
The Best of Eastern Europe

ESCORTED TOUR

Plus optional extensions in

Berlin; Vienna

EMW/EMP 2012

Grand Circle Travel
The Best of Eastern Europe
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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

We've gathered some introductory information that may prove helpful for this Grand Circle itinerary. If you expect to embark on personal exploration, or wish to discover more about the countries you visit, we suggest that you consult your choice of the many in-depth travel guidebooks devoted to your destinations. For detailed and timely information, it's wise to visit appropriate websites and confirm luggage regulations, weather conditions and other variable elements of your trip. Refer to our recommended reading list (at the end of the handbook) for alternate sources of insight.

ABOUT GRAND CIRCLE TRAVEL

Grand Circle Travel, founded in 1958 to serve the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), is the leader in international travel, adventure and discovery for Americans aged 50 and over. Grand Circle vacations have been recommended by *The New York Times*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Travel+Leisure*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, among other publications. But our most impressive reviews come from the more than one million people who have traveled with us and from readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* who placed Grand Circle Cruise Lines, the cruise branch of Grand Circle, in the Top 10 of the World's Best Cruise Lines for seven years. Grand Circle has earned a spot on the prestigious *Condé Nast Traveler* Gold List for seven consecutive years as well. For 2011 *Condé Nast Traveler* named seven Grand Circle river ships among the 20 best river ships in the world; for 2012 the Grand Circle Cruise Lines was named to their Platinum Circle of top cruise lines.

YOUR GCT PROGRAM DIRECTOR

During your Grand Circle Escorted Tour, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is a resident of Eastern Europe who is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. Your Program Director is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing tips, 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 the Program Director throughout your Escorted Tour, and during the optional trip extensions in Berlin and Vienna if you choose to take them.

1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



Passport Required

U.S. citizens need a valid passport for this itinerary.

Note

Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

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

Recommended number of blank pages:

This recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. 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 feel that it’s better to be safe than sorry, and we strongly recommend that you follow these guidelines.

- **Main trip only:** Under the terms of the Schengen Treaty, the countries on the this tour no longer require border guards to stamp your passport when traveling from one country to another; the entry stamp you receive at the airport when you first land will serve for all the countries on this itinerary. However, because the U.S. authorities will stamp your passport when you re-enter the United States, and because they may refuse to do so on a page that already has a stamp on it, you will require at least 2 blank passport pages total.

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

If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at www.travel.state.gov for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You can renew your passport by mail if it is not damaged, you obtained it within the last fifteen years, and it’s in the name you want on your new passport. Many local post offices carry forms for renewing by mail or obtaining extra pages. Allow several weeks for processing your passport. 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

U.S. citizens do not need a visa for entry into any of the countries on this itinerary.

No U.S. Passport?

Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders: If you are **not** a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. Or, you may contact PVS International directly, who can also assist non-U.S. citizens.

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

Backup Photocopies

The smartest and easiest security precaution you can take is to carry photocopies of the personal information pages of your passport, your air ticket, traveler's check serial numbers (if you're carrying these checks), and your credit cards. Store them separate from the originals. Bring along extra passport-sized photos. Add phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, for your travel protection plan company if you have purchased one and for your medical emergency network. This can save you immeasurable time, money, and bother if your documents are lost or stolen during your trip. In addition, you can scan these photocopies and email them to your personal email address so that a replacement can be printed out if needed.

2. YOUR HEALTH



Keep Your Abilities In Mind

Journeys sometimes present the traveler with unaccustomed challenges — this escorted tour, for instance, features an active itinerary with a fair amount of walking, sometimes following steep, unpaved, or cobblestone pathways. Some of the places you visit have not been improved with elevators, escalators, ramps, railings or other aids that you may be used to. If you have difficulty walking in terms of balance or stamina, or are generally inactive in your daily life consider an exercise program to tone up for your trip. For your comfort and safety, we recommend this program only to individuals in good physical condition. If in doubt, consult your physician describing the length and type of rigors you'll encounter. *Please note that this trip is not wheelchair accessible; nor can Grand Circle Travel accommodate motorized scooters of any kind.*



Health Check and Inoculations

If you have any 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. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling. You may want to have a dental exam before your trip.

If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition. If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your 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.

Vaccinations:

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

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

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

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



Jet Lag Relief

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.
- Switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane. Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Try to sleep on overnight flights.
- 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.

3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS



Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

It may seem early to discuss luggage and packing, but if you know current industry standards for international flights you can start to plan what type of luggage you'll use, how much clothing to bring, etc. The following information can help you in your trip preparations. We'll remind you to confirm your U.S./international luggage limits (and update regional limits, if applicable) in your final documents (arriving about two weeks before your departure).

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags .
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches .
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
The extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
<p>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.</p> <p>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: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.</p>	

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 than the average international flight or not, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section.

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

Luggage Suggestions

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

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your main luggage. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags. Packing is easier if you use inner bags to help organize your gear. Plastic shopping bags, nylon stuff sacks, small zipper duffels, or special mesh bags can separate clothing, gear and dirty laundry inside your suitcase. Isolate liquid toiletries in heavy-duty Ziploc style bags – which are generally quite handy to have when traveling.

