

Grand Circle Cruise Line®

THE LEADER IN VALUE AND WORLDWIDE DISCOVERY SINCE 1958

Your Grand Circle Travel Planning Guide



Grand European Cruise 2026

Grand Circle Cruise Line®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with Grand Circle Cruise Line. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you cruise with us, you can expect an award-winning experience aboard our privately owned river ship. In addition to the convenience of unpacking just once, you will also enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, coupled with camaraderie of your fellow American travelers.

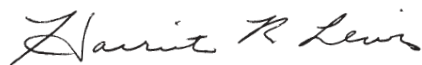
In addition, up to four **expert, local Program Directors** will accompany you from the beginning of your trip to the end. Assigned to a group of 38 travelers on average, these passionate leaders are ready and eager to share their homeland and insights as only a local can. Whether it is recommending their favorite restaurant, connecting travelers with people and culture, or providing the best ways to enhance your leisure time, your Program Director will be available to take care of all the details and ensure that you have a fun and carefree travel experience. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Throughout your journey, you will experience Exclusive Discovery Series events designed to connect you with local people and culture. From sharing traditional fare and lively conversation during Home-Hosted Visits, to discussing Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, you will gain an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-2610**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Grand Circle Cruise Line

CONTENTS

GRAND EUROPEAN CRUISE

Your Vacation at a Glance:

Where You're Going, What it Costs,
and What's Included **4**

Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary **6**

Pre-Trip Extension **24**

Post-Trip Extension **27**

Deck Plans **31**

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements... **33**

Rigors, Vaccines & General Health **35**

Money Matters: Local Currency &
Tipping Guidelines..... **38**

Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch **42**

Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits... **46**

Climate & Average Temperatures **53**

Aboard Your Ship: Cabin Features,
Dining & Services on Board **57**

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs,
Shipping & More **73**

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Austria **76**

Belgium **77**

Bulgaria **80**

Croatia **81**

Germany..... **83**

Hungary **85**

Netherlands..... **87**

Romania..... **90**

Serbia **92**

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading **94**

Suggested Films & Videos **98**

Useful Websites **103**

Useful Apps **104**



Budapest, Hungary

Grand European Cruise

The Netherlands: Amsterdam | **Germany:** Cologne, Koblenz, Rudesheim, Heidelberg, Wertheim, Wurzburg, Bamberg, Nuremberg, Regensburg, Passau | **Austria:** Melk, Vienna | **Hungary:** Budapest | **Croatia:** Vukovar | **Serbia:** Novi Sad, Belgrade | **Bulgaria:** Vidin, Ruse | **Romania:** Constanta, Bucharest

29 days starting from \$9,695

including airfare

Single Supplement: **\$1,995**

For departure dates & prices, visit

www.gct.com/gec2026pricing

Voyage from the North Sea to the Black Sea—spending **25 nights aboard the privately owned, 162-passenger M/S River Aria**—and experience eight different countries on the ultimate continuous River Cruise in Europe. Rich and textured Old World canvases come to life and rejuvenated world capitals thrive along this storied region's major waterways, the Rhine, Main, and Danube rivers.

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

IT'S INCLUDED

- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- **Accommodations** for 25 nights aboard a private river ship with wireless Internet access now in all common areas and cabins and 2 nights at the Sheraton Bucharest or similar
- **78 meals:** 27 breakfasts, 25 lunches, 26 dinners—including 6 meals in local restaurants—plus all onboard house beer & wine, as well as soft drinks
- **19 included tours** with personal headsets and **8 Exclusive Discovery Series events**—Glassblowing demonstration • Home-Hosted *Kaffeeklatsch* • Rhine-Main-Danube Canal transit & conversation • Germany & Ukraine conversation • German education system conversation • Home-Hosted Lunch • *Life Under Communism* conversation • Danube-Black Sea Canal transit & conversation
- **Local Program Directors, a Grand Circle Cruise Line exclusive:** Our dedicated experts are with you and your group of 38-45 travelers from beginning to end to provide an insider's knowledge and perspective
- **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- **All port charges**
- **Baggage handling** for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- **5% Frequent Traveler Credit** on your next trip



ITINERARY SUMMARY

1 • Depart U.S.

2-3 • Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Embark ship

Port Amsterdam

4-5 • Germany by Rhine

Ports Cologne • Koblenz

6-10 • Germany by Main

Ports Frankfurt • Wertheim • Würzburg
• Gerlachshausen • Schweinfurt • Bamberg

11-13 • Germany by Danube

Ports Nuremberg • Regensburg • Passau

14-16 • Austria

Ports Melk • Vienna

17-19 • Budapest, Hungary

Port Budapest

20 • Croatia

Ports Aljimas • Vukovar

21-23 • Serbia

Ports Novi Sad • Belgrade

24-25 • Bulgaria

Ports Vidin • Ruse

26-27 • Romania

Disembark ship

Port Constanta

28-29 • Bucharest • Return to U.S.

Port Bucharest

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 2 3 4 5 Easy

Group Size

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers with our local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

Pacing

- 27 days, with 25 nights aboard a private river ship, and 1 two-night hotel stay
- Return flights often require departing in early morning

Physical Requirements

- Walk 1-3 miles unassisted over a time period of 1-2 hours, and participate in 3-4 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs and cobblestones
- Optional activities and elective walks may be offered in addition to the above activity levels
- Agility needed for boarding small canal boats and navigating steep, slippery stairs
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must

travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip

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

Terrain & Transportation

- Diverse terrain and uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slippery in wet or colder conditions
- Travel by 140- to 162-passenger river ship, 49-seat coach, and canal boat
- Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 58-82°F during cruising season
- June-August are the warmest months

MAXIMIZE YOUR DISCOVERIES & VALUE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

all with FREE Single Supplements

Bruges, Belgium

PRE-TRIP: 3 nights from \$995

Transylvania, Romania

POST-TRIP: 3 nights from \$895

Grand European Cruise

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Bruges, Belgium*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Bruges, Belgium

Day 3 Explore Bruges

Day 4 Explore Bruges • Optional Flanders Field tour

Day 5 Bruges • Explore Ghent • Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

Day 2 Arrive Amsterdam, the Netherlands

• Embark ship

- Destination: Amsterdam
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship is docked outside of the city center; it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus. If the ship is docked in Lelystad, the driving time will increase to one hour.

Morning: Arrive in Amsterdam, where you'll be met at the airport and transferred to the pier to board your river ship.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Enjoy time to relax after your flight or set off to explore on your own a city that has successfully blended its Old World traditions

with a thoroughly modern vibe. Marvel at Amsterdam's famous tall and skinny rowhouses during your walk, noting tidy window boxes and hand-scrubbed stoops along the way.

Gather onboard for your first Port Talk—a nightly feature of your River Cruise, designed as an opportunity for your Program Directors to prepare you for the following day's discoveries.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll get better acquainted with your fellow travelers in the lounge, including those who took our optional *Bruges, Belgium* pre-trip extension.

Day 3 Explore Amsterdam • Captain's Welcome Dinner

- Destination: Amsterdam
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship is docked outside of the city center; it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus. If the ship is docked in Lelystad, the driving time will increase to one hour.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast this morning, gather for a Welcome Briefing. During this briefing, which will last around 45 minutes, you will introduce yourself and review your itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur). Your Program Director will also discuss logistics, safety and emergency procedures, and answer questions you may have.

Today's discoveries will begin, fittingly, with a morning canal boat tour—providing you an unmatched vantage point from which you can marvel at the city's remarkable architectural achievements.

Lunch: Return to your ship for lunch onboard.

Afternoon: During lunch, we'll set sail for Cologne. After your meal, you'll have free time onboard.

Dinner: You'll formally meet your ship crew this evening, during a Welcome Drink and introduction, followed by the Captain's Welcome Dinner onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 4 Explore Cologne, Germany

- Destination: Cologne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship is docked outside of the city center; it will take up to 30 minutes to reach the city by bus. Today's walking tour of Cologne will include cobblestones, stairs, steep inclines, narrow streets, and no options to sit down during the tour.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: As your ship continues to make its journey into Germany this morning, you'll have a chance to relax onboard.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: After lunch, join an included tour of Cologne. A former Roman settlement called Colonia Agrippina, Cologne came under Frankish control in the fifth century. Traces of this layered history can be seen throughout the city: Among multiple visible Roman ruins is the Roman Gate, a medieval archway that stands guard near Cologne Cathedral.

Your tour concludes outside the city's magnificent Gothic cathedral, just outside the Dom. This UNESCO World Heritage Site largely escaped the World War II damage that devastated the rest of the city (and Germany)—there's evidence that Allied forces were specifically ordered to preserve the beauty of this structure. The largest Gothic cathedral in northern Europe, the Dom boasts incredible stained-glass windows, an ornate gold altar shrine, and the intricate detail traditional for 14th-century Gothic churches.

Before returning to the ship, you'll have some time this afternoon to explore as you please. Perhaps you'll venture into the Dom to see the splendors contained therein. Or, consider learning more about the city's ancient history

with a visit to the Roman-Germanic Museum: The building was constructed on the site of a third-century Roman villa, and includes a stunning Dionysus mosaic floor.

Upon your arrival back at the ship, you'll enjoy a cocktail hour to discuss the day's discoveries with your fellow travelers before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 5 Explore Koblenz

- Destination: Koblenz
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship may be docked outside of the city center; if so, it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus. This morning's walking tour of Koblenz will be longer and include cobblestones, uneven surfaces, narrow streets, and no options to sit down during the tour.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Disembark after breakfast this morning for an included tour of Koblenz. Located where the Rhine and Mosel rivers meet, Koblenz was originally established as an outpost of the Roman Empire in 9 BC, and named *Castellum apud Confluentes* (Castle at the Confluence of the Rivers). Benefiting significantly from its prime location, the settlement grew from a small town into a prosperous city by the 13th century. Explore the narrow winding streets lined by half-timbered buildings, medieval churches, and the *Weinstuben* (wine taverns) that celebrate the region's local products.

