel. Or there may be vaccinations that he or she recommends for you because of your personal medical history. We suggest you consult with your own physician at least 6 weeks prior to departure, and ask about vaccinations at that time.

If you'd like to know more about possible vaccinations for this trip—or just about health in general while traveling—the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a great resource. You can contact them online or by phone.

Online: We suggest you visit the CDC's website at wwwnc.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.

But please keep in mind that the CDC's suggestions may not apply to you! For example, you might already have some of the vaccinations they routinely recommend. So be sure to ask your own doctor.

### **Prescription Medications**

If you take prescription medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip. 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.



# 3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS & AIR TRAVEL

### **Luggage Limits**

| MAIN TRIP LIMITS         |   |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| Pieces per person        | One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person   |  |  |  |  |
| Weight restrictions      | Varies by airline. The current <b>standard</b> is <b>50lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-on bags</b> .   |  |  |  |  |
| Size restrictions        | Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit</b> ; <b>carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> . |  |  |  |  |
| 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 website 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.

# **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**, which keeps a current list of restricted items.

**Follow the TSA's 3-1-1 rule for liquids:** 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.

### **Air Inclusive Travelers**

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- 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, it is our goal to have a GCCL Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, 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 in Europe: Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. Important note on porters: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.
- U.S. Return: 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. Again, it is our goal to have our GCCL Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.
- 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.

# **Airport Transfers**

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line and have not customized your dates of travel, then airport transfers are included in your program price.

If you will be booking your own international flights or will be customizing your travel dates with our air department, then 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**. You can also find more information online at <a href="www.gct.com/airporttransfers">www.gct.com/airporttransfers</a>. Please note: You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as Grand Circle travelers who purchased included airfare, and transfers are only available the same day that the group arrives or departs.



# **How to Carry Your Money**

Carry a mix of local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card: You'll be well prepared if you plan on this combination for payments on your trip.

**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. Most banks, post offices, or exchange offices will want to see your passport at the time of exchange. It's more practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last resort in the event of a special situation.

**U.S. dollars not accepted for payment:** You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip; you will need local currency instead. 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/exchange offices or broken ATMs. Once you are on the trip, you can withdraw euros or francs from an ATM. You can also exchange money at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange money, you'll usually need your passport, bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty); new bills (post 2004) are best. You can also exchange a small amount of money on board your river cruise ship; see the "On Board Ship" section of this chapter for details.

# **Local Currency**

### Euro Countries: Austria, Slovakia, and Germany

The euro is the official currency of several countries, including Austria, Slovakia, and Germany. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euro

### 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.

### 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: 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.

#### **Poland**

The Polish monetary unit is the zloty, which is divided into 100 groszy. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 10, 20, 50, 100, and 200 zloty
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 groszy; 1, 2, and 5 zloty

You'll get a better exchange rate in Poland at one of the privately run Kantors, open 9 am to 6 pm. Kantors will also change your leftover zlotys back into U.S. dollars.

#### **Banking Hours**

- Czech Republic: Banks are typically open 9 am 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.
- **Hungary:** Banking hours may vary between seasons, but generally banks are open 8 am 4 pm, Monday through Friday. It is more economical to change your money at a bank rather than at a hotel, as the bank's exchange rate is better.
- **Slovakia:** Banks are generally open from Monday through Friday, approximately from 8 am until 3-5 pm. Banks are usually closed on Saturday and Sunday.
- **Austria:** Generally banks are open 8 am 12 noon and 2:30 pm 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday.
- Germany: German banks are normally open 8 am to 4 or 5 pm, Monday through Friday
- **Poland:** Banking hours may vary between seasons, but generally they are open from 8 or 9 am to 5 or 6 pm, Monday through Friday.

### **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 can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.

# **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.

### **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.!

#### **Chip-and-PIN Cards**

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.

# On Board Ship

# Two separate bills will be issued

• **Shipboard account:** This bill is for on board 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 (on board 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).

#### **Exchange Services**

On board 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  $\notin XX$  — 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.

### **Shopping**

There is no requirement to make purchases 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.

#### **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).

**Store Hours:** Most stores open between 9 – 10 am and close at 6 pm. On Saturdays they close at 1 pm.

#### **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 stores 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.

**Store Hours**: Long store hours facilitate shopping. Shops are open Monday through Friday, from 8 or 9 am to 6 pm; 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.

#### Slovakia

Handicraft shops in Slovakia feature pictures painted on glass or wood, puppets in elaborate costumes, and shepherd axes. Travelers who enjoy musical instruments from other countries should keep their an eye out for a *fujara*, a type of flute that is played upright like an oboe. At 3 feet long, it might not fit in your carry-on, but it is typically Slovakian. Slovakia is also known for its wines and for *slivovica*, a potent plum brandy.

#### Berlin

Berlin is a cosmopolitan city filled with a wide variety of alluring shops, specialty boutiques, elegant malls, and major department stores, including the KaDeWe at Wittenbergplatz, the biggest department store in continental Europe. Whatever you wish to buy, you can find it here. In addition to the Ku'damm and the streets surrounding it, you'll find a plethora of stores on Freidrichstrasse, Wilmersdorferstrasse, Hackescher Markt, and the Alexanderplatz. For a more eclectic range of boutiques and independent designers, stroll down the alleys of Nikolaivirtel or the historic center of Spandau.

Special to Berlin are handmade porcelain items, ranging from exquisite Staaliche Porzellan Manufactur china to kitsch souvenir pieces like freedom bells fashioned after the Freedom Bell hanging in Schoneberg Rathaus. Other popular German buys are high-quality cutlery, cameras, binoculars, and watches; goose-down comforters; glassware; and all kinds of delicious chocolates.

**Store hours**: Standard hours for department stores and stores in the major shopping areas are Monday through Friday 9:30 am to 8 pm, and Saturday 9:30 am to 4 pm. Smaller neighborhood shops may close at 6 pm.

*VAT:* Inquire locally about rebates on Germany's 16% VAT sales tax. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or your Program Director for details, and be sure to save all receipts for Customs.

#### Dresden

The best shopping in Dresden can be found near the historic *Altstadt* (old town). A stroll down Pragerstrasse toward the Elbe will take you through the *Altmarkt* (old market), which marks the intersection of Pragerstrasse and Wilsdrufferstrasse, where you can find high-quality retail outlets. Crossing the Elbe on the Augustusbrucke, Pragerstrasse becomes Hauptstrasse, a tree-lined boulevard that has hosted Dresden's oldest covered market for centuries. Hauptstrasse terminates at Albertplatz, a center for commerce and fashion. From Albertplatz, you can sortie back toward the Elbe along Konigstrasse for more high-end designer boutiques or venture further north to the cutting-edge stores of Outer Neustadt.

#### Warsaw/Krakow

Polish folk objects make good mementos and are an excellent value. Some interesting possibilities include embroidery, lace, dolls in folk costumes, prints and engravings, amber, pottery, and woodcarvings. The wide range of chain stores specializing in different local wares makes shopping in Poland relatively easy. *Desa* stores carry tapestries, painting, sculptures, and porcelain. Most stores accept local currency and major credit cards.

**Store hours**: Department stores are open from 10 or 11 am until 6, 7, or 8 pm. On Saturday and Sunday, stores are normally open as well.

**VAT**: There is a 22% VAT (Value Added Tax) build into the price of most items. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase, or talk to your Program Director about it before you shop. Be sure to save all receipts and VAT forms for Customs.

# **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, <a href="https://www.cbp.gov">www.cbp.gov</a> 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 <u>always</u> 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.

# **Tipping Guidelines**

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. To make it easy for you to budget, we have quoted the amounts in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars.

- GCCL Program Director: It is customary to express a personal "thank you" to your GCCL Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$4-\$6 per traveler for each day their Program Director is with them. Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$10-\$12 U.S. per traveler, per day. You'll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire cruise staff. For your convenience tips for the crew can be paid by credit card.
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

#### Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it's useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis**: In many cities the tip is included in the fare, and will be announced on a sign inside the cab; otherwise a 10% tip is appropriate.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** A service charge is usually included in restaurant and bar bills. If not, it is customary to leave a tip of around 10% of the bill for your waiter or bartender.
- Public Restrooms: Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually 2 zlotys in Poland, 10 crowns in the Czech Republic or half a euro elsewhere—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. In this case, the fee is set and no tip is needed. U.S. dollars are usually not accepted for this fee, so bring small change in the local currency with you to the restroom just in case.

Suggestion from our regional staff: In Austria it is best to tip in euros, but in Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland, it is acceptable (and welcomed) to tip in U.S. dollars. You might want to bring a supply of U.S. \$1 bills for tipping purposes.



### 5. 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.

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 online 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.

**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. At dinner, you will not need to don dressy clothing; men do not need a tie or jacket. You may want one or two "smart casual" outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.

Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions. 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. For warmer conditions, a mixture of cotton sweaters, sweatshirts, long-sleeved shirts, summery tops, pants, skirts, and walking shorts is recommended. 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. 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.

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.

# **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 ...

| <ul> <li>□ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.</li> <li>□ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription</li> <li>□ Sunglasses with a neck strap</li> <li>□ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger</li> <li>□ Travel money bag or money belt</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>☐ Moisturizer, lip balm</li> <li>☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor</li> <li>☐ Pocket-size tissues</li> <li>☐ Moist towelettes (packets) and/or antibacterial hand lotion</li> <li>☐ Light folding umbrella</li> <li>☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards</li> </ul> |
|--|--|
|--|--|

# **Other Gear**

| ☐ Travel alarm (or rely on wake up calls)                                    | ☐ Reading materials                               |
|--|---|
| ☐ Compact binoculars   | ☐ Travel journal/note pad                         |
| ☐ Hanging toiletry bag with pockets ☐ Hair dryer (see "Regional Electricity) | Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool/whirlpool |
| □ Washcloth  | ☐ Home address book                               |
| ☐ Handkerchiefs  | Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit          |
| ☐ Basic sewing kit   | Phrase book                                       |
| Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite),  | ☐ Water bottle                                    |
| clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper                                       | Collapsible walking staff                         |
| ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapter—see "Regional Electricity"           | ☐ Pocket calculator for exchange rates            |
| Medicines  |   |
| ☐ Your own prescription medicines  | ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta             |
| ☐ Vitamins   | Anti-diarrheal: Imodium                           |
| Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan   | ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads                   |
| ☐ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin                                 | ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin               |
| ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax  |   |



# 6. 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 weather forecast at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites (like www.wunderground.com) for those forecasts and tweak your wardrobe accordingly. You'll find historical averages and general information on local climates below – but, given recent weather extremes, it's important to consult up-to-the-minute resources.

### **By Destination**

**Hungary & Slovakia:** The countries of Hungary and Slovakia are completely landlocked, and their inland positions cut them off from the moderating influence of the Atlantic Ocean. Consequently, seasonal weather 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 are chilly.

**Czech Republic:** 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 early November. In general, the climate is similar to that of Austria, but with temperatures a bit cooler in all seasons.

**Austria:** Austria has a central European climate: variable weather reigns, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Spring weather is moderate, with intermittent sun and showers; afternoons in early spring average about 60° F and about 70° later in the season. Summers are typically sunny and warm, though you should be prepared for a few cloudy and wet days. Evenings, too, can get quite chilly. Autumn weather with some drizzle 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.

**Germany:** This country also has a central European climate: Variable weather is common, and rain and drizzle are normal occurrences year-round. The character of individual winters may also be very different from year to year, depending on whether oceanic or continental influences dominate. Come prepared for daily temperatures in the 30s, though you might be lucky and instead get a stint of warmer weather, especially in November or early December. Rain showers are certainly possible, and there may even be dustings of snow. And of course, higher altitudes have an effect on temperatures and weather.

**Berlin:** Summer in Berlin, between May and August, is pleasantly warm with lots of sunshine July and August, the hottest months, are also unpredictable – with the possibility of going from sunny to rainy very quickly. Winters can be quite cold and damp although extreme weather is rare. Snow, however, is common and days can be cold, clear, and frosty.

**Poland:** Poland has a long border with the Czech and Slovak Republics in the south and a coastline on the Baltic Sea in the north. Most of Poland has a very similar climate and the same sequence of weather throughout the year. Winter cold increases towards the east and in the southern mountains, while the coastlands of the Baltic Sea have slightly milder winters and cooler summers. Precipitation is well distributed around the year with a summer maximum of rain, often heavy and accompanied by thunder. Much of the winter precipitation is snow. Summer temperatures do not differ very much over the country. It rarely gets excessively hot but fine, sunny spells of weather and occasional droughts occur. Winters are distinctly cold and the length of really cold spells varies considerably from year to year.

### 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 Cruise Tour, Grand Circle 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. The sequence of ports visited and the days on which included features and optional tours occur may vary.

# **Climate Charts**

The following charts reflect the average *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. As your departure approaches you may wish to monitor current weather conditions online. Here is the official data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations:

#### Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity, & Precipitation

| MONTH | PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC |                                   |                                   | VIENNA, AUSTRIA   |                                   |                             |
|-------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|       | Temp.<br>High-Low      | % Relative<br>Humidity<br>(am-pm) | Average #<br>of days<br>with rain | Temp.<br>High-Low | % Relative<br>Humidity<br>(am-pm) | Average # of days with rain |
| JAN   | 34-24                  | 91-84                             | 15                                | 39-31             | 84-75                             | 13                          |
| FEB   | 36-25                  | 92-76                             | 12                                | 43-33             | 82-68                             | 11                          |
| MAR   | 46-32                  | 89-63                             | 16                                | 50-38             | 81-62                             | 16                          |
| APR   | 54-36                  | 83-51                             | 16                                | 61-46             | 76-54                             | 19                          |
| MAY   | 64-45                  | 79-53                             | 17                                | 70-55             | 76-54                             | 18                          |
| JUN   | 69-51                  | 80-55                             | 17                                | 75-59             | 76-57                             | 20                          |
| JUL   | 72-54                  | 81-54                             | 18                                | 80-63             | 76-54                             | 18                          |
| AUG   | 73-53                  | 85-53                             | 16                                | 80-64             | 78-54                             | 16                          |
| SEP   | 65-48                  | 90-60                             | 15                                | 70-57             | 84-61                             | 15                          |
| OCT   | 54-39                  | 91-68                             | 16                                | 60-48             | 86-65                             | 15                          |
| NOV   | 41-32                  | 91-83                             | 17                                | 47-39             | 86-75                             | 17                          |
| DEC   | 36-28                  | 90-85                             | 14                                | 40-33             | 85-78                             | 15                          |

| MONTH | BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA |                                   |                                   | BUDAPEST, HUNGARY |                                   |                                   |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|       | Temp.<br>High-Low    | % Relative<br>Humidity<br>(am-pm) | Average #<br>of days<br>with rain | Temp.<br>High-Low | % Relative<br>Humidity<br>(am-pm) | Average #<br>of days<br>with rain |
| JAN   | 36-26                | 87-79                             | 13                                | 36-25             | 86-77                             | 7                                 |
| FEB   | 40-28                | 88-72                             | 11                                | 40-27             | 85-68                             | 6                                 |
| MAR   | 51-35                | 85-58                             | 15                                | 51-35             | 81-57                             | 6                                 |
| APR   | 60-40                | 78-50                             | 14                                | 60-41             | 75-51                             | 7                                 |
| MAY   | 69-49                | 77-52                             | 14                                | 70-51             | 73-51                             | 8                                 |
| JUN   | 75-55                | 76-53                             | 15                                | 75-56             | 72-51                             | 8                                 |
| JUL   | 79-58                | 75-49                             | 12                                | 79-59             | 72-49                             | 6                                 |
| AUG   | 79-57                | 80-50                             | 14                                | 79-59             | 76-48                             | 7                                 |
| SEP   | 71-51                | 85-56                             | 15                                | 71-52             | 82-52                             | 5                                 |
| OCT   | 59-42                | 89-64                             | 16                                | 59-43             | 86-60                             | 5                                 |
| NOV   | 45-34                | 88-77                             | 16                                | 45-34             | 87-75                             | 8                                 |
| DEC   | 38-30                | 86-80                             | 14                                | 38-28             | 86-79                             | 8                                 |

| MONTH | BERLIN, GERMANY (optional extension) |                                   |                                   | WARSAW, POLAND<br>(optional extension) |                                   |                                   |
|-------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|       | Temp.<br>High-Low                    | % Relative<br>Humidity<br>(am-pm) | Average #<br>of days<br>with rain | Temp.<br>High-Low                      | % Relative<br>Humidity<br>(am-pm) | Average #<br>of days<br>with rain |
| JAN   | 35-26                                | 89-83                             | 17                                | 33-24                                  | 88-84                             | 15                                |
| FEB   | 39-27                                | 90-76                             | 13                                | 34-24                                  | 89-79                             | 13                                |
| MAR   | 47-33                                | 88-64                             | 17                                | 44-31                                  | 88-67                             | 15                                |
| APR   | 54-37                                | 84-54                             | 15                                | 54-37                                  | 83-58                             | 15                                |
| MAY   | 65-45                                | 78-50                             | 15                                | 65-47                                  | 79-56                             | 15                                |
| JUN   | 70-53                                | 79-55                             | 19                                | 70-52                                  | 80-60                             | 16                                |
| JUL   | 73-56                                | 80-53                             | 18                                | 73-55                                  | 83-60                             | 15                                |
| AUG   | 73-55                                | 84-54                             | 17                                | 73-54                                  | 86-58                             | 13                                |
| SEP   | 66-50                                | 89-59                             | 17                                | 64-47                                  | 91-66                             | 14                                |
| OCT   | 56-42                                | 90-71                             | 17                                | 54-40                                  | 92-75                             | 15                                |
| NOV   | 45-35                                | 89-81                             | 21                                | 42-33                                  | 91-85                             | 16                                |
| DEC   | 38-30                                | 89-86                             | 19                                | 36-27                                  | 90-87                             | 15                                |

**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.



# 7. 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.

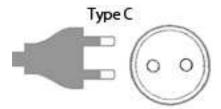
The electric current in the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland operate on 220V AC/50 Hz, and all use the Type C "Europlug" and receptacles that accommodate it.

# **Electricity On Board**

#### River Adagio and Aria

Cabin bathrooms are equipped with a 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with Europlug outlets. You will need a transformer to operate 110V appliances as well as plug adapters.

**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 plug adapter 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 midrange 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.

# 8. GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES



### **Aboard Ship**

M/S River Adagio, M/S River Allegro, M/S River Aria, M/S River Concerto, M/S River Harmony, M/S River Melody, M/S River Rhapsody

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 travelers, 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.

By owning our ships, we can assure that you'll be sharing this unique travel experience with only likeminded 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 a daytime couch
- 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.

#### **Cabin Assignments**

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Account at <a href="www.gct.com/myaccount">www.gct.com/myaccount</a>. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive on board the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

#### **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. Travelers 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 shipboard 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.

### **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.

#### **Drinking Water**

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

#### 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.

#### **Embarkation/Disembarkation**

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available at around 1:00 pm. The first meal available on board will be dinner. 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.

#### **Fitness Center**

A fitness center with an exercise bike and walking/running treadmill is available on each ship.

### **Laundry and Linen Services**

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.

#### **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.

#### On Board Activities

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

### **Passport Procedure**

For your convenience, your passport will be held by the hotel manager after embarkation and returned to you on disembarkation day. This is standard ship's procedure, and is designed to speed up border crossings and to ensure the crew has all the necessary documents on hand during potential controls in our ports of call.

#### **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.

#### **Shore Excursions**

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

### **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.

#### 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.

# **Ship Specifications**

|              | Entered<br>service | Length | Width | Passenger capacity |    | Decks | Cabins |     | Chairlift<br>o sun deck |
|--------------|--------------------|--------|-------|--------------------|----|-------|--------|-----|-------------------------|
| M/S River Ad | <b>lagio</b> 2003  | 410    | 38    | 164                | 38 | 4     | 82     | yes | yes                     |
| M/S River Ar | ria<br>2001        | 410    | 38    | 164                | 40 | 4     | 82     | yes | yes                     |

# **Your GCCL Program Directors**

During your exclusive Grand Circle Cruise Line Cruise Tour, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from up to 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 Budapest, Warsaw & Krakow, or Berlin & Dresden land extensions if you take them).



# 9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

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 will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.

## **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.

## **Drinking Water**

Tap water in the countries you visit is perfectly safe for drinking, although the water in Hungary and the Czech Republic may not always be tasty. Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.

# **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 18<sup>th</sup> 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).

## **Local Transportation**

The public transportation system in Budapest—a metro (subway), buses, streetcars, and trolleybuses—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 trolleybus tickets must be canceled on board. Don't get caught without a ticket: spot checks are frequent, and you can be fined if you don't possess one.

# **Prague in Brief**

## **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 14<sup>th</sup> 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, their flavors influenced by German cooking, and they tend toward meaty dishes accompanied by sauces and gravies. The three items that are nationwide 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 in 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.

## **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.

**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 need to buy a new ticket every time you change vehicles.

**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!

**Punch your ticket on the Metro, trams, and buses**: For the Metro, punch the ticket in the station before getting on the escalators; for buses and trams, punch the ticket inside the vehicle.

# Vienna in Brief

## **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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 sausages 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 1<sup>st</sup> District, which is largely a pedestrian zone and easily reached by public transportation. Many 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> on up to the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

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.

# **Berlin in Brief—Optional Extension**

## **City Layout and Details**

Berlin is a sprawling city comprised of several smaller towns that joined together over time. The city was largely destroyed in World War II before being occupied and reconstructed by the victorious Four Powers. Berlin served as a powerful symbol of the Cold War, and the Soviets built and maintained an 87-mile-long wall that physically divided the city. Today, only the placid waters of the River Spree separate east from west. In the two decades since the fall of communism, Berlin has reintegrated and remade itself as a unified city, a beacon for the future of Germany. For the most part, Berlin's wide, well-maintained boulevards form a sensible grid pattern, which makes the city easy to navigate.

Major thoroughfares on the western side of the city include Potsdamerstrasse, Kantstrasse, and most importantly, Kurfurstendamm. The "Ku'damm," as its known to locals, is Berlin's answer to the Champs-Elysees: a long, leafy avenue lined with upscale shops, art galleries, department stores, hotels, restaurants, bars, and clubs. The enormous Europa Center, a modern shopping and business complex, forms the easternmost terminus of the Ku'damm and abuts the Tiergarten, a verdant urban park. The Europa Center sits at the extreme southwestern edge of the park; at the extreme northeastern edge, you can find the seat of the German government, including the venerable Brandenburg Gate and the glass-domed Reichstag.

A short walk east from the Brandenburg Gate along Unter den Linden (central Berlin's answer to the Ku'damm) will take you past the University of Humboldt to the banks of the River Spree. If you follow Unter den Linden over the river, it becomes Karl-Liebknicht Strasse, and a few short blocks later, your path intersects with Alexanderplatz. Here, you'll find Kaufhof den Westens, an enormous department store rivaled in size and splendor only by Harrod's in London.

The KaDeWe (Berliners' name for the Kaufhof) resides in the shadow of the Femsehturm, an iconic television tower built by the Soviets that has become a defining feature of Berlin's skyline. Just a few blocks to the southwest, you can find the Berlin city hall, Marienkirche, Nikolaikirche, and the magnificent Neptunbrunen fountain. If you cross back over the Spree from Nikolaikirche, you'll find yourself amid the medieval architecture of the Nikolaivirtel and Fischerinsel neighborhoods, both of which survived the destruction of World War II to preserve a taste of old Berlin.

### Cuisine

German cuisine is at once local and global. You'll find examples of what might be considered traditional German fare—currywurst, sauerkraut, Apfelstrudel— alongside dishes imported by Turkish, Italian, and east Asian immigrants. Italian workers arriving to rebuild the city after World War II brought spaghetti and pizza with them, while Chinese and Thai immigrants have popularized their home countries' cooking in recent decades. But Turkish food holds greater sway over Berliners' bellies than any other, and the doner kebab is far and away the most popular food in the city. Recently, Austrian cuisine has experienced a renaissance in Berlin, making wiener schnitzel a common sight on the city's menus. The sixth floor of the KaDeWe features gourmet foods from around the world and is a must-see for anyone seeking to satisfy his gastronomic curiosity. Of course, no visit to Berlin would be complete without a few sips from a molle (glass of beer). Berlin's bars do not have an official closing time, so patrons while away the hours by nibbling on rollmops (marinated herring filets) and buletten (hamburgers without buns, served with spicy mustard) to wash down some of the best beer in the world. Pilsners are common in Berlin, and if you find yourself in one of the picturesque beer gardens near the River Spree, be sure to try Berliner Weisse, a refreshing, extra light, slightly bitter beer that you won't find anywhere else.

## **Drinking Water**

Tap water is clean and safe to drink throughout Germany.

## **Public Transportation**

Berlin has one of the most efficient public transportation systems in Europe, a smoothly integrated network of subway (U-bahn) and elevated (S-bahn) train lines, buses, trams (in East Berlin only), and even a ferry (across the Wannsee Lake), making every part of the city accessible. There's also an all-night bus service, indicated by the letter "N" next to route numbers. In summer, there are excursion buses linking the downtown area with the most popular recreational areas. For visitors who plan to travel extensively around the city, there is a "Berlin Ticket," valid for 24 hours and good for all trains and buses.

# **Dresden in Brief—Optional Extension**

# City Layout and Details

Situated near the Polish and Czech borders, Dresden sits on a wide-open floodplain. The River Elbe flows through the center of town, and unlike most major European cities, civic planners have made the riverbanks accessible to the public, creating broad green spaces in the heart of Dresden. The Dresdner Heide is the largest of several nature reserves within the city, and the Elbe meadows provide a provincial retreat within a major metropolitan area.

Dresden was nearly completely razed by Allied bombers in February 1945; the firestorm caused by the raids reached temperatures of 2700 degrees Fahreinheit and incinerated over 90% of the city. Since then, Dresden has risen from the ashes, a city marked by enlightened urban planning, spacious green areas, and an eclectic blend of neighborhoods.

The Dresden Frauenkirche is perhaps the most vivid example of the city's reconstruction after World War II. The church was gutted by the Allied firebombing, leaving only one corner of the original structure intact. As recently as 1991, the ruins were overrun with grass, but with the help of sophisticated computer modeling, the Frauenkirche was rebuilt in its original splendor, with the charred bricks of the old church intermingled with the new. The soaring cupola of the Lutheran Frauenkirche, the stately nave of the Catholic Hofkirche, and the regal mixture of baroque and Renaissance stylings of the reconstructed Semperoper and the nearby Zwinger Palance evoke the glory of Dresden's architectural past. Alongside these reconstructed masterpieces, you'll find newer Stalinist apartment blocks built during the Cold War, the post-modern New Synagogue, and the sleek glass walls of the Transparent Factory and the UFA Palast. The Botanical and Zoological Gardens in the Grosser Garten park provide a beautiful sanctuary for locals and travelers looking to escape the hustle and bustle of this modern city.

## Cuisine

Typical German cuisine is common in Dresden, but you can find some local Saxon specialities here too. *Sauerbraten* (marinated braised beef) is the most recognizable Saxon dish, and quark, a soft cheese common in this part of Europe, finds its way into a number of iconic dishes, including *quarkkeulchen* (sweetened potato pancakes) and *eierschecke* (similar to cheesecake). Potato stew, sour roast, and *lebkeuchen* (a soft gingerbread) are considered traditional Saxon fare, but no gastronomic tour of Dresden is complete without a tall glass of Radeberger, an outstanding Pilsner brewed just outside the city.

## **Local Transportation**

Dresden has long been a world-renowned center of traffic engineering, and its well-maintained *autobahnen* make the city easy to navigate by car. Public transportation is equally user-friendly, with over 125 miles of tramways providing efficient transportation for Dresdeners and tourists alike. Unlike many cities of similar size, none of Dresden's trams operate underground, making them a great way to see the city's center. Germans have a reputation for punctuality, so you can rest assured that your tram will arrive and depart according to the published schedule. Dresden also features two large rail hubs providing commuter service to the city's suburbs, along with inter-city service to Leipzig, Prague, and Berlin.

# Krakow & Warsaw in Brief—Optional Extension

## City Layout: Krakow

Krakow, for centuries the capital of royal Poland, is today recognized as a valid competitor to the historic charms you'll discover in Vienna, Budapest and Prague. Having escaped serious damage in World War II, and come through the Communist years with minimal impact. The beautifully restored Old Town, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, retains its original Medieval form, and serves as a lovely setting for Wawel Castle. Surrounded by charming streets, a plethora of Catholic churches, and classic examples of historic architecture the formal Rynek Glowny is the huge central square. The Old Town bustles constantly, vibrant with visitors and locals admiring the square, picking up flowers at one of the many florists, stopping for a snack at the bagel cart or perhaps sitting in one of the restaurants.

## **City Layout: Warsaw**

Bisected by the Vistula River Warsaw – the modern capital of Poland – is a very different animal from Krakow. World War II dealt Warsaw a particularly devastating hand – only 15% of the city emerged still standing after being razed by the German occupiers and nearly 60% of the population was either dead of missing. The Postwar years saw Soviet-style city planners, with a blank slate, design and build to their Socialist-Realist palette

### Cuisine

As with many European counties, Polish cuisine feels the influence of many cultures: Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Hungarian, German, etc., as well as a pinch of Russian, Italian, and Turkish. The focus is on meat, especially chicken and pork, and winter vegetables (cabbage in the dish *bigos*), and spices, as well as different kinds of noodles – particularly the *pierogi*. Traditionally, Poles take their festive meals seriously, and feast days — like Christmas Eve or Easter Breakfast — can involve days of preparation.

Normally the main meal is eaten in mid-afternoon or later, and involves three courses, starting with a soup, such as bouillon or tomato or more festive *barszcz* (beet) followed sometimes by an appetizer. The main course is usually meaty — a roast or breaded pork cutlet. Vegetables, though now replaced by leaf salad, were traditionally served as *'surówka'* - shredded root vegetables with lemon and sugar (carrot, celeriac, beetroot) or fermented cabbage. Popular side dishes are now boiled potatoes, and, less commonly the traditional **kasha** (cereals). Meals often conclude with a dessert such as *makowiec*, a poppy seed pastry, or *drożdżówka*, a type of yeast cake.

## **Local Transportation**

The public transportation systems in both Krakow and Warsaw offer similar convenience and value, despite the differences in the cities. Trams are most convenient for distance travel, and they run from early morning to around 11:00 pm, though it's best to avoid the trams at rush hour. Buses and taxis are economical, efficient, and simple to use and tough more expensive than the trams, are relatively economical. Krakow's center is mostly closed to traffic, and is quite compact: with many attractions centrally located, walking in Krakow is both easy and a pleasure. Warsaw, on the other hand, is quite large, so you can expect to become more familiar with the transportation system. It's complex, and you should probably seek destination specifics before you set out.

## 10. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

### 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 multi-faceted 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.

## Austria

**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.

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

**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.

## **National Holidays:**

| National I | ionuays:                           |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| 01/01      | New Year's Day                     |
| 01/06      | Epiphany                           |
| 04/05      | Easter                             |
| 04/06      | Easter Monday                      |
| 05/01      | May Day                            |
| 05/29      | Ascension Day                      |
| 06/08      | Whit Sunday                        |
| 06/09      | Whit Monday                        |
| 06/19      | Corpus Christi                     |
| 08/15      | Assumption Day                     |
| 10/26      | National Day                       |
| 11/01      | All Saints' Day                    |
| 12/08      | Feast of the Immaculate Conception |
| 12/25      | Christmas Day                      |
| 12/26      | St. Stephen's Day                  |
|            |                                    |

## **Czech Republic**

**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:** 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 Washington D.C., it is 6 pm in Prague.

## **National Holidays:**

| Manonai | Hondays.                               |
|---------|--|
| 01/01   | New Year's Day                         |
| 04/06   | 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.

**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.

### **National Holidays:**

| 1 auon | ai iionaays.                 |
|--------|------------------------------|
| 01/01  | New Year's Day               |
| 03/15  | 1848 Revolution Memorial Day |
| 04/06  | Easter Monday                |
| 05/01  | Labor Day                    |
| 05/24  | Whit Monday                  |
| 08/20  | <b>Hungary National Day</b>  |
| 10/23  | 1956 Revolution Memorial Day |
| 11/01  | All Saints                   |
| 12/25  | Christmas Day                |
| 12/26  | Boxing Day                   |
|        |                              |

### Slovakia

**Area:** 18,917 square miles **Capital:** Bratislava

**Languages:** Slovak is the official language; Hungarian is also spoken.

**Location:** Slovakia is bordered by Austria, Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. **Geography:** Situated in central Europe, Slovakia has a strategic position as a "bridge" between the countries of Austria (on its west) and Ukraine (on its east), and Hungary (to the south) and Poland (to the north); it's also bordered by the Czech Republic (to the northwest). The land has rugged mountains, rich in mineral resources, and vast forests and pastures. The Carpathian Mountains dominate the topography

of Slovakia, with lowland areas in the southern region. **Population:** 5,488,339

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 60%, atheist 9.7%, Protestant 8.4%

Time Zone: Slovakia is on Central Europe Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in

Washington D.C., it is noon in Bratislava.

### **National Holidays:**

| Republic Day                               |
|--|
| Epiphany                                   |
| Good Friday                                |
| Easter Monday                              |
| Labor Day                                  |
| End of World War II                        |
| St. Cyril & St. Methodius Day              |
| National Uprising Day                      |
| Constitution Day                           |
| The Day of the Virgin Mary                 |
| All Saints                                 |
| Day of the Fight for Freedom and Democracy |
| Christmas Eve                              |
| Christmas Day                              |
| Second Day of Christmas                    |
|  |

## **Poland**

**Area:** 120,728 square miles

Capital: Warsaw

**Government:** Republic

**Language:** Polish is the official language. It is a Slavonic language. Unlike Russian, it uses the familiar Roman alphabet, but with many additional accents. German, Russian, English, and French are spoken by most members of the travel industry and in hotels.

**Location:** Situated in the heart of Europe, Poland's low-lying plains extend from the Baltic shore in the north to the Tatra Mountains on its southern border with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To the east of the Polish border are Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine; to the west is Germany.

**Population:** 38,383,809

Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, Eastern Orthodox 1.3%, Protestant 0.3%, other 8.4%

**Time Zone:** The time in Poland is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon

in Washington D.C., it is 6 pm in Warsaw and Krakow.

### **National Holidays:**

01/01 New Year's Day

04/05 Easter

04/06 Easter Monday

05/01 Labor Day

05/03 Constitution Day

05/24 Whit Sunday

06/04 Corpus Christi

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints

11/11 Independence Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

## **Germany**

Area: 137,846 square miles

Capital: Berlin

Languages: German is the official language; Turkish is also spoken in Berlin.

Location: Germany is bordered by Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France,

Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea.

**Geography:** Located in central Europe, Germany is bordered on the west by the Benelux countries and France, and on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic. Switzerland and Austria are to the south.

Germany's northern coastline is met by the North Sea and the Baltic.

**Population:** 80,996,685

Religions: Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, unaffiliated or other 28.3%

**Time Zone:** Germany is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Berlin. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

### **National Holidays:**

- 01/01 New Year's Day
- 04/03 Good Friday
- 04/06 Easter Monday
- 05/01 Labor Day
- 05/14 Ascension Day
- 05/25 Whit Monday
- 10/03 Day of German Unity
- 12/25 Christmas Day
- 12/26 Second day of Christmas

# 11. 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 widely 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.

### 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.

#### *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.

### A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival by Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (History)

A ground-breaking work, this is the first comprehensive study to describe the resilience of the Slovaks—from the Avar invasions in the 7th century to their break with the Czech Republic in 1993.

## *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.

### 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.

## The Power of the Powerless by Vaclav Havel (Political Science)

In this 1978 essay, Vaclav Havel (elected the first president of the Czech Republic in 1993) analyzes totalitarian oppression and the mechanisms used by the powerful to subdue the spirit and morality of the powerless citizenry. He speaks in searing terms of the meaning of citizenship, resistance, and the power of the moral and truthful individual.

### **Before the Deluge:** A **Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s** by Otto Friedrich (History)

A noted historian describes this interesting and intriguing chapter in Berlin's history, a time when such well-known people as Marlene Dietrich, Albert Einstein, Greta Garbo, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Gropius, Kandinsky, and Klee all made their homes here.

## Berlin by Giles MacDonogh (History)

A 1998 study of the history, sociology, architecture, food, crime, and theater of one of Europe's most intriguing cities—on the eve of its return as the capital of the Unified Germany.

## Another Beauty by Adam Zagajewski (Memoir)

A quirky, lyrical memoir of coming of age in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s by the influential poet of the Polish New Wave. Zagajewski looks back on his life and particularly time in Krakow as a philosophy student, dissident and young writer. Susan Sontag, who provides the introduction, calls *Another Beauty* a wise and iridescent book, which dips in and out of many genres. It's many things: a coming-of-age-memoir, commonplace book, collection of vignettes and portraits, and a defense of poetry.

### 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.

## **Germany**

## Goodbye Lenin!

In this 2003 comedy drama from director Wolfgang Becker, a young German boy named Alex pulls off an elaborate scheme to prevent his fragile mother from experiencing fatal shock after waking from a long coma. Alex strives to keep the fall of the German Democratic Republic a secret from his socialist mother for as long as possible. This sophisticated satire offers a glimpse into a turbulent time of European history while revealing the great lengths one will go to when it comes to matters of the family.

#### Das Boot

One of the most authentic war films ever made *Das Boot* is a raw and compelling portrayal of a German Atlantic U-boat crew and captain as they struggle to survive during World War II. This 1981 gem from director Wolfgang Petersen revolves around the U-boat crew as battles break out, the submarine's claustrophobic interior comes to life, and the soldiers' ideals and professionalism are put to the test.

### The Lives of Others

A 2006 drama that marked the feature film debut of German filmmaker Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Set in East Berlin in 1984, an agent of the secret police conducts surveillance on a writer and his lover. As the story unfolds, he finds himself becoming increasingly absorbed by their lives. As intoxicating as it is chilling, this film quietly depicts the secret world of German espionage.

## **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

Another entry is the 1966 film *Closely Watched Trains*, 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.

## **Slovakia**

### The Shop on Main Street

The 1965 Oscar winner for Best Foreign Film, The Shop on Main Street, reveals a wealth of cinematic offerings centered on Slovakia during World War II. The film revolves around a Slovakian carpenter, Tono, who takes a job working in an elderly Jewish woman's rundown button shop. Tono and the old woman form a friendship, and Tono finds himself in a gut-wrenching situation when the order goes out for all Jews to leave the city. Will the shopkeeper elude capture and be freed from all danger and fear—or will Tono panic and prepare to turn her over to the Nazis?

# **Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites**

The following sites offer good travel 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.czechtourism.com Czech Republic

www.hungarytourism.hu Hungary

www.sacr.sk Slovakia

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