Optional: 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.

TSA locks

For flights that originate in the U.S:

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, please do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has the responsibility for screening every piece of checked luggage at commercial airports throughout the U.S. According to the TSA, baggage-handling agents may require access to the contents of your luggage and will break locks as required. There are some locks available from retailers that are “accepted and recognized” by TSA. TSA screeners have tools for opening and re-locking bags using those locks, thus avoiding damage to the lock or bag if a physical inspection is required. For a list of TSA-accepted locks, visit their website at www.tsa.gov/public.

For flights outside the U.S.:

On all flights outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend you lock your luggage. This is not a legal requirement but merely a precaution against theft. Please remember to have your keys handy as you may be asked to open your luggage as part of a security screening process or for customs either in the U.S. or in Europe.

For more suggestions from the TSA, visit www.tsa.gov/public.

4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE



GCT Air Travelers

U.S. Departure: If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a GCT 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 and at the gate one hour before your departure time (security permitting).

Please note that if you are arriving at your international gateway city via a connecting domestic flight, the Grand Circle Representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

Important note on porters: Airport porters are *NOT* allowed in the customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your motor coach. Your motor coach driver will load your luggage onto your motor coach.

Arrival in Berlin—main trip & optional pre-trip extension: When you deplane from your connecting flight to Berlin, a Grand Circle Travel Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit Customs and assist you with the transfer to your hotel.

U.S. Return: At the end of your base trip or optional post-trip extension, you'll be transferred by motor coach to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCT 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 GCT Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

Name Tags: Please remember to wear your Grand Circle Travel nametag when you exit Customs, upon arrival and when you return to the U.S., so that you are readily identifiable as a GCT traveler.

5. MONEY MATTERS



How to Carry Your Money

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 or exchange offices will want to see your passport at the time of exchange. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

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

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip. You can change money at banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices. Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills may not be accepted.

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director can advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our website select the region and then click on the country you'll be visiting. A link to the currency converter is included in the menu on the page of each individual country.

ATMs and Debit Cards

Debit cards give you a reliable payment method and ready access to local currency. We recommend you use a debit card for withdrawals at ATM machines when you need cash, as it will allow you the flexibility of accessing money at your convenience without relying on bank hours for money exchanges. 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.*

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 the 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; ask your bank or credit card company about the rate before you leave.

Please be aware that credit cards might not be accepted for small purchases or in the markets. Discover credit card does not operate 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.

Please note: Optional tour payments made by credit card may take up to 3 months to process. For this reason we ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months following your trip. 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).

By Destination

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

The best way to exchange money: 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: Banking hours may vary between seasons, but generally they are open from 8 or 9 am to 5 or 6 pm, Monday through Friday.

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.

Banking Hours: 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 your hotel, as the bank's exchange rate is better.

The Czech Republic

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

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

Germany

The euro is the official currency of 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

Banking hours: German banks are normally open 8 am to 4 or 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

Austria

The euro is the official currency of Austria. 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

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

Note on Expenses: Austria's cost of living is higher than that of the other countries you'll visit on this program. If you're taking the optional Vienna extension, expect to pay a hefty amount for your personal expenses.



Shopping

It is Grand Circle 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. **Grand Circle Travel cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price.

By Destination

Poland

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.

Budapest

Budapest's main shopping area is Vaci Utca, in Pest's Inner City and its side streets. Here you will find, among much else, 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. Jewelry, particularly amber, is also on offer. If you want to see how the locals shop, visit either the Central Market (Vasarcarnok) in Tolbuhin Korut, or one of the large department stores like the Corvin Nagyaruhaz, in Rakoczi Ut, or the newest and largest of them all, the Metro-Skala, in Marx Square, opposite the West Station.

Store hours: Most stores open between 9 and 10 am and close at 6 pm. On Saturdays they typically close at 1 pm.

VAT: There is a 25% 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.

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.

The pride a joy of Czech artisans is hand-cut crystal. In Prague you will find an array of these gorgeous pieces: from quite inexpensive ones to the state-of-the-art, almost museum pieces. Many stores sell a wide range of crafts and tourist goods, such as Bohemian glass, porcelain, fine quality records, peasant pottery, wooden toys, and folk carvings. Imported goods from the West are also popular, 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 - Friday, from 8 or 9 am to 6 pm; on Saturdays they are open 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.

VAT: There is a 19% 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.

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, one of the biggest department stores in Europe. Whatever you wish to buy, you can find it here. Around the corner is the famous Ku'damm shopping area. Here the city's most upscale fashion boutiques and art galleries make for some pleasurable browsing and window-shopping.

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-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 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.

Austria

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 when you leave the country. 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 the special *Global Tax Refund* Forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

Exemption Amounts

Articles totaling \$800, at fair retail value where they were acquired, may be imported free of charge if you bring them with you. A flat rate of duty—usually a percentage—will be applied to the next \$1,000 worth (fair retail value) of merchandise. The U.S. Customs Inspector determines the value of your items when you enter, and is not bound by your bill of sale. In almost every case, however, a genuine bill of sale will be honored.

Fees on Items Shipped Home

Items shipped home are *always* subject to duty when received in the U.S. There will also be charges for shipping. Although some shops abroad may offer to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the customs facility closest to you and payment of the *export* duties (the fee to remove an item from its country of origin) not door-to-door shipping or *import* duties (the fee the U.S. government charges to bring an item into the U.S.). All additional duties or shipping charges would be the responsibility of the purchaser—you.

Therefore unless the item is small enough to mail or to be sent by a global parcel service (like FedEx) you should be prepared to pay customs duties and for shipping or pick-up from the nearest customs facility. This is why the U.S. Customs & Border Protection service states: “The most cost-effective thing to do is to take your purchases with you if at all possible.”

Illegal Items

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. For more information on what you may or may not bring back into the United States, you can obtain the publication “Know Before You Go” from the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection by phone, mail or from their website:

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229
Tel. 1-877-272-5511
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Problem with a Purchase?

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

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



To Tip or Not to Tip ...

Sometimes *that* is the question. The good news is twofold: we're fresh out of Shakespearean soliloquies, so no thesauri will get hurt here; and the answer to the question "**to tip or not to tip** (and how much to tip if you so choose)" is *always* a personal decision. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should *never* be used for tips).

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

Airport/Hotel/Pier Portage & Transfers: When using GCT transfer services, tips to hotel, airport, and pier porters are included in the cost of your trip. Tips to the motor coach driver for your airport/hotel/pier transfers are also paid by GCT.

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

Included Group Meals: Your Program Director will tip waiters for the included meals when the group dines together.

Time at Leisure: During the times that you explore independently, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. The following are suggestions for your areas of travel:

- **Poland, Hungary & Czech Republic:** Unless service charges are included in your bill, we suggest you leave bartenders and waiters about 10% of the check in cash. It is also customary to tip taxi drivers about 10% of the fare.
- **Germany & Austria (optional extensions):** Typically diners tip waiters 8% to 10% of the food bill; you can tip taxi drivers 10% of the fare, and barbers/hairdressers 10% to 15%. In these countries, tips in local currency are preferred.

Restrooms: It is very common for there to be a small fee (not a tip) to use the restroom. Typical amounts are about 2 Zlotys in Poland, 200 Forints in Hungary, 30 Crowns in the Czech Republic, or 50 Euro cents elsewhere. The restroom attendants are prepared to give you change if you don't have exact amount. US dollars are not usually accepted for this fee, so **bring small change in the local currency with you to the restroom just in case.**

6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP



In General

Travel light: It's a good practice to gather together everything you want to bring and then take just 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 clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.

Pack casual clothes: Comfortable, informal apparel is perfectly acceptable at each of your destinations. Basic pants, shirts, sportswear, everyday dresses/skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended. Shorts, while acceptable, are usually considered beachwear by stylish Europeans—they won't offend, but they will mark you as a tourist.

Most of our actives are designed for casual dress, but there may be some evenings when you will feel more comfortable dressed up a bit. Men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses, but you may want a "smart casual" outfit for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner—it's completely up to you. You would only need more formal clothing if you plan to dine at a deluxe city restaurant or attend an artistic performance on your own.

Warm clothes are needed year-round: For trips from October through April, you should be prepared for the cold with warm winter clothing: a jacket or coat, hat, and gloves. Instead of sneakers, look for boots or shoes with anti-slip soles because snow or frost on cobblestones can be slippery.

For trips from May through September: Although the weather is normally pleasant, it is not unusual to have surprising fluctuations ranging from chilly to hot—sometimes in the same day. Regardless of your travel season, bring long sleeves, warm socks and pants, and items to layer with—a heavy sweatshirt, fleece top or light woolens, and windproof jacket. Even in peak summer, these items can be useful in Eastern Europe, though light cottons and one or two short-sleeve tops may come in handy, too. Always dress in layers, so you can easily adjust to any sudden weather shifts.

Comfortable, supportive walking shoes are essential: The region's magnificent churches, museums, markets, and shops truly invite exploration by foot. But negotiating the cobblestone streets and rather uneven sidewalks can be a challenge—even for the most surefooted traveler. For your comfort and safety, you'll need supportive walking shoes.

Light rain gear is recommended: Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. While it may not rain on your trip, we suggest you bring a waterproof shell or coat, preferably with a hood. This is usually a better choice than a folding umbrella, which is only one more thing to keep track of and to carry.

Style hints: In religious buildings such as churches and synagogues, it is customary to wear pants or skirts below the knee rather than shorts. It is also customary to cover one's shoulders.



Clothing Options

We've included information below on the weather you can expect for the regions you'll be visiting on your travels. Taking into account the climate you'll encounter and the general suggestions we offer above will enable you to create a flexible wardrobe that's light enough for sophisticated travel and will guarantee comfort in all the conditions you can expect to encounter. The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.



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.

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



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.

What not to pack: do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. 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.

Consider ...

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses and a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger.
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Travel money bag or money belt, worn under your shirt/jacket if possible
- Compact umbrella
- Pocket-size tissues
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor (seasonal)
- Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial "waterless" hand cleanser
- Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Extra passport-sized photos
- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Swimsuit, for hotel pools

Medicines

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

Optional Gear

- Travel alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Hair dryer (this is provided in all hotels)
- Washcloth
- Handkerchiefs
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters—see "Regional Electricity" below
- Travel journal/note pad/reading material
- Home address book
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates



7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

We can't predict what the weather will be during your travels, but you'll find historical averages and general information on the climate of your destinations below. As your departure nears it's a good idea to visit the *My Account* feature of www.gct.com, where you'll find monthly temperature averages for the countries you'll visit as well as a current 10-day forecast of local temperatures and conditions. Or check Internet weather sites (www.wunderground.com is very comprehensive) for those forecasts.

Austria & Germany: These two countries have a central European climate: weather is variable, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Afternoons average about 60° F. during early spring, 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 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.

Czech Republic: The weather patterns here are similar to Austria and Germany, but it is perhaps a bit cooler in all seasons in the 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, you can expect spring temperatures to average in the low 60s, summer in the low 70s, and fall in the 50s.

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. Seasonal weather, consequently, is more prone to extremes. Summers can be very hot and winters absolutely frigid. If you're traveling during the peak of summer, be prepared for some high temperatures, though it could also be comfortable and pleasant. As fall approaches, some days may be on the cool side, but stints of warm weather still occur; by late October, the air is usually brisk, and evenings chilly.

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.

Here are the data from the weather observation stations at or closest to our destinations:

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?

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

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Berlin (main trip & optional extension)												
High	35	39	47	54	65	70	73	73	66	56	45	38
Low	26	27	33	37	45	53	56	55	50	42	35	30
Warsaw, Poland												
High	33	34	44	54	65	70	73	73	64	54	42	36
Low	24	24	31	37	47	52	55	54	47	40	33	27
Krakow, Poland												
High	33	35	45	54	64	69	71	71	64	55	42	36
Low	22	24	31	38	46	52	55	54	48	40	32	26
Budapest, Hungary												
High	36	40	51	60	70	75	79	79	71	59	45	36
Low	25	27	35	41	51	56	59	59	52	43	34	28
Prague, Czech Republic												
High	34	36	46	54	64	69	72	73	65	54	41	36
Low	24	25	32	36	45	51	54	53	48	39	32	28
Vienna, Austria (optional extension)												
High	36	39	49	57	67	72	77	77	69	57	44	39
Low	27	28	35	41	49	55	59	59	53	43	35	30

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

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY



In General

Cell phone, digital camera, camcorder, PDA, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't even exist as recently as ten years ago. The variety of digital gadgets and their usefulness when you travel – en route or after arrival – is enormous. An e-book reader allows you to keep guidebooks for uncounted countries at your fingertips and not increase your luggage weight by an ounce. (**Tip:** you can download *this* document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader. Many of those devices can display PDF files. A large screen is best, however, since PDF documents don't scale like documents designed specifically for e-readers.) Compact, lightweight digital camcorders and cameras let you bring home high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit on your travels.

Laptops/netbooks/tablets can keep you connected and promise up-to-the-minute information via Wi-Fi and the Internet. As with all gear, you'll need to determine if bringing them makes sense for you. With laptops it's often wiser to rely on Internet cafes or hotel Internet access, if available, than pay the weight and space penalty just for casual Internet use. And, of course, the more time you spend gazing into gadgets the less time you have to relish the local sights, sites, and people.

To take advantage of the devices you choose to bring, you'll need to consider some variables—particularly in regard to the services that will be available in the countries you visit. You'll encounter a range of electrical current standards, varied physical plug configurations to access that current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and different technological standards (cell phone networks differ across borders.)

You'll need to understand your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices under the different conditions you'll encounter. You'll find some tips below to ensure that your gadgets reach their full potential. Read the owner's manual *before* you depart, particularly if it's a new gadget. Pay special attention to electrical, charging and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. And remember that good preparation is the best guarantee that you'll get the most benefit from your devices.



Regional Electricity

Outside the U.S. most countries use electrical systems that differ from the standard U.S. 110 V 60 Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system. The use of 220-240 V and 50/60 Hz current is the overwhelming choice for the rest of the world. Plug shapes, sizes, and configurations vary from country to country and often inside countries as well. In addition, some plugs will work with multiple receptacles and some won't. Europe is largely and conveniently standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110 V U.S. appliance into 220/240 V 50/60 Hz service will result in a broken appliance, since the motor will burn out as it tries to run twice as fast as it was designed to run. We suggest that you bring dual voltage appliances that will work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. These are widely available, though you may have to read the fine print to confirm the dual voltage capability. With dual voltage appliances you'll only need to carry whatever plug adapters you need - which are both inexpensive and reliable.

If you do choose to bring 110 V American appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a current transformer (to cut the 220/240 V in half) as well as the necessary plug adapters. Transformer/adaptor kits can usually be found at your local hardware or at many online stores. Note, however, that transformers are unreliable and tend to burn out - which will render your 110 V appliance useless. Another option is to use battery-operated appliances-which don't need adapters or transformers-just an ample supply of batteries. (Rechargeable batteries are an economical option, but then you'll need a charger.)

Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, and Poland all use the Type C “Europlug” and receptacles that accommodate it.



If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, and MP3 player for instance – it’s handy to have a travel power strip to increase the number of available outlets for charging these devices. Some types include surge suppressors and USB-style plugs capable of charging cell phones and MP3 players without the need for a brand-specific charging block – saving weight and packing space. You’ll have to review the specifications of your device to ensure that it will work with the power strip you choose—and that the power strip will work with the various voltages you may encounter.



Cell Phones

If you want to use a cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check whether your own 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. You may also want to consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

To use your own phone, it’s best to investigate the options and fees your plan offers for international use. Consult your service provider (www.verizon.com, www.t-mobile.com etc.) for details. U.S. service is dominated by the CDMA technology standard, while most of the world uses the incompatible GSM standard. Some U.S. providers do offer GSM, but in either case you may incur high international roaming fees. With GSM, however, you can often choose to have your phone “unlocked” and then add a local SIM card for lower fees. If you can access the Internet as you travel, you can take advantage of email or a Skype Internet telephone (VOIP) account for the best value.

Phone Calling Cards

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, we advise that you use a prepaid calling card, because the only additional charge you'll normally incur (besides the prepaid long distance charges) is a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at your hotel. It is best to check with the hotel's reception desk prior to making phone calls to avoid unexpected charges.

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.



Photo Gear

One of the most enjoyable aspects of traveling to new places is the chance to photograph some of the highlights of your experience and bring them home. You can share them with friends and family, relive some of the important moments, and savor them for years to come. Lightweight and compact, digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel accessories—and you can find models of either cameras or camcorders that will record both movies *and* still images. Camcorders weighing as little as 9 ounces and about the size of your fist can capture high definition movies and high quality still photos; compact still cameras are great for snapshots and can capture casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can have all you need for your whole trip in a very compact, lightweight package.

Be sure to bring enough batteries. Recharging batteries is not always possible, due to a lack of outlets, electrical shortages or outages—and some cameras go through batteries *very* quickly. Whether your camera uses standard-size (double or triple A) rechargeables or proprietary batteries, it's handy to have backup for extended shooting or for an emergency. Be sure your battery charger will work with the local electrical current. You'll need to bring enough memory cards—these can be hard to find and, if found, will often be pricier than in the U.S. Whatever the storage format (usually Compact Flash or Secure Digital) memory cards are small, light and thin and, as with being thin, there's probably no such thing as too much storage. MiniDVD discs are compact to pack, as well.

Compact cameras, however, are impractical for capturing distant subjects (such as wildlife in Africa or architectural details on Europe's taller buildings), as their lenses rarely reach long distances. Some compact models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is acceptable for moderate distances. For photographing distant subjects a *megazoom* compact (physically larger than a compact – and built for lenses that telescope to 500+mm) or a single lens reflex (35mm film SLR—or DSLR for the digital variety) camera with a telephoto lens of 200mm to 300mm is ideal. With a DSLR you can consider wide-angle lenses, which are valuable for panoramic shots, and fast prime lenses for low light/no flash situations. As your photographic gear gets more elaborate, however, you'll need to consider luggage weight and size constraints. Professional quality equipment weighs more, is larger in size, and multiple lenses add size and weight. A single megazoom lens for your DSLR may be the best option for a walk-around travel lens. Large lenses that need tripod support, or double reflex cameras are impractical for casual travel photography. If you use a SLR camera, protect your lens with a UV filter and remember to bring lens caps and covers. When traveling it is easy to get dirt or moisture on the front of your lens, which could permanently damage it. A screw-in filter can protect the lens and if the filter is damaged, it is much less expensive to replace than a lens; caps and covers are common sense.

Bring lens paper for cleaning the lens and a waterproof bag to protect your camera—a heavy duty Ziploc style bag is a good choice. If your camera's flash is detachable, remember to pack it. Be sure to bring a camera with a flash that can be turned off, and learn how to turn it off when it's not needed. (At some sites, and in many museums, flashes are not permitted; in other situations flashes can frighten wary wildlife.) It's good to note that in some countries you may be charged for photography at specific sites;

and that some cultures and individuals are less receptive to photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs.

Disposable cameras are also an option. They are inexpensive and capable of perfectly acceptable photos in light that is not too dim *or* bright. A panoramic disposable can add a particularly interesting perspective when compared to standard photo formats—and may suggest inventive ways of seeing your subjects. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so poses no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Escorted 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 Travel Program Director or Hospitality Desk Representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.



Drinking Water

The water in Warsaw, Krakow, Budapest, and Prague is safe for drinking (and the tap water in both Berlin and Vienna, the optional extensions, is perfectly fine to drink as well). In addition, bottled water is readily available.

The quality of water in areas of the Czech Republic outside of Prague varies greatly. Your Program Director will advise you. When in doubt, it's always safest to drink only bottled water, sold in hotels, restaurants, and food shops.



Laundry Service

Laundry and dry cleaning services are available at your hotels for a fee. However, since these fees may be higher than you expect, and laundromats may be scarce, consider bringing a small bottle of laundry soap to hand-wash items with. In certain places you will find a dry cleaner in the vicinity of the hotel.



Newspapers & Magazines

Western periodicals and magazines are increasingly available in much of Eastern Europe. Most hotels have newsstands where you can purchase the *International Herald Tribune*, *USA Today*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*.

Poland in Brief

Cultural Insights

Religion: The majority of Poles are Roman Catholic, and nearly two thirds of the population attends church on Sunday. The most important religious holidays are Christmas and Easter; Advent and Lent are both observed. These holidays are viewed as an important time to be with family—even if you're not too fond of everyone in the family! Traditional foods are served, such as eggs at Easter and *Oplatek* (Holy Bread) on Christmas Eve. The Holy Bread is actually made of the same ingredients as a Catholic communion wafer, only it is not consecrated (blessed by a priest). The act of breaking the Holy Bread and sharing it with someone on Christmas Eve is seen as a symbolic gesture of putting the past behind you or offering your blessing.

Visiting a home: Like many parts of Europe, it is customary in Poland to greet others with a handshake or even kisses (three) on the cheek. Flowers are a traditional gift for the host/hostess, and so is wine or vodka. For everyday affairs, a small token is polite; bigger gifts are for large celebrations or social gatherings. Of course, for Poles a party at home for 10 or more people is quite common, so a “bigger gathering” is really a party!

Namesake Day: One such celebration may be a person’s namesake day. In the Catholic tradition, each day belongs to a specific saint. People with the same name as that saint share the day as their namesake day. So if December 4th is St Barbara’s day, then Poles would wish all the Barbaras they know a “Happy Namesake Day” and perhaps present them with a gift. In Poland it is very common to celebrate your namesake day instead of your birthday—that way, no one needs to know how old you are!



Cuisine

Polish cuisine is a mixture of Slavic and foreign culinary traditions. Born as a mixture of various culinary traditions, both of various regions of Poland and surrounding cultures, it uses a large variety of ingredients. It is rich in meat of all kinds, with spices, as well as in different kinds of noodles and dumplings, the most notable of which are the *pierogi*. It is related to other Slavic cuisines in usage of *kasza* and other cereals, but was also under the heavy influence of Turkish, Germanic, Hungarian, and French cuisines of the past.

Most meals in Poland start with soup and the main course is very hearty. Traditionally people eat a lot and consume a lot of meat, preferably with a vodka shot (although vodka is for special occasions, not everyday).

Budapest in Brief



City Layout and Details

Budapest is divided by the *Duna* (Danube River) into a right and left bank. Of the city’s three main districts, two—Buda and Obuda—are found on the west bank; Pest is on the east bank.

Most of the major shopping venues, the House Parliament, the National Museum, Museum of Applied Arts, and Museum of Fine Arts are located in Pest. Buda, on the west bank, is the site of Castle Hill, Fishermen’s Bastion, Matthias Church, and the National Gallery. In essence, Pest is the hub for dining, shopping, banking, and nightlife; and Buda contains the historical and cultural part of the city. The main shopping street in Pest is Vaci Utca, now a pedestrian zone, which runs parallel to the Danube and is every bit as elegant as the Merceria in Venice or the Faubourg-St-Honore in Paris.



Cuisine

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

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

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

Some dishes for vegetarians to request are *rantott sajt* (fried cheese), *rantott gomba* (fried mushrooms), *gomba leves* (mushroom soup), *gyumolcs leves* (fruit soup), *sajtos kenyér* (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 onboard. Don't get caught without a ticket: spot checks are frequent, and you can be fined if you don't possess one.



Newspapers

Budapest Week and *The Budapest Sun* are two English-language newspapers that mix politics and culture, carry listings of concerts, culture events, and foreign-language films.

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 14th century) stretches around parts of Stare Mesto and historic Wenceslas Square. The Charles Bridge, a city landmark, stretches over the Vltava and links much of the city.

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

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



Cuisine

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

Thick soups offer some of the strongest flavors on a typical menu, with garlic, onion, and fish soup being among the tastiest. Pork as a main course is often a seasoned brisket that is breaded and fried. Another mainstay is *svickova*, slices of oven-braised beef served 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; 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.



Newspapers

The *Prague Post*, an English-language newspaper, offers information on concerts, museums, theaters, restaurants, and other events.

Berlin in Brief—Main Trip & Optional Extension



City Layout and Details

West Berlin: Most of the downtown was laid out in the late 19th century, and the streets form a sensible grid. Running from east to west, the major avenues are Kurfurstendamm (the closest thing to Main Street in West Berlin), Hardenberstrasse, Kantstrasse, and Strasse des 17 Juni. The chief north to south connections are Potsdamer Strasse, Joachimstaler Strasse, and Wilmersdorfer Strasse. The Kurfurstendamm, nicknamed Ku'damm, is lined with shops, department stores, art galleries, theaters, movie theaters, hotels, and some 100 restaurants, bars, clubs, and sidewalk cafés. It bustles with shoppers and strollers most of the day and fairly far into the night.

Just steps away from Ku'Damm's Memorial Church, on the east side of the Brietscheidplatz, is the Europa Center, a vast shopping and business complex. It houses more than 100 shops, restaurants and cafés, an ice rink, two cinemas, a theater, casino, and the Tourist Information Center (Verkehrsam). The city's aquarium and zoo complex are just across from the entrance to the Tourist Information Center (on Budapesterstrasse).

Diagonally across from the zoo is the Tiergarten, a beautifully laid-out park with some 14 miles of footpaths and 6.5 acres of lakes and ponds. Other city attractions include the Bellevue Palace, built on Spree River in 1775, and Reichstag, Germany's former parliament building. To get beyond the city

center, you can use the excellent network of buses, trains (the S-Bahn), and subways (the U-Bahn), described under “Local Transportation.”

East Berlin: Much of East Berlin has been renovated and restored in recent years and is laid out in somewhat of a grid pattern. The city center—the 4-square-mile “Berlin Mitte” district—has received a complete facelift. The shop-lined Friedrichstrasse is a major thoroughfare; it runs north to south, and leads to Johann-Dieckmann-Strasse, which in turn takes you to the large square called Platz der Akademie, still one of Europe’s finest piazzas. East Berlin’s main concert hall is here, and so are the rebuilt German and French cathedrals.

Unter den Linden is the main thoroughfare of old Berlin, along with Karl-Marx-Allee, which run east to west. On the north side of elegant Unter den Linden is Humboldt University, built in 1766. The Palais Unter den Linden is also on this street.

The focal point for shopping is the Kaufhof department store, which took over the former East German Centrum Warenhaus, located on the Alexanderplatz Square, the former hub of Berlin city life. Just past the Red Town Hall, around St. Nicholas’s Church, is the Nikolai Quarter, filled with stores, cafés, and restaurants. Just past the area of Breite Strasse, where there’s an array of fine old buildings, is the Fischerinsel area—it was the heart of Berlin 750 years ago. Today, it retains some of its medieval character, and provides a refreshing change from the postwar architecture.



Cuisine

German Cuisine varies greatly from region to region. The southern regions of Bavaria and Swabia share many dishes among them and with their neighbours to the south, Switzerland and Austria. In the West, French influences are more pronounced, while the eastern parts of the country have much in common with Eastern European cuisine and there are marked Scandinavian influences in the northern coastal regions.

Traditionally, the main meal of the day is lunch, eaten around noon. Supper (*Abendessen* or *Abendbrot*) is a smaller meal, sometimes only consisting of a couple of sandwiches. However, changing working habits have forced this to be changed in recent decades; today, it is not uncommon for many Germans to eat their main meal in the evening.

Meat is usually pot-roasted; pan-fried dishes also exist, but these are usually imports from France. Throughout Germany, meat is very often eaten in sausage form. There are more than 1500 different types of sausage in Germany.

Beer is very common throughout all parts of Germany. In most of the country, the originally Czech Pils is predominant nowadays, whereas people in the South (especially in Bavaria) seem to prefer Lager or wheat beer. Wine is also popular throughout the country. German wine comes predominantly from the areas along the upper and middle Rhine and its tributaries.



Local 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 from the time of purchase until 3 am the next day and good for all trains and buses.



Newspapers & Magazines

Detailed information about what's going on in Berlin can be found in *Berlin Programm*, a month guide to Berlin arts, East Berlin's monthly *Wohin in Berlin?*, and the magazines *Tip* and *Zitty*, which appear every two weeks and provide full arts listings.

Vienna in Brief—Optional Extension



City Layout and Details

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



Cuisine

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

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

Main courses: Familiar dishes are *Bauernschmaus* (a combination of many varied 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.



Local Transportation

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

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

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



Newspapers & Magazines

The Vienna Tourist Board puts out a monthly program of what's going on in opera, concerts, jazz, theater, and galleries, which is available at hotels and tourist offices. Similar information is posted on billboards and newspaper advertising columns around the city.

10. DEMOGRAPHICS

Austria—Optional Extension

Area: 32,378 square miles

Capital: Vienna

Language: German is the official language, spoken by virtually all Austrians. English is the second most common language, however, and is spoken in all tourist areas and major cities.

Location: Austria is bordered by Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein. It combines rich agricultural plains along the Danube with alpine peaks, lakes, vineyards, and castles that evoke the Middle Ages.

Population (2007 estimate): 8,199,783

Religion: Roman Catholic 85%

Time zone: Austria is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST: when it's 6 am in New York, it's noon in Vienna.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/06 Easter

05/01 National Holiday

05/17 Ascension Day

05/28 Whit Monday

06/07 Corpus Christi

08/15 Assumption

10/26 National Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

Czech Republic

Area: 30,464 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 (2007 estimate): 10,228,744

Religion: atheist 39.8%, Roman Catholic 39.2%, Protestant 4.6%, Orthodox 3%, other 13.4%

Time zone: The Czech Republic is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day

04/09 Easter Monday

05/01 May Day

05/08 Liberation Day

07/05 Day of the Apostles St Cyril and St Methodius

07/06 Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Jan Hus

09/28 Czech Statehood Day
10/28 Independence Day
11/17 Freedom and Democracy Day
12/25 Christmas

Germany

Area: 137,486 square miles

Capital: Berlin

Language: German is the official language. Many Germans are impeccably fluent in English.

Location: Located in central Europe, Germany is bordered in the north by Denmark and in the south by Austria and Switzerland. On the west are the Benelux Countries and France; on the east are Poland and the Czech Republic. Germany has coastlines on both the North Sea and the Baltic.

Population (2007 estimate): 82,400,996

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

Time zone: Germany is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day
01/06 Epiphany
04/06 Good Friday
04/09 Easter Monday
05/01 Labor Day
05/17 Ascension
05/28 Whit Monday
06/07 Corpus Christi
08/15 Assumption
10/03 Day of German Unity
10/31 Day of Reformation
11/01 All Saints' Day
11/21 Repentance Day
12/25 Christmas

Hungary

Area: 35,919 square miles

Capital: Budapest

Language: Hungarian (Magyar) is the official language. It is one of the more exotic languages of Europe. Knowledge of German is most useful. English is spoken by many who work in the public sector.

Location: Hungary is a landlocked country in central Europe that has borders with seven countries: Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia to the east; Serbia 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 (2007 estimate): 9,956,108

Religion: Roman Catholic 67.5%, Protestant, 25%, atheist and others, 7.5%

Time zone: Hungary is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day
03/15 Anniversary of 1848 uprising against Austrian rule
04/09 Easter Monday
05/01 Labor Day

05/28 Whit Monday
08/20 National Day (Feast of St Stephen)
10/23 Republic Day (Anniversary of 1956)
11/01 All Saints' Day
12/24 Christmas Eve
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 Boxing Day

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 (2005 estimate): 38,635,144

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 New York, it is 6 pm in Warsaw and Krakow.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day

04/09 Easter Monday

05/01 Labor Day

05/03 National Day

05/17 Ascension Day

06/07 Corpus Christi

08/15 Assumption

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Independence Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

11. REFERENCE MATERIALS



Recommended Reading

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.

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.

God's Playground: A History of Poland by Norman Davies (History) Critics regard this work as the best and most exciting history of Poland, in two volumes; the author also offers a condensed version—*Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*.

The Polish August by Neal Ascherson (History) An absorbing postwar history that culminates in the rise of Solidarity.

The Power of the Powerless by Vaclav Havel (Political Science) In his 1978 essay, Havel 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 Struggle & The Triumph by Lech Walesa (Autobiography) Lech Walesa's autobiography sheds enormous light on the issues around Solidarity, as well as reveals much about the life of this courageous leader.

Berlin, Germany—main trip & optional extension

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 (Culture) 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.

Vienna, Austria—optional extension

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

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.



Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites

If you have access to the Internet, 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.austria-tourism.at **Austria**

www.berlin.de/english/index.html **Berlin**

www.czechtourism.com **Czech Republic**

www.germany-tourism.de **Germany**

www.hungarytourism.hu **Hungary**

www.gopoland.com **Poland**

www.welcome-vienna.com **Vienna**

www.attrb.co.at **Ticket agency in Vienna**

www.viennaticket.at **Ticket agency in Vienna**

www.visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**

www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html **City guides**



Tourist Board Addresses

Tourist offices offer free brochures, maps, and pamphlets with information that pertains to many of your destinations. If these materials would enhance your vacation planning, you can write or call the following tourist board offices:

Polish National Tourist Office

5 Marine View Plaza, Suite 208
Hoboken, NJ 07030
Telephone: 201-420-9910

German National Tourist Office

122 E. 42nd St.
New York, NY 10168
Telephone: 1-212-661-7200

Czech Tourism

1109 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10028
Telephone: 1-212-288-0830

Austrian Tourist Information Office

P.O. Box 1142
New York, NY 10108-1142
Telephone: 1-212-944-6880

Hungarian National Tourist Office

350 Fifth Avenue
Suite 7107
New York, NY 10118
Telephone: 1-212-695-1221

Measurement & Temperature Conversions

Conversion Chart			
U.S. Standard to Metric		Metric to U.S. Standard	
1 inch	= 2.54 centimeters	1 centimeter	= 0.4 inch
1 foot	= 30 centimeters	1 meter	= 3 feet 3 inches
1 mile	= 1.6 kilometers	1 kilometer	= 0.6 mile
1 ounce	= 28 grams	1 gram	= 0.04 ounce
1 pound	= 454 grams	1 kilogram	= 2.2 pounds
1 U.S. gallon	= 3.8 liters	1 liter	= 1.1 U.S. quarts

To convert Kilometers to Miles:

Multiply the first digit by 6. A 40-kilometer drive is about 24 miles (6 x 4). For a one-digit figure, use .6. For a three-digit number, multiply the first two digits by 6; thus, 150 kilometers equals about 90 miles (15 x 6 = 90).

To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit:

Double the Celsius temperature, then add 30 degrees.

For example, if the temperature is 20° C, that's about 70° F: (2 x 20 = 40; 40 + 30 = 70).

For Celsius temperatures below zero, ignore the minus sign, double the number, and subtract it from 32.

Thus, -10° C equals 12° F (2 x 10 = 20; 32 - 20 = 12).

To convert hectares to acres:

Multiply the hectares by 2.471. For example, a 3-hectare area is equal to 7.413 acres: (3 x 2.471=7.413).