After your tour, you have the option to spend the rest of the morning as you please. You may choose to set off for the Winningen wine region where you'll sample a selection of local wines—perhaps you'll try a refreshing Riesling white wine, which the area is known for. Or, perhaps you'll traverse the city via cable car using the pre-paid voucher provided by your Program Director.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Get your camera ready as you make your way to your ship's Sun Deck—or settle in for a window seat within the lounge—for an unforgettable stretch of scenic sailing. As you sail, you'll be treated to a view of the Rhine River's castle corridor, a stretch of valley liberally sprinkled with turreted hilltop fortresses on both shores.

Your Program Directors will help you spot each structure—and learn about important local history—as they provide commentary from the ship's bridge. They'll also be sure to point out Lorelei, a large rock rising 440 feet above the river. Ancient Greek mythology is littered with tales of sirens who lured sailors to their deaths with sweet songs. The Germanic variation of this legend places one such golden-haired creature—Lorelei—here, and it is said she enticed sailors to destruction on the reef below the rock.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 6 Frankfurt • Explore Heidelberg

- Destination: Heidelberg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The Sun Deck will be closed today because of low-standing bridges on our sailing route. Today's walking tour of medieval Heidelberg will include cobblestones, uneven surfaces, and no options to sit down during the tour.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Disembark in Frankfurt and board your private motorcoach for a transfer to Heidelberg, a historical and vibrant German university town that allures visitors with enchanting architecture, a rich literary heritage, and striking riverside panoramas. Here, you'll take in the view of the city from the ruins of its namesake castle, a strong example of Renaissance architecture. A palace has stood on these grounds since the 13th century, despite multiple lightning strikes, fires, and explosions over the years—most notably damage inflicted by the French in 1689, during the Nine Years' War.

Discover more of Heidelberg during a walking tour, followed by some free time to explore independently. Perhaps you'll seek out a glimpse into 17th-century student life at a *Studentenkarzer*—a private jail cell intended for misbehaving undergrads.

Lunch: Settle in for a meal of traditional fare in a Heidelberg *Gasthaus* (a small inn with a restaurant and bar) that has been part of the Old Town for centuries.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries. Buses will be available to shuttle you back to your ship.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 7 Explore Wertheim • Glassblowing demonstration • Home-Hosted *Kaffeeklatsch*

- Destination: Wertheim
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The Sun Deck will be closed today because of low-standing bridges on our sailing route.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Enjoy a fitting introduction to your next port of call, Wertheim with an **Exclusive Discovery Series** glassblowing demonstration.

Then, step ashore for a walking tour of Wertheim—located at the meeting of the Main and Tauber rivers—and admire the imposing ruins of its castle, set on a hill overlooking the fairy-tale town below. The rest of the morning is yours to explore Wertheim on your own. Climb the stairs to the castle and follow the trail around the fortress walls, or visit its renowned Glass Museum, where exhibitions display the town's long and proud tradition of glass production.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Head to the home of a local family for a traditional *Kaffeeklatsch* to share coffee and cake, and experience what life is like for a typical German family during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** Home-Hosted Visit.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 8 Explore Würzburg

- Destination: Würzburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The Sun Deck will be closed today because of low-standing bridges on our sailing route. On some departures, the ship will be docked outside of the city center. It will take around 15 minutes to reach the city by bus. Today's combined bus and walking tour of Würzburg will be approximately 5 hours long with stops along the way.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Dock in the Bavarian city of Würzburg, a marvelous display of Baroque and Rococo architecture and a hot spot for wine enthusiasts. You'll explore the city, founded in the tenth century, during an included walking tour. Along the way, you'll find remnants of history left behind by several powerful prince-bishops—the most obvious example being the exterior of the UNESCO World Heritage Würzburg *Residenz*, a NEW feature for 2025. An ornate complex commissioned by the prince-bishop von Schönborn brothers, Johann Philipp Franz and Friedrich Carl, Napoleon proclaimed this building the “nicest parsonage in Europe.” While the structure was heavily damaged during World War II, it has been painstakingly restored to its pre-war form as we will discover during our visit.

Enjoy time here on your own before returning to the ship. Perhaps you'll get a glimpse of daily life from a comfy chair at a local cafe.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 9 Visit Gerlachshausen • Optional Rothenburg tour • Schweinfurt

- Destination: Schweinfurt
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The Sun Deck will be closed today because of low-standing bridges on our sailing route.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning/Afternoon: Your ship will stop briefly in Gerlachshausen this morning. If you choose, you can spend the morning onboard enjoying a scenic cruise to Schweinfurt.

Or you can disembark and join our optional full-day excursion to Rothenburg, where you'll step back into medieval times. This lovely old town, nestled on the Tauber River, is home to undamaged 14th-century city walls and beautifully preserved fortifications. As you explore, you'll see stately towers, imposing burghers' houses, and the town's whimsical mechanical clock tower.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room for those travelers who do not choose the optional tour. Travelers who chose to partake in the tour will have an included lunch at a local restaurant and free time to explore on your own before you travel to meet up with the ship in Schweinfurt.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 10 Explore Bamberg • Rhine-Main-Danube Canal transit & discussion

- Destination: Bamberg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: During the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal transit, it will be necessary for the Captain to close the Sun Deck because of low-standing bridges. The ship is docked outside of the city center; it will take around 15 minutes to reach the city by bus.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Set out on a morning walking tour of Bamberg, which was founded in AD 902, began to prosper in the twelfth century, and was the center of southern Germany's Enlightenment in the late 18th century. The great German philosopher Hegel lived here, and Bamberg was the second city (after Mainz) to introduce book-printing. The city has grown famous in beer-enthusiast circles as the home to *Rauchbier*, a beer known for its smoky notes and malty finish.

With more than 2,000 buildings listed as historical monuments, Bamberg's old city center is Europe's largest existing group of historic structures. This area not only earned UNESCO World Heritage Site status, but it was also designated as a "World Cultural and Natural Heritage of Mankind" site in 1993. Your tour will immerse you in this vibrant display of historical locations and culture.

Then, before heading back to the ship for lunch, you'll take part in one of Germany's most popular traditions—visiting a local *Biergarten* (beer garden) to sample local brews.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Begin cruising to Nuremberg this afternoon—a journey that will take you through the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: After dinner, you'll enjoy an **Exclusive Discovery Series** discussion on the history and construction of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal.

Day 11 Explore Nuremberg • Conversation about Germany's political shift to the right

- Destination: Nuremberg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The Sun Deck will be closed today because of low-standing bridges on our sailing route. Please also note that Courtroom 600 is still a working courtroom, and therefore is not always open to visitors. The ship is docked outside of the city center; it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: This morning's included tour introduces you to Nuremberg—a city with a long and storied history, but also forever linked to Hitler's rise to power. Bavaria's second-largest city, Nuremberg was once the unofficial capital of the Holy Roman Empire—and you can see traces of its exalted past with the imposing medieval castle that looks over the city from above. It grew to serve as the heart of the German Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The Nazi Party chose Nuremberg as the site of massive conventions between 1927 and 1938 because of its connection to the Holy Roman Empire. Your tour will take you to Zeppelin Field, where these rallies were held for up to 100,000 spectators, on grounds designed by Hitler's chief architect, Albert Speer. (Speer later went down in history as "the Nazi who said sorry" during the Nuremberg Trials.) While rally footage and photographs show this space as home to large, loud, boisterous activity, Zeppelin Field is quiet for visitors today—vast and almost overwhelming in its expansive magnitude. Our explorations will also include a visit to the infamous Courtroom 600 from the Nuremberg Trials.

Lunch: While Nuremberg is so closely associated with numerous events of the past, it is today a lively and vibrant city with a contemporary vibe, and you'll get a sense of daily life here during lunch in a local restaurant, where you'll sample regional specialties among those who call this city home.

Afternoon: The rest of the afternoon is yours to relax onboard or to take advantage of a shuttle bus into town. If you'd like to continue to trace World War II history, you can explore Nuremberg's Old Town, full of medieval charm, including the Church of Our Lady—complete with a 16th-century mechanical clock depicting the Holy Roman Emperor.

Later, return to the ship for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** conversation about the recent ascendance of far-right political groups in Germany—in particular, the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which has called for the mass expulsion of immigrants from the country, among other militant and xenophobic rhetoric.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 12 Conversation about German education • Explore Regensburg

- Destination: Regensburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship may be docked outside of the city center; if so, it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus. Today's combined bus and walking tour of Regensburg will be approximately 5 hours long in total and include cobblestones, uneven surfaces, narrow streets, and no options to sit down during the tour.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: As you sail toward Regensburg, head to the lounge to engage in an **Exclusive Discovery Series** conversation about the education system in Germany with a local expert.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Upon arrival at our destination, step ashore for a walking tour of Regensburg, one of Germany's largest and best preserved medieval cities. Experience its Old Town Hall and the famous Stone Bridge (Germany's oldest bridge), constructed during the twelfth century. You'll also see soaring St. Peter's Cathedral, Bavaria's most impressive Gothic wonder and home to a famous boys' choir. Admire the winding medieval streets and the relics of Regensburg's Roman past at the ruins of Castra Regina fort—the Porta Praetoria—containing a stone inscribed in AD 179, when Marcus Aurelius was emperor. Along the way, keep your

eyes peeled for a small red plaque affixed to a home on the *Watmarkt*: Oskar Schindler lived here for a time after the end of World War II.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 13 Explore Passau

- Destination: Passau
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/S River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Explore Passau, situated at the confluence of the Danube, Ilz, and Inn rivers, during this morning's walking tour. Called the *Dreiflussesstadt* (City on Three Rivers), this elegant town has served as a German cultural and intellectual hub for centuries. Explore this kaleidoscopic assortment of pastel-colored buildings, cobblestone streets, and ornate sculptures during your tour.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Enjoy the afternoon to pursue your own interests in Passau, such as the town's lavish, 17th-century St. Stephen's Cathedral, known as the *Dom*. This structure is home to 17,774 pipes and 234 resounding stops, making it one of the world's largest pipe organs. While the cathedral underwent a 17th-century reconstruction in the grand Baroque style, its original Gothic plan is still evident. One of its most striking features is a gorgeous octagonal dome hovering over the intersection of the nave (where the congregation sits) and the transept running perpendicular.

Later this afternoon, return to your ship and say *auf Wiedersehen* to Germany as we begin cruising to Austria—the last of three countries on your itinerary.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 14 Visit Melk, Austria • Vienna • Optional *Musical Vienna* tour

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/S River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship will be docked outside of Vienna's city center; it will take around 20 minutes to reach the city by bus. Today's combined bus and walking tour of Melk will be approximately 3.5 hours long.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Awake to find yourself in Melk, where you can glimpse the formidable Melk Abbey from the ship, as it rises up from the surrounding countryside along the Danube. Disembark after breakfast for a guided tour of the magnificently ornate 900-year-old Baroque abbey. Strategically situated on a steep cliffside perch, Melk Abbey's earliest incarnation was as a Roman border post. Later, it served as a tenth-century Babenberg fortress. The abbey then became a Benedictine monastery in 1089 and earned a distinguished reputation for medieval scholarship.

Its library includes more than 70,000 books and 2,000 manuscripts, chiefly from the ninth through the 15th centuries. Ravaged by fires in 1297 and 1683, the stately Baroque edifice that stands today, with its twin towers and 208-foot-high dome, dates from its

reconstruction in 1736. In addition to those thousands of volumes, the Abbey library houses a remarkable collection of cherubs, and 365 windows—one for every day of the year. The interior of the abbey’s church is a kaleidoscope of red, orange, and gold, with an intricately carved pulpit and shimmering ceiling frescoes, which you’ll observe up close during your tour.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Afternoon: Continue on to Vienna, cruising through the captivating landscape of the Wachau Valley—past terraced vineyards and lush flowering fields. As we sail, we’ll enjoy a tasting of a few recipes made from apricots, a sweet fruit that thrives in this fertile region.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Evening: When you arrive in Austria’s capital this evening, you’ll have the night to relax or start exploring on your own. You may also choose to join our optional *Musical Vienna* excursion to one of the city’s famed concert halls. Celebrate this city’s incredible classical music heritage, and hear an enchanting performance of works by Austrian masters such as Mozart and Strauss.

Day 15 Explore Vienna • Captain’s Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship is docked outside of the city center; it will take around 20 minutes to reach the city by bus. Today’s combined bus and walking tour of Vienna will be approximately 3.5 hours long.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Morning: Today, discover Vienna, Austria’s legendary capital and a city renowned for its elegance and culture. Your exploration begins with a panoramic bus and walking tour along (and within) the *Ringstrasse*, one of Emperor Franz Joseph’s many achievements. In 1857, the emperor ordered the demolition of Vienna’s ancient city walls, which were impeding the city’s growth. In their place was constructed an elegant 2.5-mile long boulevard, encircling the *Inner Stadt* (Old Town).

The *Ringstrasse* showcases Neo-classical buildings that bring together a variety of architectural styles in an exuberant celebration of all that seemed possible during the Industrial Revolution. Your tour will also give you an opportunity to witness the well-known Imperial Palace, home to many generations of the Habsburg family, and the renowned Spanish Riding School.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Afternoon: The remainder of the day is yours in Vienna to spend as you please—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Dinner: Reminisce about the first half of your journey with your fellow travelers—especially those whose *The Great Rivers of Europe* cruise comes to an end tomorrow—during the Captain’s Farewell Reception and Dinner in the ship’s dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you’ll enjoy one a nightcap at the bar.

Day 16 Explore Vienna • Budapest, Hungary

- Destination: Budapest, Hungary
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: Today, you'll bid farewell to some of your fellow travelers and your Western European Program Director as their portion of their River Cruise comes to an end. Your Eastern European Program Director will then join you onboard. The ship may be docked outside of Budapest's city center; if so, it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Join your Program Director in discovering more of Vienna via public transportation.

Perhaps you'll visit one of Vienna's many museums dedicated to prominent, historical figures, including the Leopold Museum, which houses the largest collection of Schiele paintings and drawings in the world, or the Sigmund Freud Museum to learn more about the founder of psychoanalysis' life. Or you may explore Stephansdom—a spectacular twelfth-century, Gothic cathedral.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Spend the afternoon sailing toward Budapest, Hungary, your next destination, crossing the former Iron Curtain as you pass freely over the border. Relax and enjoy commentary from your Program Director as you sail towards Eastern Europe.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 17 Explore Budapest

- Destination: Budapest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: Today you welcome new travelers into your group as you continue your explorations. The ship may be docked outside of the city center; if so, it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Get acquainted with the city during a quick discovery walk with your Program Director.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Before dinner, learn more about Budapest during a Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 18 Explore Budapest

- Destination: Budapest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship may be docked outside of the city center; if so, it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast, join us for a briefing by your Program Director. Then set out to explore Budapest on an included city tour, including Heroes' Square with its Millennial Column, set off by equestrian statues of the

ninth-century Magyar leaders who conquered this region in the ninth century. The adjoining colonnade displays more statues of kings, dukes of Transylvania, and liberty fighters who influenced the history of Hungary.

In your free time, you can also visit the Church of Our Lady, formerly used for the coronations of Hungarian kings. Its popular name of Matthias is in recognition of the Renaissance king who ruled in the 15th century and whose heraldic sign—a raven—is displayed on one of the towers of the church. Dating to the 13th century, the structure is an interesting mix of architectural styles used during reconstruction of the building at different times in its history. Note that during the 150-year Turkish occupation of Hungary, the church served as *Eski Djami* (Old Mosque) for the Turks. Inside the church, you can view the art of Bertalan Szekely and Karoly Lotz, 19th-century Hungarian painters.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: You'll have the balance of the afternoon to relax on the ship or explore Budapest on your own. If you'd like, you have the option to join your Program Director on a discovery walk of the city.

Known as the "City of Baths," Budapest has a number of thermal baths worth visiting for a soothing dip if you choose. Fed by natural hot springs, each bathhouse is unique; some even date back to the 16th century. Or, you may wish to stroll the city's famous Castle District, home to famous sites such as the Royal Palace and the Hungarian National Gallery.

When you return to your ship, your Program Director will describe tomorrow's discoveries during your Port Talk.

Dinner: Tonight, gather with your fellow travelers—including those whose *Eastern Europe to the Black Sea* cruise starts today—for a Welcome Drink, followed by the Welcome Dinner with your captain.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 19 Budapest • Optional *Hungarian Jewish Heritage* tour

- Destination: Budapest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The Hungarian Jewish Heritage optional tour is not available Saturdays and on regional holidays. The Hungarian Jewish Association also reserves the right of changing the opening hours. The ship may be docked outside of the city center; if so, it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Spend the day enjoying the wonders of Budapest on your own. Or, join an optional tour exploring *Hungarian Jewish Heritage*. You'll visit the Great Synagogue, the largest in Europe, designed in a Moorish style but with Byzantine, Romantic, and Gothic elements. Then you'll see the Kazinczy Street Orthodox Synagogue, the center of traditional Orthodox Jewish life here; and the Emanuel Memorial Tree.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to make further discoveries on your own in Budapest. Then this evening, begin cruising along the Danube from Hungary to Croatia.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 20 Visit Aljimas, Croatia •

Home-Hosted Lunch • Explore Vukovar

- Destination: Vukovar
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/S River Adagio*

Activity Note: Due to water levels and sailing conditions, the ship may dock in Banikovo or Vukovar instead of Aljimas on some departures.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Enjoy a leisurely morning onboard as you sail. You may wish to bring a cup of coffee to the Sun Deck and enjoy the passing scenery.

Late this morning, you'll dock in the small village of Aljimas, you'll board a private motorcoach and transfer by motorcoach to the home of a local Croatian family.

Lunch: Enhance your appreciation for everyday Croatian life as you join a local family for a Home-Hosted Lunch, an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event.

Afternoon: After lunch, transfer by motorcoach to the city of Vukovar—Croatia's largest river port. You'll set off on a tour with your Program Director followed by time for independent exploration.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll relax in the lounge with your fellow travelers or enjoy a drink at the bar.

Day 21 Explore Novi Sad, Serbia

- Destination: Novi Sad
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/S River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast this morning, enjoy an included tour of Novi Sad, Serbia's cultural hub, and second-largest city. The beauty of the city is in its name—Novi Sad in English translates to "new garden." Nestled along a bend in the Danube River, Novi Sad is peppered with myriad historical and cultural monuments, verdant parks, bustling squares, a thriving pedestrian zone, and a history-rich fortress standing tall on the right bank of the river.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to further discover Novi Sad on your own. Perhaps you'll choose to explore the Petrovaradin Fortress, built between 1692 and 1780 by the Austrians as a defense against invading Turks. Declared a historical monument 200 years later, this partially restored fortress is now a museum. Delve deep into its strange past, including a twelve-mile network of underground tunnels, a mysterious well with supposed links to black magic, and an iconic clock tower on which the size of the minute and hour hands are reversed.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 22 Explore Belgrade

- Destination: Belgrade
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The Tito Memorial is closed on Mondays.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Cruise into Belgrade, the capital of Serbia (and former capital of Yugoslavia), one of Europe's oldest cities, and the center of political and cultural life in the country. Belgrade and the rest of Serbia are just now emerging from many years of repressive rule, with a welcoming spirit for visitors.

Enjoy a full morning in Belgrade, beginning with an included tour around this grand old city, which was built centuries ago along important east-west trade routes and used as a gateway to Western Europe from the Balkans. You'll explore the Tito Memorial, erected to honor Josip Broz Tito, who held Yugoslavia together as an independent country in the turmoil that followed World War II and the subsequent Cold War. Then, stroll through Old Belgrade's pedestrian area. After your tour, enjoy lunch onboard.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Explore the city on your own—you'll have a shuttle bus to and from the city available for your use. Your Program Director will have suggestions for various local sights and activities for learning and discovery.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 23 Iron Gates • *Life Under Communism* discussion

- Destination: Iron Gates
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Today you'll cruise along one of the Danube's most scenic stretches—where once the river pounded and raged through deep gorges. This stretch of the Danube boasts the massive rock sculpture of the face of Decebalus, the last king of Dacia, as well as tranquil rocky riverbeds and a scattering of small villages. Before lunch, join us for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** discussion about *Life Under Communism* with your Program Director.

Lunch: Linger over lunch in the ship's dining room as you navigate the Danube.

Afternoon: In mid-afternoon, join the chef in the galley (the ship's kitchen) for a special tour. Later you'll pass through Iron Gate I. In the 1960s, Yugoslavia and Romania cooperated on a joint venture that raised the level of the Danube with a series of hydroelectric dams called the Iron Gates. The Danube is now placid between the Iron Gates, the craggy two-mile-long gorge now underwater.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Relax onboard the ship this evening as you continue sailing through Iron Gate II.

Day 24 Explore Vidin, Bulgaria

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: If you choose to visit Baba Vida during your free time, some walkways have rough and uneven surfaces and dark passageways.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Early this morning, your ship passes through customs at Vidin, Bulgaria's main port on the Danube yet one of the least-developed of the post-Communist cities with a small population, where you'll embark on an included walking tour this morning. As you make your way through the city, you'll see the intersection of religions with views of an orthodox Catholic church, a synagogue, and a mosque over the course of your walk. Then you'll have some free time to explore; perhaps you'll visit Baba Vida, a medieval fortress of two walls and four towers that served as the city's main defense in the Middle Ages, as well as the most important fortress of northwestern Bulgaria.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll walk from the ship to the Vidin Symphonic Orchestra, a **Grand Circle Foundation** supported site. We'll first learn how the orchestra is a leading cultural institution in Vidin and was officially registered as a state organization in 1949. Afterwards, we'll be treated to a concert.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 25 Ruse • Optional Veliko Tarnovo & Arbanassi tour

- Destination: Ruse
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/S River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning/Afternoon: Early this morning, arrive in Ruse, which is situated where the Danube forms a natural border between Romania and Bulgaria.

You may spend your day at leisure exploring Ruse independently, or you could join us for an optional excursion to discover two key Bulgarian historic sites: Veliko Tarnovo, the capital of Bulgaria from 1186 until 1394, and Arbanassi, a historical village of Bulgarian heritage. You'll enjoy time on your own in both locations to make your own discoveries.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room for those who do not choose the optional tour. Those on the optional tour will enjoy an included traditional lunch in a local restaurant in Arbanassi.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 26 Danube-Black Sea Canal transit • Explore Constanta, Romania • Captain's Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Constanta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/S River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Early this morning, your Danube and Black Sea River Cruise begins sailing into the Danube-Black Sea Canal, a 40-mile engineering marvel begun in 1949, but not fully completed until 1987. You'll pass through the canal's lock system and cruise by the inland port towns of Murfatlar and Medgidia.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Following lunch, enjoy a guided tour of Constanta, a Romanian Black Sea port that is the country's oldest continually inhabited city. Dating back more than 2,500 years, Constanta boasts a wealth of fascinating architecture and history, as well as areas that still bear the marks of its former Communist occupation. Myth holds that Jason and the Argonauts stopped here after recovering the legendary Golden Fleece. Explore the beguiling city center, the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, the mosaic-paved Roman Edifice of Tomis, and other highlights of this beloved city.

Dinner: Tonight, celebrate your Danube River and Black Sea cruise at the Captain's Farewell Dinner.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy one last nightcap at the bar.

Day 27 Constanta • Disembark ship • Bucharest

- Destination: Bucharest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Sheraton Bucharest Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast, disembark your ship and begin your transfer via motorcoach to Bucharest, Romania.

Lunch: Upon arrival, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Explore Bucharest by motorcoach. This is an old city that has served as the capital of Wallachia, and later Romania, since 1659. Today, it is noted for its broad, tree-lined boulevards, well-kept parks, and mix of architectural styles that combine Neoclassical 19th-century structures with monumental 20th-century edifices (the latter built for the

most part to satisfy the late dictator Nicolae Ceausescu). You'll view the *Arc de Triomphe* commemorating the exploits of World War I soldiers and drive along Victory Avenue to Revolution Square, where recent events in history are inscribed. You have some time in the late afternoon to relax.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 28 Explore Bucharest • Optional Palace of the Parliament tour

- Destination: Bucharest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Sheraton Bucharest Hotel or similar

Activity Note: If you have chosen the optional post-trip extension to *Transylvania, Romania*, you'll break off from the main group in Bucharest after lunch and continue by motorcoach to the Transylvanian mountain resort of Sinaia—about a 3.5-hour trip. Then, after your three-night extension in Sinaia, you will enjoy the last day of your main itinerary in Bucharest.

Please also note that if the Palace of the Parliament is not available today, you may instead join an optional tour to the Spring Palace—the one-time home of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, whose eclectic design offers insights into the late leader's colorful personality.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy an additional day in Bucharest to make your own discoveries. Or, join us for an optional tour of Romania's Palace of the Parliament, the seat of Romania's national government. You'll start by walking to

Revolution Square, where you'll meet your motorcoach driver for a taste of traditional Romanian chocolate, and a brief discussion about the history of this imposing building.

The Palace of the Parliament is the second largest administrative building in the world—and at a weight of around nine billion pounds, the world's heaviest building. Dive into the controversial history of how the massive palace came to be under the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. After an earthquake devastated the city in 1977, Ceausescu took advantage of the land and recruited 700 architects and around 1.5 million factory workers to complete the project.

Ceausescu passed away before the massive undertaking was finally finished in 1994, but you'll have the opportunity to see the completed building when you drive to the palace for a guided tour of its storied halls. You'll stroll past lavishly decorated hallways, offices, galleries, and conference rooms—originally meant for Communist Party officials, now used by the elected government—and get a sweeping view of

Bucharest's main square from the grand balcony. You'll drive back to the hotel after your tour.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: On your own—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Perhaps you'll peruse one of the local flower markets, or explore the historic Old Town, home to a host of museums, such as the National Museum of Romanian History. Later, return to your hotel for a Farewell Drink with your fellow travelers.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 29 Bucharest • Return to U.S.

• Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or begin your *Transylvania, Romania* post-trip extension.

END YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Transylvania, Romania*

Day 1 Bucharest, Romania •
Transfer to Brasov

Day 2 Brasov • Explore Brasov • Optional
fortified church & organ concert tour

Day 3 Brasov • Optional Bran Castle tour

Day 4 Brasov • Visit Peles Castle • Transfer
to Bucharest

Day 5 Bucharest • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with us. We will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form and swiping your credit card at the ship's front desk. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Rothenburg

(Day 9 \$125 per person)

Disembark during a stop in Gerlachshausen for a full-day optional tour of Rothenburg. This lovely old town sits on the Tauber River and boasts undamaged 14th-century city walls and beautifully preserved fortifications. Set off on a walking tour to see stately towers and imposing burghers' houses. After an included lunch, the afternoon is yours to make your own discoveries before transferring to meet your ship.

Please note: Our combined bus and walking tour will be approximately 3.5 hours long and include cobblestones, uneven surfaces, and no options to sit down during the tour.

Musical Vienna

(Day 14 \$110 per person)

Vienna without music wouldn't be Vienna. So, subject to availability of tickets, you may want to enjoy an evening in one of Vienna's famed concert halls, where you'll hear enchanting performances of some of the most wonderful melodies of classical Austrian music.

Hungarian Jewish Heritage

(Day 19 \$80 per person)

Join us for an optional tour exploring Hungarian Jewish Heritage. The journey begins at the Great Synagogue, the largest in Europe, with its Moorish design further enhanced by Byzantine, Romantic, and Gothic elements. You'll also visit the Kazinczy Street Orthodox Synagogue, and the Emanuel Memorial Tree.

This optional tour is not available Saturdays and on regional holidays. The Hungarian Jewish Association also reserves the right of changing the opening hours.

Veliko Tarnovo & Arbanassi

(Day 25 \$125 per person)

Today, you'll travel by motorcoach to Veliko Tarnovo, the capital of Bulgaria from 1186 until 1394. This cultural center rewards visitors with views of the fortification wall atop Zarevez Hill, the cobblestoned old city, ancient ruins, and a steep ravine plunging down from two towering promontories. Continue on to Arbanassi, a historical village of Bulgarian heritage. Its 80 houses, five churches, and two monasteries reflect a unique, fortress-like architectural

style of the 17th and 18th centuries, when the village flourished. Enjoy free time to make your own discoveries, and savor typical Bulgarian fare at a local restaurant.

Please note: Today's optional tour will include cobblestones, uneven surfaces, and stairs with no handrails.

Please note: Today's tour includes climbing around 150 steps. If the Palace of Parliament is not available today, you may instead join an optional tour to the Spring Palace, the eccentrically-decorated home of the former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

Palace of Parliament

(Day 28 \$125 per person)

Discover the Palace of the Parliament, the seat of Romania's national government. You'll start by walking to Revolution Square, where you'll meet your motorcoach driver for a taste of traditional Romanian chocolate, and a brief discussion about the history of this imposing building.

The Palace of the Parliament is the second largest administrative building in the world—and at a weight of around nine billion pounds, the world's heaviest building. Dive into the controversial history of how the massive palace came to be under the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. After an earthquake devastated the city in 1977, Ceausescu took advantage of the land and recruited 700 architects and around 1.5 million factory workers to complete the project.

Ceausescu passed away before the massive undertaking was finally finished in 1994, but you'll have the opportunity to see the completed building when you drive to the palace for a guided tour of its storied halls. You'll stroll past lavishly decorated hallways, offices, galleries, and conference rooms—originally meant for Communist Party officials, now used by the elected government—and get a sweeping view of Bucharest's main square from the grand balcony. You'll drive back to the hotel after your tour.

PRE-TRIP

Bruges, Belgium

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 3 nights
- » 3 breakfasts
- » 2 guided tours: Bruges • Ghent & Delft
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Originally a ninth-century fortress built to protect the Flemish coast from marauding Vikings, Bruges today retains its reputation as one of Europe's best-preserved Old-World cities. Bruges's centuries-old canal system, which was essential to its once thriving textile industry, has beckoned tourists to meander its narrow, winding streets in search of art, history, and fine chocolates for nearly two centuries.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart on your flight to Bruges. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

Day 2 Arrive Bruges, Belgium

- Destination: Bruges
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Casselbergh Bruges

Morning: Arrive in Bruges, where you'll be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Your Program Director will advise you of your check-in status and activity schedule for the day. Get acquainted with the area around your hotel on a brief vicinity walk.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: The rest of day is yours to relax after your overseas flight or explore independently. You may also join your fellow travelers for a Welcome Drink.

Dinner: On your own—your Program Director will have suggestions to help you select a restaurant to enjoy dinner on your own this evening.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 3 Explore Bruges

- Destination: Bruges
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Casselbergh Bruges

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, you'll set off on a walking tour of this former capital of Flanders, a city still defined by its canals. Dating from the 13th century, Bruges is a living museum and a treasure trove of fine architecture. From the 13th to the 15th centuries, Bruges was the most important trading center of northern Europe, based largely on its thriving wool and textile industries. You'll see signs of this mercantile history in the beautiful houses built by wealthy textile dealers.

Your walking tour takes you past the Church of Our Lady and to Market Square, with its distinctive belfry tower and carillon of 47 bells. You also witness the intricate, white-washed facade of the Holy Blood Chapel. Then, experience Bruges from a different perspective—by boat. Enjoy a short cruise along its charming canals before visiting a lace shop to see some of the world's finest lacemakers at work, followed by a delicious tasting of one of the country's well-known treats: Belgian waffles. You'll then enjoy some free time to have lunch on your own and to explore independently.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: You'll then enjoy some free time explore independently.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Explore Bruges • Optional Flanders Field tour

- Destination: Bruges
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Casselbergh Bruges

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Continue your discoveries of Bruges on your own today.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Or, you may choose to join us this afternoon and evening for an optional excursion to Flanders Field, a museum commemorating World War I.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 5 Bruges • Explore Ghent • Amsterdam, the Netherlands

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, you'll depart for your transfer to the Netherlands' capital of Amsterdam. En route, you'll stop in one of Belgium's oldest cities, Ghent, known as "the jewel of Flanders" for an included walking tour of this historic city. Originally a settlement set at the confluence of the Scheldt and Lys rivers during the Middle Ages, Ghent became one of the biggest and wealthiest cities in northern

Europe. Today, it's the country's fourth-largest urban center and a culinary hot spot. You'll also have free time to explore independently.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: You'll return to Amsterdam in the late afternoon. Members of your group on *Grand European Cruise* have arrived today, and tonight, you join your fellow travelers, following the activities as described on Day 2 of the main itinerary.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Flanders Fields

(Day 4 \$165 per person)

Join us this afternoon and evening for an optional excursion to Flanders Fields, a museum commemorating World War I. You will travel to the city of Ypres, now known as the "City of Peace," and visit the interactive Flanders Fields Museum, where you'll learn about the Great War and then tour the battlefields. After dinner at a local restaurant, you'll visit the Menin Gate Memorial and listen to the buglers from the local fire brigade who play there every night in remembrance of those lost in the war. The cost of this optional excursion includes dinner.

POST-TRIP

Transylvania, Romania

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 4 nights
- » 6 meals: 4 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner
- » 2 guided tours: Brasov • Bucharest
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Experience the Transylvania region of Romania—a castle-dotted landscape whose well-preserved, Old-World character evokes an era of bygone, macabre figures both mythical (Count Dracula) and actual (Vlad the Impaler) from the historic medieval town of Brasov.

Day 1 Bucharest, Romania •

Transfer to Brasov

- Destination: Brasov
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Aro Palace Hotel

Morning: Enjoy a morning at leisure in Bucharest before you break away from your main trip.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Travel overland to Brasov this afternoon.

With its medieval watchtowers and Gothic spires, Brasov has long fascinated history and architecture buffs. It's also a wonderful gateway to castles in Bran and Rasnov. After you check into your room, your Program Director will lead a brief orientation tour of the neighborhood of your hotel. Spend the rest of the afternoon and evening at leisure exploring more of Brasov or simply relaxing.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 2 Brasov • Explore Brasov • Optional fortified church & organ concert tour

- Destination: Brasov
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Aro Palace Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin our day with a walking tour of Brasov. Continuously settled since the Bronze Age, the region that is now Brasov has been enriched by people of many heritages—Romans, Saxons, and Hungarians among them—as well as by traders from all over Europe and beyond who arrived in this long-thriving economic center. You'll see some outstanding medieval architecture in

Brasov, which is not far from the geographic center of Romania and is the largest city in the Transylvania region.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Enjoy time on your own to discover Brasov.

Or, join an optional tour to discover the fortified church of Vulcan, with an included organ concert and dinner. Originally constructed in the 13th century as a Romanesque basilica, the building has been destroyed and rebuilt over the centuries, with a bell tower and wooden galleries built in the 16th century and its ornate baptismal font added in the mid-17th century.

You'll drive to the church from your hotel with your Program Director late this afternoon for an introductory tour of the church's impressive exterior and interior. Then, settle in for a musical performance, featuring the reverberating tones of the church's organ.

Dinner: If you chose to join today's optional tour, dinner is included in the cost of the tour. Otherwise, dinner is on your own in Brasov tonight.

Evening: The evening is on your own.

Day 3 Brasov • Optional Bran Castle tour

- Destination: Brasov
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Aro Palace Hotel

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: The day is yours to relax and to explore Brasov on your own. Perhaps you'll hike or take a cable car ride to Mount Tampa and enjoy the views.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: Continue making independent discoveries in Brasov.

Or come with us on an optional tour to Bran Castle, often referred to as Dracula's Castle. Prince Vlad Tepes, the son of Vlad Dracul and the person who inspired Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, used this castle as headquarters for his incursions into Transylvania. This 15th-century ruler became known as "Vlad the Impaler" for his practice of impaling enemies of the kingdom, which was greatly threatened by the Ottoman Turks at the time. Stoker's work of fiction drew inspiration from this bloody practice, the family name, and the castle-dotted mountain landscape of Transylvania.

You'll see the interior and exterior of Bran Castle, which was built in 1377 to protect nearby Brasov from invaders and also served as a customs station. In 1920, the people of Brasov, who owned the castle, offered it as a gift to Queen Maria of Romania, and the castle soon became her favorite residence. After an included dinner, you return to your hotel.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations. Those who have joined our optional tour will enjoy an included dinner at a local restaurant near the castle.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Brasov • Visit Peles Castle • Transfer to Bucharest

- Destination: Bucharest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Sheraton Bucharest Hotel

Activity Note: You'll complete the remainder of your main trip (Day 13) this afternoon. If Peles Castle is closed, we will instead visit Pelisor Castle.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Tour Peles Castle, set dramatically in the hills above Sinaia. Completed in 1914 for the first Hohenzollern king of Romania, Carol I, this 160-room palace was built in Neo-Renaissance style, and represented the king's attempt to imitate the styles of his former homeland—creating a Bavarian setting in the mountains of Romania.

The castle's sculptured terraces, art displays, and historic armories make it one of Romania's most important and beautiful museums. The palace is ornately decorated, inside and out, with intricate woodcarvings and paintings of scenes from Wagner's operas. Fortunately, as you'll see, it is one of the best-preserved royal palaces in Europe.

Lunch: Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: This afternoon we'll transfer to Bucharest. Check into your hotel before setting off to make your own discoveries this afternoon. This is an old city that has served as the capital of Wallachia and later Romania since 1659. Today, it is noted for its broad, tree-lined boulevards, well-kept parks, and mix of architectural styles that combine Neo-classical structures with monumental 20th-century edifices (the latter built for the most part to satisfy the late dictator Nicolae Ceausescu).

Perhaps you'll visit the *Arc de Triomphe* commemorating the exploits of World War I soldiers, and drive along Victory Avenue to Revolution Square, where recent events in history are inscribed.

Dinner: This evening, join your fellow travelers for a farewell drink and dinner at your hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 5 Bucharest • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, you are transferred to the airport for your flight home.

OPTIONAL TOURS

Fortified Church & Organ Concert

(Day 2 \$135 per person)

Discover the fortified church of Vulcan today. Originally constructed in the 13th century as a Romanesque basilica, the building has been destroyed and rebuilt over the centuries, with a bell tower and wooden galleries built in the 16th century, and its ornate baptismal font added in the mid-17th century. You'll drive to the church

from your hotel with your Program Director late this afternoon for an introductory tour of the Church's impressive exterior and interior, before sitting down for a musical performance, featuring the reverberating tones of the church's organ. You'll also enjoy dinner at the church, included in the cost of the tour.

Bran Castle

(Day 3 \$145 per person)

Bran Castle is often referred to as Dracula's Castle. Prince Vlad Tepes, the son of Vlad Dracul and the person who inspired Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, used this castle as headquarters for his incursions into Transylvania. This 15th-century ruler became known as "Vlad the Impaler" for his practice of impaling enemies of the kingdom, which was greatly threatened by the Ottoman Turks at the time. Stoker's work of fiction drew inspiration from this bloody practice, the family name, and the castle-dotted mountain landscape of Transylvania.

You'll see the interior and exterior of Bran Castle, which was built in 1377 to protect nearby Brasov from invaders and also served as a customs station. In 1920, the people of Brasov, who owned the castle, offered it as a gift to Queen Maria of Romania, and the castle soon became her favorite residence. This optional tour includes dinner.

YOUR RHINE, MOSEL, MAIN, AND DANUBE RIVER SHIPS

Sail aboard our privately owned 140- to 162-passenger vessels

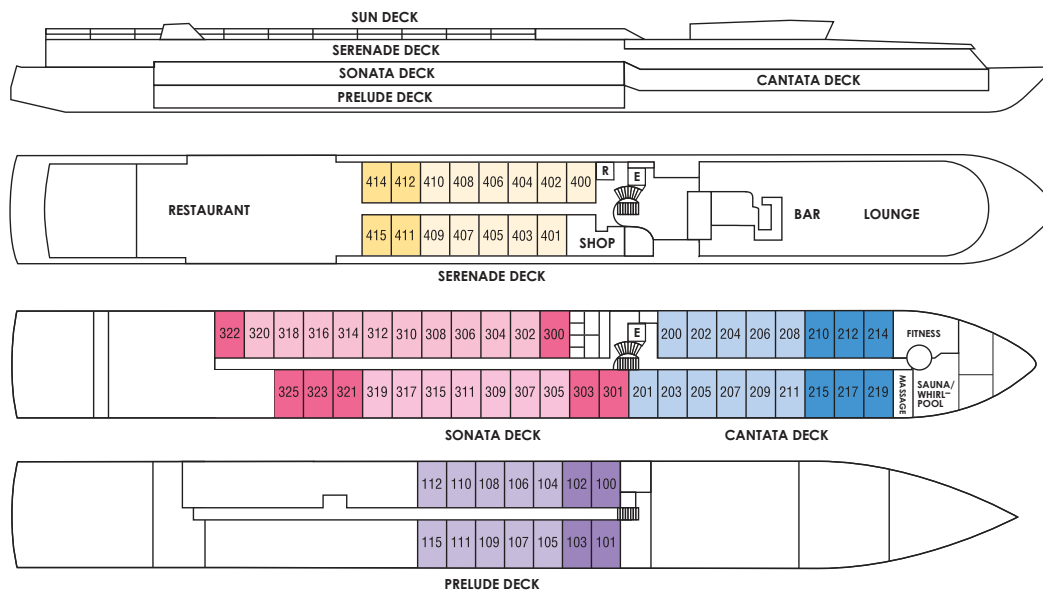
Grand Circle Cruise Line's Rhine, Mosel, Main, and Danube ships were designed specifically to create an unforgettable European river cruise experience for American travelers. Explore storybook landscapes with up to four groups of no more than 38-45 travelers, each with one of our dedicated, local Grand Circle Program Directors, and enjoy the attentive onboard service of our top-notch English-speaking ship crew.



SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Dining room with single, open seating:** Enjoy regionally-inspired cuisine in your ship's dining room.
- **Bar & lounge:** Relax with friends old and new.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and house wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Complimentary wireless Internet access:** Connect online in cabins and common areas.
Please note: Wireless Internet access may be limited at certain points throughout your River Cruise.
- **Sun Deck:** Sit outside and enjoy the view as your ship glides past the European countryside.
- **English-speaking crew:** Our staff is dedicated to your comfort, and all shipboard announcements are made in English.
- **Smoking/non-smoking:** Smoking is not permitted indoors, but is permitted on the Sun Deck.
- **Shipboard security:** State-of-the-art shipboard radar ensures safe navigation at night and in low visibility; safe docking space; onboard security staff; state-of-the-art fire safety system; and secured entryway doors.

M/S RIVER HARMONY



Registry: Malta

Width: 38 ft.

Length: 366 ft.

Passenger capacity: 140

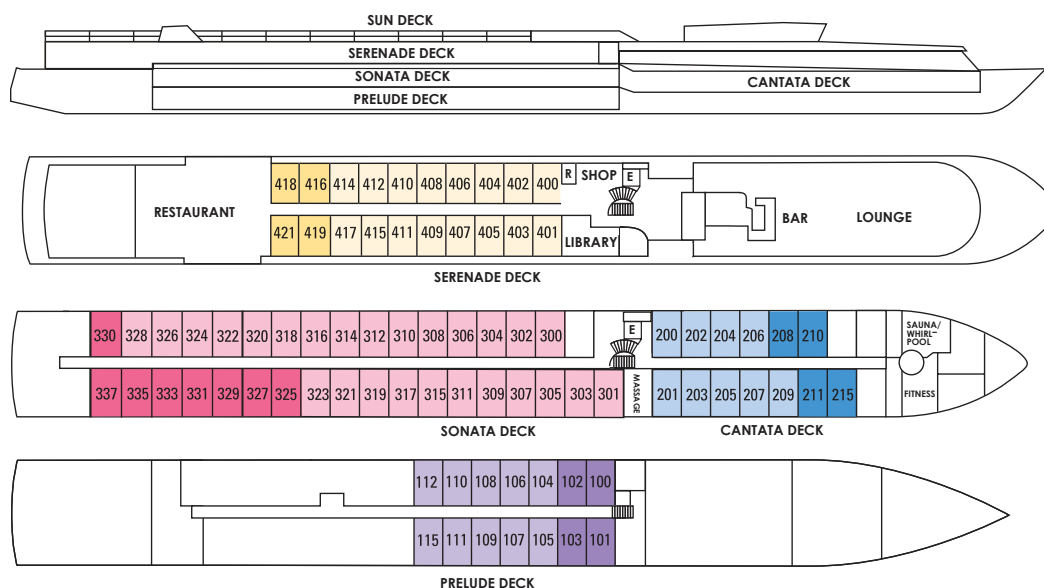
International crew: 34

Decks: 4

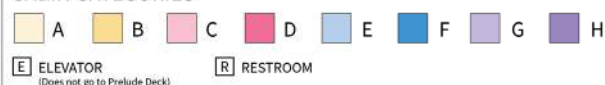
Number of cabins: 70—all outside

Elevator: Yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

M/S RIVER ARIA & M/S RIVER ADAGIO



CABIN CATEGORIES



Registry: Malta

Width: 38 ft.

Length: 418 ft.

Passenger capacity: 162

International crew: 38

Decks: 4

Number of cabins: 82—all outside

Elevator: Yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

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

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 6 blank passport pages.
- **Extension to Transylvania, Romania:** No additional pages needed.
- **Extension to Bruges, Belgium:** No additional pages needed.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** No additional pages needed.

Visa Required

We’ll provide you information with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, The Netherlands, Romania):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – we will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed
- **Serbia:** No visa needed.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

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

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities in Mind

Please review the information below prior to departing on this vacation. *We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience.*

GROUP SIZE

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers (with approximately 3-4 groups onboard) each with a local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle
- This cruise spans two itineraries, combining our *The Great Rivers of Europe* and *Eastern Europe to the Black Sea* River Cruises into a single continuous voyage. Although you will remain on the same ship throughout your cruise, your fellow passengers and Program Director may change at Vienna or Budapest as the ship reaches the transition point between these two cruises

PACING

- 27 days, with 25 nights aboard a private river ship, and 1 two-night hotel stay
- Return flights often require departing in early morning

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Included features on your trip may consist of 3-4 hours of physical activity each day. Travelers should be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted within a time frame of 1-2 hours, and walk on uneven surfaces, including steep and unpaved paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slick in wet or colder conditions
- Optional activities and elective walks may be offered in addition to the ones mentioned in our day-to-day itinerary
- Agility needed for boarding small canal boats and navigating steep, slippery stairs
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

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

- Travel by 140- to 162-passenger river ship, 49-seat coach, and canal boat
- Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary
- Docking for the following locations may be up to 30 minutes outside of the city center, with transportation to and from the ship by motorcoach: Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Nuremberg, Germany; Cologne Germany; Koblenz, Germany; Regensburg, Germany; Bamberg, Germany; Vienna, Austria; Budapest, Hungary

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 58–82°F during cruising season
- June–August are the warmest months

Health Check

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

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.

- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Select “Find International Travel Information” then select “Country Information”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Your Health Abroad” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- 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.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water aboard ship and in the countries you’ll visit is perfectly safe for drinking, although it may not taste the same as at home.
- If you prefer bottled water it is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.
- Another alternative is to bring a reusable water bottle from home, which you can fill up on the ship or in your hotel before you set out for the day.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip.**

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

Bulgaria: Bulgarian Lev (Лв.)

Hungary: Hungarian Forint (ft)

Romania: Romanian leu (lei)

Serbia: Serbian Dinar (RSD)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. One exception is in the Czech Republic, where it is more economical to try a bank first. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Belgium: ATMs are widely available in large cities, but are less common in smaller towns.

Bulgaria: International ATM networks are available throughout large cities and small towns.

Netherlands: International ATM networks are widely available in the Netherlands.

Romania: ATMs are common throughout large cities and small towns in Romania.

Serbia: ATMs can be readily found in large cities and small towns but can be scarce in rural villages.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world.. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Austria: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Austria. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

Bulgaria: Credit and debit card use is common in Bulgaria and major American credit cards are widely accepted.

Romania: Credit and debit card use is common in Romania.

Using Your Credit Card in Europe

Most of us are used to credit cards with the embedded computer chip (the ones you insert instead of swiping). In Europe—where they've had this type of card longer than us—these credit cards usually require a PIN (personal identification number) to make a purchase. And in contrast, most U.S. credit cards either do not require a PIN or don't have one. So what do you do if you want make a purchase with your credit card in Europe?

Don't worry. 90% of the time you won't need to do anything special. You'll insert your card and the purchase will go through as normal. Often you won't even be asked to sign anything.

But bring more than one form of payment with you. For those rare cases when your credit card doesn't work, the best plan is to already have a backup form of payment with you. Debit cards are a good alternative as they have a PIN. And there's always cash.

Consider asking your credit card company. You can try contacting your credit card company before you leave to see if they will issue you a PIN. Many won't—but at least you'll know. You could also try looking at their website to see if they have guidance about getting a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

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

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

Onboard Ship

Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.) and is calculated in Euros. The bill is payable at the ship's front desk; we accept cash or credit/debit card only. For cash we accept Euros. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, American Express, and Discover Card are not accepted for this bill.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. The bill is paid at the ship's front desk (they will have you fill out a form) by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.

Please note: Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

Exchange Services: Policy Update

Due to international banking laws, we are not able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the “How to Exchange Money” section for helpful tips and information.

Tipping Guidelines

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

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Grand Circle Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7–\$10 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$10–\$12 U.S. per traveler, per day. You'll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire cruise staff. ***Policy Update:*** *Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Customized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.gct.com/myplanner under "My Reservations".

Air Inclusive Travelers

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

- **Overseas Arrival:** Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. Important note on porters: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Arrival Time

If you are booking your own international airfare or have personalized your flights, we recommend that you choose flights that arrive by 1pm on Day 2 of your trip (or pre-trip extension, if you are taking one) if you are interested in joining your Program Director for an orientation walk in the vicinity of your hotel.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as GCCL travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: **www.rome2rio.com**

Bucharest Air Routing

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

For travelers on the Amsterdam-to-Bucharest route: All international flights—including direct flights to the U.S. and ones that connect through other European cities—depart Bucharest before 7 am. Expect an early morning on the day of your return flight from Bucharest to the U.S. (if you'd like a wake-up call, just ask the front desk).

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.

- Optional tours that are reserved onsite can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.) We do not take Amex, cash, or checks for optional tours.
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- We will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.gct.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone is "unlocked", meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is "unlocked" then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with "Pay as You Go" cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Program Director while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet Access and Email

While sailing Internet access may be unavailable, depending on locks, bridges, and regional remoteness. Internet access will be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities.

Receiving Calls from Home

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

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Austria: +43

Hungary: +36

Belgium: +32

Netherlands: +31

Bulgaria: +359

Romania: +40

Croatia: +385

Serbia: +381

Germany: +49

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same 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>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. 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 acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

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

What to Bring

We have included suggestions from former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

Your cabin already has: Shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer, soap, body lotion, shower cap, and towels. **And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Travel money bag or money belt
- ☐ Moisturizer, lip balm

- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards

Medicines

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

Optional Gear

- ☐ Travel alarm
- ☐ Compact binoculars
- ☐ Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- ☐ Washcloth
- ☐ Travel-size tissues
- ☐ Basic sewing kit
- ☐ Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper

- ☐ Electrical transformer and plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” section.
- ☐ Reading materials
- ☐ Travel journal/note pad
- ☐ Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- ☐ Addresses for postcards
- ☐ Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- ☐ Phrase book
- ☐ Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- ☐ Insect repellant
- ☐ For hotel stays: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version. Hair dryers are provided on your ship.

Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with 220-volt outlets. In your bathroom you will find a 110-volt outlet; this outlet is only for low-voltage appliances, like electric shavers. (Your bathroom also comes equipped with a hair dryer).

Electricity in this region is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B; standard European plugs are Type C, E, and F. **Of the three, a Type C adapter is the most useful as it fits into Type E and F sockets.** Type C is usually what is sold in stores as a European adapter.

Aboard ship, the plugs in your cabin bedroom are Type F. The 110V socket in your cabin bathroom takes U.S. plugs, but not polarized ones (where one prong is bigger than the other). *Previous travelers have mentioned this because some small appliances, like Waterpiks, have polarized plugs.*

Note that even though you'll only need the European plug adapter on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

For your reference, here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Austria: C and/or F

Belgium: C

Bulgaria: C

Croatia: C and/or F

Germany: C and/or F

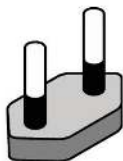
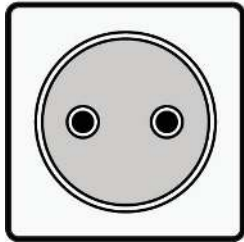
Hungary: C

Netherlands: C

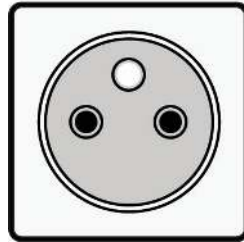
Romania: C

Serbia: F

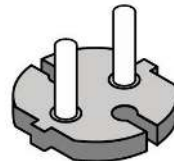
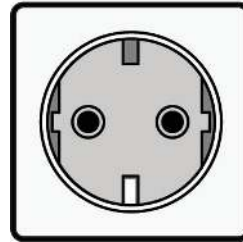
Type C



Type E



Type F



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Netherlands: As in most areas of northwest Europe, the weather in the Netherlands is frequently rainy and can be very changeable from day to day all through the year. During spring, a fine, warm spell may last for weeks, or a stretch of cool, unsettled weather may prevail. Daytime temperatures are generally mild, averaging in the upper 50s and low 60s, but weather shifts do occur on a regular basis. In summer, fine warm periods may last for weeks on occasions; but then again, the weather could also be cool and unsettled. By autumn, overcast skies occur more frequently, and the overall weather pattern consists of longer, heavier, rains and colder temperatures. Generally, the flat countryside of the Netherlands makes it a rather windy place in all seasons. In the past, the Dutch relied on this weather element to run the windmills that pumped the seawater from the low-lying lands.

Germany: Germany has a central European climate, with variable weather; rain and drizzle are common year-round. The hill slopes along the Rhine and Mosel valleys have a climate particularly suitable to the cultivation of vineyards. Though summer weather is often volatile, it is generally sufficiently warm and sunny to make this a notable area for wine. Spring and fall weather is moderate with intermittent sun; cloudy, wet days are common.

On the Rhine and Mosel Rivers, fog and mist appear frequently, especially in the early mornings. Evenings on the water can be quite chilly. The farther south you head, the milder the climate tends to become. In the upper Rhine valley of southwest Germany, site of Baden-Baden and the Black Forest, the spring and summer temperatures are the warmest in the country, allowing for a variety of crops to grow, including vines and tobacco. In this southwest region, autumn can be noticeably cooler, and winter quite cold, due to the area's proximity to the Alps and distance from the ocean.

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

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

Bulgaria: The climate of Bulgaria is temperate continental, with very warm summers, cold winters, and four distinct seasons. Spring and fall are quite comfortable but can bring rainy days. The regions in southern Bulgaria feel a Mediterranean influence, and winters here are milder. Winters are also somewhat warmer along the coast of the Black Sea, although winds blowing

down from Russia can chill the area. But during the summer the coast of the Black Sea enjoys more moderate temperatures than inland Bulgaria and pleasant breezes from the coast. Cities along the Danube, like Ruse and Vidin, have hot summers and cold winters, plus humidity can be quite high.

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

Belgium: The northern part of Belgium is low-lying, with a climate that is almost identical to that of the Netherlands, its adjoining neighbor. Showers are common—Bruges, in particular, gets a lot of rain—but the sprinkles rarely turn into heavy downpours. The weather can change quite frequently from day to day throughout the year. Though generally the daytime temperatures are mild, summer may bring a warm spell for a few weeks. Fall brings overcast and rainy days and the temperature will start to drop.

Traveling in Summer? Expect Heat Waves

We'd like to call out that the last few summers in this region have been extremely hot, with average temperatures in the mid-80s and prolonged heat waves in the 90-100 degree range. If you are traveling in the summer, know that we may need to adjust our daily activities to avoid the hottest parts of day and that many shops, restaurants, etc. do not have air conditioning.

Weather Conditions and River Depths

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

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS			KOBLENZ, GERMANY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	41 to 34	91 to 86	8	39 to 28	--	12
FEB	42 to 32	91 to 79	11	43 to 29	--	11
MAR	48 to 37	92 to 74	9	49 to 35	--	12
APR	53 to 40	90 to 66	12	57 to 39	--	12
MAY	61 to 46	87 to 62	12	66 to 48	--	14
JUN	66 to 52	89 to 66	9	71 to 54	--	12
JUL	69 to 55	90 to 68	12	74 to 57	--	13
AUG	70 to 55	91 to 65	11	73 to 56	--	13
SEP	64 to 51	93 to 72	10	68 to 51	--	12
OCT	57 to 46	93 to 78	9	57 to 44	--	10
NOV	48 to 39	92 to 85	7	46 to 36	--	11
DEC	44 to 39	92 to 88	7	40 to 31	--	12

MONTH	NUREMBERG, GERMANY			VIENNA, AUSTRIA		
	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	35 to 26	86	5	39 to 31	84 to 75	1
FEB	39 to 27	82	4	43 to 33	82 to 68	2
MAR	47 to 32	76	4	52 to 38	81 to 62	4
APR	56 to 38	69	5	63 to 46	76 to 54	2
MAY	65 to 46	67	6	73 to 55	76 to 54	7
JUN	71 to 52	67	7	79 to 59	76 to 57	4
JUL	74 to 55	68	8	84 to 63	76 to 54	7
AUG	72 to 54	71	8	88 to 64	78 to 54	5
SEP	66 to 48	77	6	75 to 57	84 to 61	5
OCT	55 to 41	82	6	63 to 48	86 to 65	2
NOV	44 to 34	85	6	50 to 39	86 to 75	3
DEC	37 to 29	87	6	40 to 33	85 to 78	2

MONTH	BUDAPEST, HUNGARY			RUSE, BULGARIA		
	Temp High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	38 to 25	86 to 77	7	36 to 27	88 to 81	12
FEB	43 to 27	85 to 68	6	40 to 29	88 to 76	11
MAR	53 to 35	81 to 57	6	52 to 37	83 to 62	11
APR	63 to 41	75 to 51	7	64 to 46	80 to 52	10
MAY	70 to 51	77 to 51	8	74 to 55	81 to 52	11
JUN	80 to 56	72 to 51	8	80 to 61	83 to 53	10
JUL	85 to 59	76 to 48	7	84 to 64	81 to 49	7
AUG	90 to 59	76 to 48	7	83 to 63	81 to 49	6
SEP	80 to 52	82 to 52	5	77 to 58	82 to 50	6
OCT	65 to 43	86 to 60	5	64 to 47	85 to 62	7
NOV	50 to 34	87 to 75	8	48 to 37	88 to 78	10
DEC	40 to 28	86 to 79	8	40 to 31	89 to 84	11

MONTH	BUCHAREST, ROMANIA			BRUGES, BELGIUM		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	36 to 23	94 to 81	8	39 to 35	87	18
FEB	39 to 25	94 to 75	7	39 to 34	88	16
MAR	50 to 33	93 to 63	11	45 to 38	86	17
APR	62 to 42	94 to 56	14	51 to 44	82	16
MAY	72 to 51	94 to 54	14	58 to 49	79	14
JUN	79 to 58	96 to 55	14	63 to 54	81	14
JUL	82 to 60	97 to 51	11	66 to 58	82	15
AUG	82 to 59	96 to 49	10	68 to 59	81	14
SEP	75 to 52	96 to 49	10	64 to 55	78	15
OCT	63 to 43	95 to 60	11	58 to 51	82	16
NOV	47 to 33	96 to 78	11	48 to 43	86	19
DEC	38 to 27	95 to 85	10	45 to 41	89	20

ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

Our River Ships

Our private fleet of custom-built river ships—with designs incorporating suggestions from Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers—offers a host of amenities to make you feel right at home. Each ship is designed to carry a moderate number of travelers, ensuring an intimate shipboard atmosphere, plus the ease of maneuverability that's so important when entering small river ports. Amenities on each ship include a restaurant with panoramic windows and wraparound promenade, sun deck with lounge chairs, a whirlpool, library, sauna, bar, lounge, dance floor, and small souvenir shop.

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

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

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

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

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

Cabin Assignments

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

Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Complimentary house wine, draft beer, and a selection of soft drinks are included with both lunch and dinner. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20–35 per bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

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

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

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

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

Celebrations: Recognition of an anniversary or birthday can be accommodated. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure.

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

Electricity

Cabin bathrooms are equipped with a 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with Type C/F “Europlug” outlets. See the electricity section of the packing chapter for more details.

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available at around noon. The restaurant will open at 12:30 pm and serve a light lunch. On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after 8:00am. You may sit in the ship’s lounge or on the sun deck until disembarkation.

Dock and Landing Etiquette

River waterways are simply not big enough to support large landing docks such as those built on ocean shorelines. It is common for river ships to tie up alongside each other at some piers—particularly in ports where docking area is restricted. While we try to arrange the most convenient mooring available in each port of call, other boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore. On some rivers influenced by the tide, the ship might get below the level of the shore. It might be more difficult to see the ship from the riverbank, and the view from the cabins might be obstructed by the docking wall.

Docking Accessibility

For certain cities along your trip, your ship may be docked up to 1 hour outside the city center. Transportation to and from the city proper will be done via motorcoach.

Headsets

During your trip, complimentary headsets, or *Whispers* receivers, are provided on our guided tours through the cities we visit. These receivers and headsets allow you to hear your Program Director and our local guides better. If you use a hearing aid or have strong preferences for headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headsets/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by iPods, computer jacks, etc.

Wireless Internet Access

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

Laundry and Linen Service

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

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. In addition to an emergency call button in all cabins, ships also feature fully staffed reception desks, 24 hours a day.

Onboard Activities

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

Recreational Facilities

These include a fitness center, sun deck with lounge, library, and lounge with bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines). Prices are in Euros. The fitness center has an exercise bike and walking/running treadmill. A massage therapist is available as well (prices listed on board).

Bicycles

We're pleased to offer complimentary bicycle rentals onboard your ship for use during free time, including all of the necessary safety gear, such as a helmet, brightly-colored safety vest, and a lock. Because there is a limited supply of bicycles available, they will be offered on a first-come first-served basis. For more information or if you are interested in using one of the bicycles, please speak to the Front Desk staff or Hotel Manager onboard your ship.

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

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

Elevator/Chairlift

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

Passport Procedures

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

Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

Ship Specifications

M/S River Adagio

- **History:** Built in 2003
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 38 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

M/S River Aria

- **History:** Built in 2001
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 40 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

M/S River Harmony

- **History:** Built in 1999
- **Size:** 361x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 140 passengers, 32 crew members
- **Layout:** 70 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Your Program Director

Grand Circle Cruise Line is committed to showing you a destination through the perspective of those who live, work, and play there. How better to do that than to have a resident with you every step of the way? We are proud to be the only cruise line to provide you the dedicated services of an expert Program Director, a resident or native of the country who is delighted to share their in-depth knowledge of local history, culture, and hidden gems.

Fluent in English and skilled in fostering camaraderie among travelers, our Program Directors are constantly cited by our travelers as the main reason they continue to travel with us. During your cruise, you'll enjoy multiple Program Directors aboard your ship, who will each be with you and your group of 25-47 travelers throughout your journey—both on ship and on land. And with personal headsets on every included and optional tour, you'll be able to enjoy their perspective and enthusiasm as you explore at a level deeper than most Americans go.

During Your Trip This Cruise Spans Two Itineraries

As a reminder, your *Grand European Cruise* itinerary combines two of our shorter cruises—*The Great Rivers of Europe* and *Eastern Europe to the Black Sea*—into one continuous cruise. This allows you to stay aboard the same ship without having to change vessels partway through your journey. However, please keep in mind that some of your fellow travelers may be taking one of the shorter itineraries, and therefore will not be with you during the full duration. Instead some travelers will disembark in Vienna and new travelers will board in Budapest (or vice versa, depending on your sailing direction).

Your Program Director will likely switch to a new Director at either Vienna or Budapest as well; this is to ensure that you'll explore both Western and Eastern Europe with a knowledgeable local and gain insight on the historical differences between the two regions.

Laundry Service

Laundry service and dry cleaning are available through your hotel for an additional fee.

Onsite Fees

You may encounter photography fees in some cathedrals and historic sites.

The Danube, Main, and Rhine Rivers

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

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

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

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

The Main River

Formed near the German town of Kulmbach, by the confluence of the rivers Roter Main and Weisser Main, the Main River flows for some 310 miles. It winds through the rich farmland of central Germany and past the industrial areas of Schweinfurt, Wurzburg, Aschaffenburg, and Frankfurt to the Rhine River at Mainz. The feisty Main River calms down and widens at its junction with the Regnitz River, its chief tributary, and from that point on is an important east-west route. Indeed, the Main serves as a "water bridge" between the Rhine River and the Danube River. It is the "Main/Danube Canal" that connects the Main with the Danube. It stretches 106 miles from Bamberg on the Main River to Kelheim on the Danube.

The Rhine River

The Rhine starts high in the Swiss Alps, runs a course of some 840 miles through six countries—Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, France, Germany, and the Netherlands—then empties into the North Sea at Rotterdam. Though the Danube is twice as long as the Rhine, it is the latter that, throughout history, has served as the most important route for river trade between the European continent and the North Sea.

Of particular significance is the segment of the Rhine that forms a natural geographical boundary between Germany and France. This stretch of the river was once Europe's major link between Basel and the Atlantic, before the onset of efficient land transportation. Prominent cities such as Strasbourg, Mainz, Cologne, and Dusseldorf cropped up along the Rhine's shores, and further established the river's commercial importance, not only to this region, but to all of Europe.

For the artistic community, too, the Rhine has been an endless source of inspiration—from Heinrich Heine’s famous poem about the Lorelei legend to Wagner’s epic operas, *der Ring des Nibelungen*, to William Turner’s paintings of the Rhine’s foggy sunsets. Indeed, to travel the Rhine by boat, and witness the rising mists enshrouding the castles perched above, is to comprehend why the river has so strongly stimulated the creative imaginations of Germany’s greatest poets and composers.

Even though the Rhine flows through other countries besides Germany, it is in Germany—especially the stretch between Mainz and Cologne known as the Middle Rhine—that the riverside scenery is most spectacular. This is the “typical” Rhine: a land of steep and densely wooded hills, terraced vineyards, tiny villages hugging the banks, Gothic churches, and a succession of brooding castles. This portion of the river is the focal point of your cruise on the Rhine.

Waterways of the Netherlands

Nearly half of this small country—it measures just over 16,000 square miles—is below sea level, making the famous Dutch dikes a requisite for the use of a lot of the land. As early as 100 years ago, as much as 1,000 square miles of the Netherlands were still under water. Over the 20th century, however, it was a never-ending Dutch pursuit to extract more and more land from the sea. With the completion of ingenious water-control designs like the Zeeland Delta Project—a massive system of dikes, storm-surge barriers, and sluice gates—the Netherlands now has working solutions to its centuries-old problem of recurrent flooding by the North Sea.

Even so, the country still contains a lot of water, at least 1,100 square miles of it. That water, however, due to Dutch ingenuity and modern technology, is now mostly channeled into manageable canals, lakes, and rerouted rivers that were once open sea. It is the Netherlands’ waterways, which, despite being a hazard when flooded, have long enabled the commercial success of the country. Throughout history, the rivers’ strategic positions have given the Netherlands a prominent role in world shipping and trading. