

**Jewels of Bohemia:
Czech Republic,
Slovakia & Hungary**

Plus optional extensions:

*Berlin & Dresden, Germany
and
Vienna, Austria*

2014

Overseas Adventure Travel

Jewels of Bohemia: Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary

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1. Travel Documents & Entry Requirements

Your Passport

Please take a moment to confirm that your passport meets all of these requirements:

- 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

Know that this recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. When you are on this adventure, you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration official on duty that day. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we at OAT feel that in this case, safe is better than sorry, and we strongly recommend that you follow these guidelines.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will require 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip to Berlin & Dresden, Germany:** This extension does not require any additional pages.
- **Post-trip to Vienna, Austria:** This extension does not require any additional pages.
- **Both pre- and a post-trip extension:** You will need a total of 2 blank pages.

If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages

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

***TIP:** 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 get a new passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.*

No Visas Required

The following information applies to U.S. citizens only. *All visas and fees are subject to change.*

- **Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia—no visas needed:** U.S. citizens do not need visas for stays of less than 90 days in any of these countries. However, the Czech Republic does require that all travelers be able to provide proof of medical coverage; see page 6 for details.
- **Germany (optional extension)—no visa needed:** U.S. citizens do not need visas for stays of less than 90 days.
- **Austria (optional extension)—no visa needed:** U.S. citizens do not need visa for stays of less than 90 days.

If you are staying longer in any of these countries, you should check with their embassy for the applicable regulations:

Austria: (202) 895-6700

Czech Republic: (202) 274-9100

Germany: (202) 298-4000

Hungary: (202) 362-6730

Slovakia: (202) 237-1054

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 www.pvsinternational.org.

Medical Coverage for the Czech Republic

You will need to bring along very specific documentation, so please read carefully.

The Czech Republic has an entry requirement that is different from many other European countries. They require that all travelers must be able to provide proof of medical coverage, *if asked*. When you enter the country, the officer that checks your passport may ask to see this additional documentation. (Just to be clear, we are not saying that all travelers will be asked. In fact, it is becoming less common.) But if you are asked by the immigration officer to show proof of medical coverage, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

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

If you purchased or will be purchasing OAT's comprehensive Travel Protection Plan, it meets these requirements. All you'll need to do is **bring is a copy of the plan's *Terms and Conditions* and your *paid OAT invoice***. If you are asked to provide proof of medical coverage—which may only happen if you enter the Czech Republic by air, or if you become ill—these are the documents you need to present.

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

Emergency Photocopies

The smartest and easiest security precaution you can take is to carry photocopies of key documents: the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, your air itinerary, and credit card numbers. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals. This can save you time, money, and bother if your documents are lost during your trip.

If you don't feel like taking paper copies, consider going digital. Scan everything and email it to yourself. That way as long as you have access to email, you can access the info you need. Another option is to give copies to a trusted friend or relative at home as a backup that they can email or fax to you if you need it.

2. Health

Is This Adventure Right For You?

We've worked closely with our local Trip Leaders and regional associates to identify the aspects of this adventure that you should be aware of, from physical requirements to cultural factors. **Please carefully review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** *We reserve the right for our Trip Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.*

Pacing

- 5 locations in 14 days with two 2-night stays and some early mornings
- International flights to Czech Republic depart around midnight

Physical Requirements

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 2-3 miles unassisted and participate in 4-6 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for embarking inflatable rafts

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 35-70°F
- The Czech Republic and Hungary have relatively temperate climates, while seasonal changes in temperature are more extreme in Slovakia
- The hottest months are June-August, when mid-day temperatures can reach more than 95°F
- April weather can be unpredictable and can change quickly within a short period of time

Terrain

- Travel on some rugged paths, as well as bumpy, cobblestone roads, both by bus and on foot; climb uneven stairways

Transportation

- Travel by 20-passenger coach, 50-passenger boat, and by raft
- 3-5 hour drives

Accommodations & Facilities

- Hotel rooms are smaller than U.S. and offer basic amenities
- All accommodations feature private baths

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on your adventure, there are at least four health-related things you should do. We'll outline some of these steps in more detail in the following pages, but for now, here's the short list:

- **Step 1:** Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- **Step 2:** Have a medical checkup with your doctor.
- **Step 3:** Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- **Step 4:** Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less important than steps 1-3.)

Check with the CDC (Vaccinations)

To ensure you receive any needed vaccinations, or know about suggested medications, you should check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the countries that you'll be visiting. You can contact them:

- **Online:** the CDC's website at wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel has detailed recommendations for each country and comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.
- **By phone:** toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

Medical Checkup

After checking the CDC's recommendations, we strongly recommend that you have a medical checkup with your doctor at least six weeks before your trip. (We suggest you check with the CDC first so that you can have an informed conversation with your doctor about vaccines and such.)

Topics to discuss during your checkup are:

- **The CDC recommendations.** The CDC makes suggestions based on the destination, but that doesn't mean the suggestions are right for you. Your doctor will be able to advise you on what is best considering your unique medical history.
- **Advice on what medicines (if any) to bring.** For our suggestions of what types of medications to ask your doctor about, see the section titled "Medications" that follows. Remember to get a copy of any prescriptions—written as a generic drug name—so you can replace your medications if they are lost during the trip.
- **Your fitness for this adventure. This is a must if you have any medical conditions or physical limitations.** Use the "Is This Adventure Right For You?" section on previous pages as a guideline. Make certain to review any medical condition you have, particularly cardiac or respiratory disease or diabetes, and discuss the details of the trip itinerary as it pertains to your health. Remember, your trip may take you into remote areas, with no nearby medical facilities.

Please notify us in writing about any medical condition that may require special attention. If your report is normal, you don't need to send it to us. If you send us a medical report, we don't use it to determine if you should take this trip, or if you are likely to enjoy it. Those decisions are up to you and your doctor.

Medications

Prescription medication suggestions

Of course, you'll need to bring an ample supply of any prescription medications you happen to be taking. You'll also want to talk to your doctor about any medications suggested by the CDC. In addition, we suggest you ask about prescriptions for:

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

Over-the-counter medication suggestions

When traveling, keep in mind that not every country has approved every medication. Most major brands are OK, but some medications we take for granted are not allowed in other countries. Fortunately, the U.S. State Department offers advice on restricted medications online at www.travel.state.gov/travel. (Look under the "Criminal Penalties" and "Special Circumstances" sections of each country you'll be visiting. If you don't see anything mentioned, then major U.S. brands should be fine.)

TIP: At time of writing, the State Department did not have any special warnings about American over-the-counter medications for the countries we visit on this itinerary.

Traveling with medications

To avoid loss and to have them handy, pack medications in your carry-on bag. For quicker security screening at the airport—and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas—keep medicines 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.

Jet Lag Precautions

You will feel better on the first days of your trip if, shortly before you leave home, you start to adjust to the different time zone of your destination. Since you will cross several time zones to reach your destination, you may lose many hours of regular sleep. On arrival, your body then will have to suddenly adjust to new sleeping and eating patterns. The result is jet lag. Its symptoms are fatigue—often compounded by insomnia and general restlessness—irritability, and vague disorientation. You cannot totally avoid jet lag; but you can minimize it. Here's how:

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane. Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight. Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying.
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane, and make an effort to get up and walk about the cabin a few times to keep your blood circulation normal.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Safe Water

Tap water in the region is safe to drink, but is processed differently than in the U.S. so it can still upset your stomach or feel “heavy”. Therefore, you might want to drink bottle water instead. Bottled water is readily available for purchase and is relatively inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.) Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly. When in doubt about the water, salads, or ice, just ask the restaurant or your Trip Leader. It is OK to brush your teeth with tap water.

Safe Food

We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own. Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked foods.

3. Money Matters

How to Carry Your Money

Generally speaking, you'll want to bring a mixture of different payment methods—some cash to exchange and a couple of cards—so that you'll be prepared for any situation. In this chapter, we offer some tips on each type of payment method.

One note: **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.

Cash

We recommend that you bring some cash with you on this adventure. Cash has a few advantages over other forms of payment. It is more widely accepted than any other form of payment, and sometimes commands a better exchange rate. Cash is also a better choice for rural or undeveloped areas where ATMs and credit card machines are scarce.

So we know that bringing cash is a good idea—does that mean U.S. dollars or local currency?

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip. In fact, your U.S. bank may not carry it. You can change money when you arrive at the airport, or at banks, and money exchange offices. In some countries you do not even need to exchange money at all—you can use U.S. dollars. For more information on what type of currency can be used on this trip, see the “Currency” section. **Torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills will not be accepted for exchange.**

ATMs

PLUS, Cirrus, and other international ATM networks are widely available throughout the region, so ATMs shouldn't be too hard to find on this adventure. Plus your Trip Leader can advise you on ATM locations as well.

Using a local ATM on an international network will allow you to withdraw money from your U.S. account in local currency; your bank at home will calculate the conversion rate and charge you in U.S. dollars. However, many banks charge a fee ranging from \$1 to \$5 for every time you use a foreign ATM. Others will charge you a percentage of what you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. You'll also want to notify your bank that you'll be out of the country—that way when they see foreign ATM withdrawals, they won't put a fraud alert on your account. Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

Credit Cards

Credit cards are widely accepted in Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Austria. Only a handful of businesses—street vendors, some cafes, or “Mom and Pop” stores—are still “cash only”. If you don’t see a credit card logo on the door or the cash register, then ask the cashier or server.

Please note that many European credit cards are moving to a new technology called “smartcards” or “chip-and-pin”. These cards have an embedded computer chip instead of a magnetized strip, and the card owner authorizes a purchase by entering a PIN (personal identification number) instead of signing a slip. This new technology is not common in the U.S., so occasionally there are machines in Europe that can’t read U.S. cards. Or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn’t happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don’t speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) Or you can use another form of payment. For example, a debit card can sometimes be useful in place of a credit card because debit cards use PINs.

Even if you do not plan on using them, we suggest you bring one or two credit or debit cards as a “backup” or for optional tours. We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although the Discover card is now accepted in some countries outside the U.S., it is not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

***TIP:** Many credit card companies 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 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 could 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.!

And speaking of credit cards, please keep in mind that optional tours with OAT can only be purchased with a credit or debit card (if it has a credit card logo and allows you to sign for purchases). Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to our website www.oattravel.com, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

In Austria, Germany, and Slovakia

The euro is the monetary unit of all three countries. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Bills come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 Euro
- Coins come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 Euro

U.S. dollars are not widely accepted for payment in these countries; euros are preferred.

In 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:

- Bills come in denominations of 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000, and 5000 CZK
- Coins come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 CZK

U.S. dollars are usually not accepted for payment in the Czech Republic; the local currency is preferred. Because the Czech Republic is preparing to merge into the Eurozone (in 2020), you'll also find many places in the larger cities accept Euros with no problem.

In Hungary

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

- Bills come in denominations of 500, 1000, 5000, 10,000, and 20,000 Forints
- Coins come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 200 Forints

U.S. dollars are not usually accepted for payment; local currency is preferred.

Tipping

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

- **OAT Trip Leader:** It is customary to express a personal "thank you" to your OAT Trip Leader at the end of your trip, especially if he or she has provided you with individual service. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7-\$10 per person per day.
- **Drivers:** \$3-\$4 per person, per day
- **Local guides:** \$3-\$4 per person, per day
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** When dining as a group, your tip is included—there is no need for you to leave an additional tip. When dining on your own, you can simply round up the bill. Or if you want to leave a really nice tip for excellent service 5-10% of the check is enough.
- **Taxi drivers:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change.

Shopping

It is Overseas Adventure Travel's goal to identify and provide you with shopping opportunities that highlight unique, locally-produced products with good value from reliable vendors. For this reason there may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. **Overseas Adventure Travel cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

Crafts & Souvenirs

Each country has its own specialties; here are a few that you might not be aware of.

- **Czech Republic:** In the Czech Republic many stores sell a wide range of crafts and tourist goods, such as Bohemian glass, porcelain, crystal, peasant pottery, wooden toys, and folk carvings. Modern artwork and crafts are sold at private art galleries.
- **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.
- **Hungary:** In Budapest, 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.
- **Germany and Austria:** For travelers on one or both of the extensions, both Germany and Austria are known for quality goods. Popular German buys are high-quality cutlery, cameras, binoculars, and watches; goose-down comforters; glassware; and all kinds of beers. Austria is a good place to look for traditional lederhosen shorts or dirndl skirts, classical music recordings, Mozart chocolates, and all things made from apricots (apricot jam, apricot brandy, a chocolate and apricot cake known as *sachertorte*). Vienna's many museums have great gift shops; the one at the Hunderwasser museum is especially fun.

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

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

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the *export* duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the *import* duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need 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.

If You Have a 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.

4. Climate: A Word about the Weather

Climate by Location

- **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 (optional extension):** 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 (optional extension):** 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.

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			BRATISLAVA, Slovakia		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	34-24	91-84	0.8	36-26	87-79	1.4
FEB	36-25	92-76	0.7	40-28	88-72	1.6
MAR	46-32	89-63	1.0	51-35	85-58	1.5
APR	54-36	83-51	1.4	60-40	78-50	1.4
MAY	64-45	79-53	2.3	69-49	77-52	2.2
JUN	69-51	80-55	2.7	75-55	76-53	2.8
JUL	72-54	81-54	2.6	79-58	75-49	2.5
AUG	73-53	85-53	2.5	79-57	80-50	2.4
SEP	65-48	90-60	1.6	71-51	85-56	1.5
OCT	54-39	91-68	1.2	59-42	89-64	1.6
NOV	41-32	91-83	1.1	45-34	88-77	2.1
DEC	36-28	90-85	0.9	38-30	85-80	2.0

MONTH	BUDAPEST, Hungary		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Avg # of Days with Precip.
JAN	36-25	86-77	19
FEB	40-27	85-68	17
MAR	51-35	81-57	20
APR	60-41	75-51	22
MAY	70-51	73-51	25
JUN	75-56	72-51	24
JUL	79-59	72-49	23
AUG	79-59	76-48	20
SEP	71-52	82-52	15
OCT	59-43	86-60	17
NOV	45-34	87-75	19
DEC	38-28	86-79	21

MONTH	BERLIN, Germany (optional extension)			VIENNA, Austria (optional extension)		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Avg # of Days with Precip.	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	35-26	89-83	23	39-31	84-75	0.8
FEB	39-27	90-76	18	43-33	82-68	1.1
MAR	47-33	88-64	20	50-38	81-62	1.5
APR	54-37	84-54	16	61-46	76-54	1.5
MAY	65-45	78-50	15	70-55	76-54	2.4
JUN	70-53	79-55	19	75-59	76-57	2.5
JUL	73-56	80-53	18	80-63	76-54	2.6
AUG	73-55	84-54	17	80-63	78-54	2.6
SEP	66-50	89-59	17	70-57	84-61	2.0
OCT	56-42	90-71	17	60-48	86-65	1.3
NOV	45-35	89-81	22	46-39	86-75	1.7
DEC	38-30	89-86	23	40-33	85-78	1.4

Online Forecast

Monthly temperature averages for the countries you will be visiting, plus a current 10-day forecast, are available online through the My Account feature of our website www.oattravel.com.

5. Packing Just What You Need

Your Luggage & Locks

Luggage Suggestions

Checked luggage

One duffle bag or suitcase. Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy-duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.

Carry-on bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during driving excursions and walking trips.

***TIP:** Consider bringing a second, empty, lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home. Also, when 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.*

Locks

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.

LUGGAGE LIMITATIONS

	Number of Pieces	Type of Luggage	Weight Restrictions	Special Size Restrictions?
Main trip only	One checked bag and one carry-on per person	Duffle bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.	Varies by international airline. The current industry standard is 50lbs for checked luggage and 15lbs for carry-ons.	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches
Pre- and post-trip extensions	Same	Same	Same	Same
Remarks and Suggestions				
<p>The “Dirty Harry” luggage rule: The limits in the chart above are based on the airlines’ published restrictions. The enforcement of luggage limits is a matter of airline corporate policy. It may not be consistent in all situations and may include random spot checks, especially for carry-on luggage. Airline penalties and fines, however, will probably be immediate when and if enforcement occurs. Before you choose to go above the airline’s published restrictions, you should first ask: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> (And if the answer is yes, then you should accept that you might be charged a fee by the airlines.)</p>				

Remember, these limits can change. If the airline(s) notifies us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet. **You should also confirm both luggage restrictions and luggage fees directly with your U.S./international airline a week or so before your departure.** Doing so will keep you up-to-date on any last-minute changes, new security measures, or new fees. **Most airlines are now charging fees for checked luggage, even on some international flights.** These fees are not included in your trip price; they are payable directly to the airlines. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website under the FAQ section.

Clothing Suggestions

Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear: Comfortable, supportive walking shoes are essential.** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction.
- **Light rain gear is recommended.** Regardless of when you travel, rainfall is a possibility. While it may not rain on your trip, we suggest you bring a waterproof shell or coat, preferably with a hood. This might be a better choice than a folding umbrella, which is usually less effective in wind. (Plus it can be tricky to try to hold onto an umbrella and take photos at the same time.)
- **Layers are key.** We suggest wearing layers, so you can adjust to warmer and cooler conditions as needed.

Style Hints

Dress on our trip is functional and casual. Comfortable, informal apparel is perfectly acceptable in the countries on this adventure. Basic pants, shirts, sportswear, everyday dresses/skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended. You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants or for the Farewell Dinner, but that is completely up to you.

Traveler's Checklists

Did you know that the top two comments travelers have about packing are “I wish I had brought less” and “I wish I had thought to double-check the weather”? In an effort to help you bring less, we offer these lists, which have been compiled from suggestions by Trip Leaders and former travelers. The lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. You might also want to refer to the climate charts in this handbook or online weather forecasts before you pack. And finally, remember the Golden Rule of Packing Light—whatever you think you need at first—take half the clothes and twice the money.

Recommended Clothing Checklist

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts.
- Trousers and/or jeans.
- Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking/ running shoes or low-cut hiking shoes, with arch support. Bring at least a couple pairs of medium- to heavy-weight socks for long walks.
- Underwear and sleepwear
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Wide-brim sun hat
- Swimsuit for hotel pools or saunas

Seasonal Clothing Checklist

- For summer departures:** Although high temperatures tend to be in the high 70s, temperatures can easily spike into the 80s and 90s. A few shorts and some lightweight tops will help you cope with an unexpected heat wave. Despite the potential for higher temperatures, you'll also want at least one piece to layer—a light sweater, a vest, or jacket—in case it gets cool at night or in case you are somewhere where the air conditioning is chilly.
- For spring and fall departures:** Light sweater and/or a warm jacket, gloves, and a scarf
- For winter departures:** Winter coat, hat, warm gloves, scarf, and long underwear

Other Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses
- Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Cold-water hand-wash laundry soap such as Woolite and plastic hang-up clothespins
- Light folding umbrella
- Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- Packets of pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial "water-free" hand cleanser
- Electrical converter & plug adapter: see "A Word about Electricity" for details

- Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- Your own prescription medicines
- Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

Optional Gear

(These are items that other travelers have suggested *might* be useful—not requirements. The extra spaces at the end are for you to add whatever you don't want to forget.)

- Travel alarm or travel watch with alarm
- Folding walking staff, sold in most camping stores (preferably rubber-tipped)
- Hanging toiletry bag (with hook to hang on doorknob and pockets to organize items)
- Basic sewing kit
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad and pens
- Phrase book
- Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

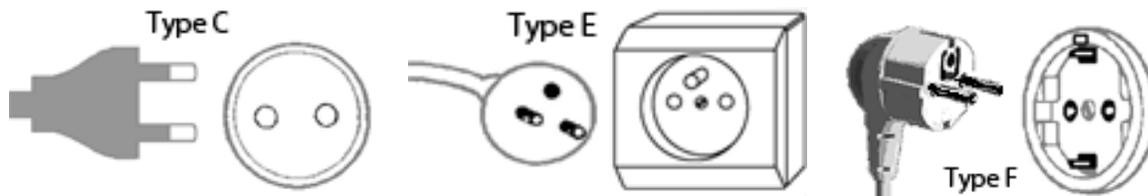
A Word about Electricity

When traveling overseas, there are a few differences to keep in mind about electricity. First, the voltage is usually different. Second, the plugs might not be the same shape. Lastly, the availability of power can vary.

Voltage: Electricity in this region is generally 220 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, MP3 players, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs: The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet—Type A, Type B, and so on. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B.

Overall, C and F plugs are by far the most common plugs in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, and Slovakia. And occasionally, you will find Type E as well. Type C plugs will fit into E or F sockets.



To plug something from the U.S. into a C, E, or F socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Since an E or F socket will take a C plug, you’ll only need one adapter, though 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 adventures. You can usually find them at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you *might* also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Availability: Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

6. Learn about Your Destinations

We encourage you to start learning about your destinations before your trip. Even a small amount of background reading can help you make sense of the kaleidoscope of facts and impressions that will come your way. Having some knowledge in advance can complement and enrich what you can learn from your resident Trip Leader.

Czech Republic at a Glance

Facts & Figures

Area: 30,464 square miles

Capital: Prague

Languages: Czech is the official language.

Ethnicities: Czech 63.7%, Moravian 4.9%, Slovak 1.4%, other 30%

Location: The Czech Republic is bordered by Austria, Slovakia, and Poland.

Geography: 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.

Population: 10,162,921

Religions: Atheist 39.8%, Roman Catholic 39.2%, Protestant 4.6%, Orthodox 3%, other 13.4%

Time Zone: The Czech Republic on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Prague.

Historical Overview

Although it has undergone many changes en route to its present form as a future leader of Eastern Europe, the area known as the Czech Republic has actually been settled since the Neolithic era. Once the seat of Bohemia—a key stronghold of the Holy Roman Republic and later the storied Austro-Hungarian Empire—Czechoslovakia only emerged as an autonomous country after the collapse of the latter following World War I.

The 20th century saw Czechoslovakia come under Communist control until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, when it dissolved (notably without bloodshed) into two nations: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. After centuries of being ruled by monarchs, the country has now become a parliamentary democracy, and much of its economy is fueled by visitors who flock to Prague, its historic capital.

Prague today is a bustling city that retains much of its Old World charm. It lies along both sides of the winding Vltava River, connected by 16 picturesque bridges. Like Rome and San Francisco, the city is built over a series of hills, with varied architecture that spans many centuries. Entering the city, one is struck by the view of its many hilltop neighborhoods, where rows of steeples stand out against the city's skyline, earning Prague the nickname "City of 100 Spires."

Prague owes much of its modern majesty to the fact that while other European capitals were leveled during World War II, Prague survived virtually intact. Among the structures to remain remarkably undamaged was Prague's great landmark, Prague Castle—the largest ancient castle in the world and still the seat of political power. Built during the ninth century, Prague Castle has evolved over the centuries, blending Romanesque, Gothic, and even Spanish architectural styles. Today, it is a sprawling complex of breathtaking enormity and a symbol of Czech unity.

A visit to Stare Mesto, the Old Town, reveals Gothic and Baroque buildings. From there, you might cross over the famous Charles Bridge, built by Charles IV in 1357, which crosses the Vltava River from Stare Mesto to Mala Strana (Lesser Town). Lined with statues and ornate lampposts, the bridge is reserved for pedestrians and offers views of Prague Castle and the skyline of the medieval city. For 400 years, this bridge was the only river link connecting the two parts of the city.

Prague's attractions do not simply include historical monuments. As it was during the zenith of the Bohemian kingdom, Prague still ranks as the thriving cultural center of the country, reminiscent of Paris in the 1920s. Here you'll find some of Europe's best jazz venues, excellent opera, and innovative theater groups.

Slovakia at a Glance

Facts & Figures

Area: 18,917 square miles

Capital: Bratislava

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

Ethnicities: Slovak 85.8%, Hungarian 9.7%, Roma 1.7%, Ruthenian/Ukrainian 1%, other and unspecified 1.8%

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.

Historical Overview

Slovakia became an independent nation in 1993—and its development is still in progress. Since independence, major privatizations of the industrial and financial areas are almost complete and foreign investment has increased, and it has turned into an economic engine for the region. Economically, Slovakia is quite progressive, earning qualification to adopt the Euro in early 2009. Due to the worldwide economic problems of late 2009, however, its overall growth and prosperity has slowed from the highs it experienced in the early 21st century.

As with the many other local countries, the history of Slovakia is complex, with earlier ethnic and cultural difficulties continuing today. Celts, Romans, Barbarian tribes, Huns, Slavs, Hungarians, and eventually Germans and the Soviet Union—as part of the Warsaw Pact in 1948—ruled the region at one point or another. The population today reflects that diversity, and it continues to struggle to find a common national identity. The majority of the population is ethnic Slovak, but there is still a large contingent of Hungarians living along the Hungarian border; and the country has a community of Gypsies, or Roma, as a significant segment of the population, while smaller ethnic enclaves are spotted throughout the country.

Bratislava reinvigorated its Old Town, which today feels both youthful and vibrant. The smudge of communist architecture has often been replaced with modern, Western style buildings. The emerging city is a far cry from its late 20th century composition. Outside the city, Slovakia is still quite rural and rustic—which means accommodations, dining, and culture in general can be less than progressive.

A notable historical highlight can be found at the impressive mid-European castle of Spissky Hrad. As if grown out of the rock base of the small hilltop it perches on, the sprawling remains are reminiscent of the Incan stronghold at Machu Picchu. While these ruins overlook a placid countryside—as opposed to the dramatic Andes—the sense of an organic, intricate, and perhaps even lovingly built structure is apparent.

Hungary at a Glance

Facts & figures

Area: 35,919 square miles

Capital: Budapest

Languages: Hungarian (Magyar) is the official language.

Ethnicities: Hungarian 92.3%, Roma 1.9%, other or unknown 5.8%

Location: Hungary is located in central Europe

Geography: Hungary is a landlocked country that has borders with seven countries: Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia to the east; Serbia-Montenegro and Romania to the south; Ukraine to the northeast; and Slovakia directly to the north. Most of Hungary is a fertile, rolling plain lying east of the Danube River, and drained by the Danube and Tisza Rivers.

Population: 9,939,470

Religion: Roman Catholic 52%, Calvinist 16%, Lutheran 3%, other 14%, unaffiliated 15%

Time Zone: Hungary is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Budapest.

Historical Overview

Today Hungary is a parliamentary republic, with a wealth of architecture and ruins left behind from its medieval, Ottoman, and Imperial periods—all of which hints at its multifaceted past.

Though the people of Hungary consider Attila the Hun their first great leader, the Kingdom of Hungary as it exists today began with King Stephen I, who accepted a crown sent by the Pope in 1000 and later went on to be canonized as a saint. The Ottoman and Habsburg empires clashed over the region during the 16th and 17th centuries; by the 18th century, Hungary had become part of the massive Austro-Hungarian protectorate that reigned supreme over much of Europe. The World War I Treaty of Trianon stripped Hungary of much of its territories—including eight of its ten major cities—and the country came under Communist control until 1989.

Modern Hungary is on full display in Budapest, a lively capital city that acts as the political and cultural heart of the nation. This is a city full of monuments to its past, but also a place of arts and culture, cafes and restaurants, and museums and galleries, all enhanced by the presence of the Danube River, which flows through Budapest and divides the city into Pest on the east bank and Buda on the west bank.

While Budapest flourished as a cultural and commercial center in the latter part of the 1800s, the city greatly expanded the number of its buildings to meet the needs of its ever-growing populace. As you walk through the city, you'll see that many of Budapest's structures reflect two architectural styles—Historicism and the more predominant Hungarian Art Nouveau. The variations of this Art Nouveau embellished the façades of buildings with decorative ceramic tiles characteristic of Hungarian folk motifs. The cityscape has retained its Art Nouveau elegance throughout the 20th century and is now protected by its inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Margaret Island is one of the more unusual destinations in Budapest. The island does not allow motorized traffic; buses, horse-drawn carriages, bicycles, and walking are the means of getting around the island. The giant Water Tower building dominates the landscape. There are also the ruins of a convent of Dominican nuns where the island's namesake, Margaret—daughter of the King of Hungary—lived as a nun in the 13th century.

Hungary's modern attractions, which include its lavish thermal spas and noted restaurants, are as popular with visitors as its ancient treasures. It is also known for its prized Tokaj wines, and dishes like goulash and foie gras have become culinary staples around the world.

Germany at a Glance—optional extension

Facts & Figures

Area: 137,846 square miles

Capital: Berlin

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

Ethnicities: German 91.5%, Turkish 2.4%, other 6.1% (made up largely of Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish)

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: 81,147,265

Religions: Protestant 38%, Roman Catholic 34%, unaffiliated or other 26.3%

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.

Historical Overview

Though the story of Germany includes centuries-old tribal settlements, the reign of Charlemagne, and the rise of imperialism, its more recent history—including the wars of the 20th century and the aftermath—has had the largest cultural and psychological influence on the country.

Germany's capital, Berlin, is a city completely transformed by the 20th century. Divided at the end of World War II, blockaded by the Soviets during the Cold War, driven apart by a cruel grey wall, Berlin was finally returned to its present, united form by the sledgehammers of freedom fighters. However, the city's divided history has led to a truly unique collection of architectural styles. The Reichstag, site of the final defense of the Third Reich, was rebuilt after World War II and now features an enormous glass sphere, emphasizing the transparency and openness of the new Germany.

Nearby Potsdam also played an important role in shaping the post-war world. Stalin, Truman, and Churchill met here to determine how to deal with a defeated Germany, and the city's Glienicke Bridge became known as the "Bridge of Spies" during the Cold War, as the superpowers used its midpoint as a place to exchange captured agents.

Germany's second largest city, Hamburg, was devastated by Allied bombings during the World War II. Today, however, this northern port is a thriving business and cultural center, hearkening back to its past as an important free trading center during the Middle Ages.

Another notable cultural center is Dresden, a mecca for Germany's artists, whose complete destruction was catalogued in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*. Following the war, Dresden was rebuilt from the ground up. Today, the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady), whose ruins stood as a stark reminder of the war, has been totally reconstructed, incorporating the charred bricks of the original structure as a tribute to its past. Since reconstruction, Dresden has, for the most part, returned to its place as one of Europe's major cultural leaders.

Nuremberg has similarly been intrinsically connected to World War II in the minds of many visitors. While this city is now known for being the site of major Nazi activity during the war—and the high-profile trials that followed—this politically important city has actually been at the center of world politics for centuries, dating back to its position as the unofficial capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Though Allied bombing destroyed much of its medieval city center, the city has been largely rebuilt, once again a hub of trade and culture in Germany.

Meanwhile, Munich is a convenient location from which to explore scenic Bavaria, Germany. Its German name, München, derives from the German word for “monks,” a nod to the Benedictine monks who founded this city. The third-largest city in Germany, after Hamburg and Berlin, Munich prides itself on being a Weltdorf (world village), where an international stream of visitors comes to explore its museums, shop its high-fashion boutiques, and revel in its seemingly contradictory Gemütlichkeit (coziness).

Austria at a Glance—optional extension

Facts & Figures

Area: 32,375 square miles

Capital: Vienna

Languages: German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.

Ethnicities: Austrians 91.1%, former Yugoslavs 4% (includes Croatians, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosniaks), Turks 1.6%, German 0.9%, other or unspecified 2.4%

Location: Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.

Geography: Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.

Population: 8,221,646

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.

Historical Overview

Once a powerful empire and later an occupied land, Austria now sits at the heart of Central Europe as a neutral state that shares borders with the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Switzerland.

Originally settled by Celts and later conquered by Romans and Charlemagne, Austria arrived on the world stage when its Habsburg family rose to power, a dynasty that ruled much of Europe for six centuries. Evidence of its proud Imperial past can still be seen in its capital, Vienna, a city showcasing the Old World charm that has for centuries helped it stand out—even in the company of other great European cities. This is a city of museums and music, art and architecture, and notable names from a storied past. Here, you can walk the same streets Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Freud strolled while conducting their daily business. Once the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna came to symbolize the splendor of an age, and its Baroque palaces and avenues, lined with architectural standouts, still exude a sense of enduring Imperial elegance and dignity.

Following the events of World War I, however, the Austrian empire was reduced to a smaller republic. During World War II, it was annexed by Germany and later controlled by the Allies. The period of occupation ended in 1955, when the Austrian State Treaty recognized its independence and declared its permanent neutrality. Today, Austria is home to international organizations and continues to thrive as a meeting point between east and west.

Culture & Points to Know

Language Barrier

You can have some great “conversations” with local people who do not speak English, even if you don’t speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Your Trip Leader can help get the ball rolling.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing most people in the countries on your itinerary is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject, try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK. Your Trip Leader can help.

Safety & Security

Common Sense and Awareness

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don’t be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash in your pocket. Carry most of your money, and your passport, in a travel pouch or money belt under your shirt. Replenish your pocket supply when you are in a safe and quiet place, or in our vehicle. Don’t leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Every hotel will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe.

Pickpockets

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful. Con artists sometimes target travelers.

Communications

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

How to Dial

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. The country codes on this trip are: +43 for Austria, +420 for the Czech Republic, +49 for Germany, +36 for Hungary, and +421 for Slovakia. Phone numbers abroad may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even numbers within a country can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Most hotels in Eastern Europe will have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. WiFi service is fairly common, but may be limited to a public area, like the lobby. If you'd like to use WiFi when and where it is available, you'll need to bring your own device. Or you could chose to rely on hotel computers instead—many hotels will also offer a limited number of computers in the lobby or business center for guests to use.

7. Additional Resources

Suggested Readings

We've listed a few of our favorite books about the region you'll be traveling. Most of these are available in large bookshops (especially those that specialize in travel or international books), by mail order, and from the Internet.

General:

Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends by Lonnie R. Johnson (History) A panoramic history of Central Europe. Stands out from other history books about the region because the author compares the underlying similarities between the different countries instead of just dividing them into East (Soviet Bloc) and West.

Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe by Anne Applebaum (History) A lot of books recount how the Eastern Bloc countries broke off from the Soviet Union, but few are dedicated to the details of how the Soviets gained control in the first place. This hefty book, written by a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist, uses detailed research and personal accounts to recount the start of the Iron Curtain.

The Bridge of Sighs: A Novel by Olen Steinhauer (Mystery) Set in an unnamed Eastern European country under Soviet control, this mystery follows a young member of the state's police force on his first big case. The only trouble is that no one trusts him and his co-workers think he's a spy. This is the first of a series that also includes *The Confession* and *36 Yalta Boulevard*.

Czech Republic:

Hastening Toward Prague by Lisa Wolverton (History) 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.

Me, Myself & Prague: An Unreliable Guide to Bohemia by Rachael Weiss (Travel Narrative) When the author uproots herself and moves from Australia to Prague she hopes to reinvent herself in a specific way—as a worldly and chic novelist—but ends up discovering more about who she was all along.

Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948 by Madeleine Albright (History) Although she was only two when the Nazis invaded her homeland (then known as Czechoslovakia), the story of her parents' struggles is movingly retold and the history of the war clearly explained in this book. And yes, she's *that* Madeleine Albright—the former Secretary of State.

The Metamorphosis and ***The Trial***, both by Franz Kafka (Literature) Two famous works by an influential author and a native of Prague. In *The Metamorphosis* (also called simply *Metamorphosis*) the main character wakes up one morning to find that he has turned into a giant bug overnight; in *The Trial*, the protagonist finds himself on trial without knowing exactly what the charge is.

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.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera (Fiction) Passion, politics, and philosophy; loyalty and lies; these are just some of the themes explored in this novel, which follows a young woman in love with a philandering surgeon in Prague of the 1960s.

Hungary:

A Concise History of Hungary by Miklós Molnár (History) The title says it all—this book delivers a readable and compact overview of Hungarian history.

Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture by John Lukacs (Culture/History) Focusing on an era when Budapest was booming, this book is equal parts history and culture.

Budapest Noir by Vilmos Kondor (Mystery) The death of a call girl in a seedy neighborhood a few days after the death of Hungary's Prime Minister doesn't seem to be of interest to anyone, except a dogged reporter. A classic noir-style mystery that unravels in 1930s Budapest.

The Bridge at Andau by James Michener (History) For a brief time in 1956 the bridge at Andau became an escape route for Hungarians fleeing the Soviet suppression of a revolt in Budapest. Historian Michener captures the dramatic nature of the true-life events surrounding the revolt and escape attempts.

Slovakia:

A Country Lost, Then Found: Discovering My Father's Slovakia by Rick Zednik (Memoir) In this touching memoir, Zednik first describes what it was like for his father to break all ties with Slovakia (due to the 1968 invasion by the Soviets); the second half of the story is what it was like for the author himself to visit to Bratislava after the end of the Cold War and rediscover his extended family.

A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival by Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (History) A groundbreaking 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 Luck of the Weissensteiners by Christoph Fischer (Fiction) When Greta, who is both Slovak and Jewish, falls for Wilhelm, who is German, everything seems to go well. But then World War II breaks out, and trouble ensues.

Berlin, Germany:

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.

In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin by Erik Larson (History) Acclaimed historian and author Larson follows the experiences of the American ambassador to Germany in 1933 as he and his family slowly come to realize the menace and danger that is Hitler's Third Reich.

Berlin 1961: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth by Frederick Kempe (History) Kempe brings his training as a journalist to bear on this moment-by-moment account of the Berlin Crisis, which led to the construction of the infamous Berlin Wall.

March Violets by Philip Kerr (Mystery) The first of a series that also includes titles such as *The Pale Criminal* and *A German Requiem*. Set in 1930s Berlin, these dark mysteries follow Bernard Gunther, a former police officer now turned private detective who specializes in finding missing people and people who don't want to be found. The language is very much like a classic noir film from the 30s or 40s.

Vienna, Austria:

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.

Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792-1803 by Tia Denora (Culture). Beethoven's life and work is examined in the context of late 18th-century Vienna, with special emphasis on the small circle of aristocratic patrons who paved the way for his enormous success, and the potent myths surrounding him during his lifetime and today.

A Death in Vienna by Frank Tallis (Mystery) Set in turn-of-the-century Vienna, this is the first of the popular Dr. Max Liebermann series. There's also a different book by the same title, but authored by Daniel Silva—that *Death in Vienna* is more of a spy story than a whodunit.

Guidebooks:

Your Trip Leader 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 U.S. may be harder to find, but they are usually available online.

Czech Republic

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

Divided We Fall directed by Jan Hřebejk (2000, color) In this comedy drama, 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.

Last Holiday starring Queen Latifah, LL Cool J, and Timothy Hutton (2006, color) In this remake of the 1950 movie with the same name, timid department store clerk Georgia Byrd is diagnosed with an incurable illness, which prompts her to set off on a European adventure. A lighthearted comedy, but one that shows off the beauty of Cesky Krumlov in the Czech Republic.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being starring Daniel Day-Lewis and Juliette Binoche (1988, color) Based on a well-know novel by the same name, *Lightness* follows the womanizing Tomas and the two women in his life in 1960s Prague. It's a story that could be set anywhere in the world—until the Russian tanks arrive.

Hungary

Fateless starring Marcell Nagy and Bela Dora (2005, color) This Hungarian film follows 14-year-old Gyorgy as he is removed from his home in Budapest and sent to a concentration camp. It's a challenging subject, but the filmmakers handle it with sensitivity. In Hungarian with subtitles.

The Shop Around the Corner starring James Stewart and Margaret Sullavan (1940, B&W) The setting is 1940s Budapest; the shop is Matuschek and Company. Two of the clerks—Alfred Kralik (played by Stewart) and Klara Novak (played by Syllavan) can't stand each other. But little do they know that they've been writing to each other (and falling in love) as anonymous pen pals.

Slovakia

The Shop on Main Street directed by Elmar Klos and Jan Kadar (1965, B&W) The 1965 Oscar winner for Best Foreign Film, *The Shop* 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?

Germany

Das Boot starring Jurgen Prochnow and Herbert Gronemeyer (1981, color) 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. In German with subtitles.

Goodbye Lenin! Directed by Wolfgang Becker (2003, color) 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.

Grand Hotel starring Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Joan Crawford, and Lionel Barrymore (1932, B&W) As people come and go at Berlin's finest hotel, drama unfolds. Berlin is barely showcased—the drama is all indoors—but we couldn't resist adding this to the list because of the amazing cast.

Run Lola Run starring Franka Potente and Moritz Bleibtreu (1998, color) When her boyfriend Manny loses a lot of money that belongs to a crime boss, Lola has only 20 minutes to run and replace the cash before he robs a store in desperation. The film actually shows three different outcomes; each time the story changes depending on minor events that happen as Lola runs. A cult classic in Germany and the U.S.; in German with subtitles.

The Lives of Others directed by Florian Henckel (2006, color) A 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. In German with subtitles.

The Spy Who Came in From the Cold starring Richard Burton and Claire Bloom (1965, B&W) This classic spy thriller is all about the twists and turns of an undercover mission by a British agent in East Berlin. The standout performance by Richard Burton garnered him an Oscar nomination for Best Actor.

Austria

Amadeus starring F. Murray Abraham and Tom Hulce (1984, color) A lavish, dark, and intense retelling of the life of Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from the point of view of his obsessed fan/rival, the Italian composer Salieri.

The Sound of Music starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer (1965, color) The plot of this famous musical about the Von Trapp Family Singers isn't 100% accurate (for example, the real Von Trapps didn't cross the alps on foot) but the songs are memorable and the scenery breathtaking. Filmed in and around Salzburg and the Austrian Alps.

The Third Man starring Joseph Cotton, Orson Welles, and Trevor Howard (1949, B&W) Vienna's shadowy underground—both figuratively and literally—is put front and center in this classic film noir with a famous chase scene in the Viennese sewers. The director insisted on filming on location, and used many places that you can still visit today, like the Prater's giant Ferris wheel and the "Third Man" doorway.

Useful Websites

Tourist information

<http://www.czech.cz/en/Home-en> **Czech Republic**

<http://visit-hungary.com/> **Hungary**

<http://www.slovakia.travel/> **Slovakia**

<http://www.germany.travel/> **Germany**

<http://www.austria.info/us> **Austria**

Overseas Adventure Travel Store

<http://www.oatshop.com>

International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

Electric current and plug types

<http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm>

Foreign exchange rates

<http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic>

ATM locators

<http://www.mastercard.com/atm> **for Cirrus ATMs**

<http://www.visa.com/atmlocator> **for PLUS ATMs**

World weather

<http://www.intellicast.com>

<http://www.weather.com>

<http://www.wunderground.com>

Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages

<http://www.travlang.com/languages>

Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.

<http://www.travelite.org>

Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe

<http://www.cybercafes.com>

U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information

<http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel>

Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency that screens luggage in U.S.

<http://www.tsa.gov>

National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information

<http://www.travel.state.gov>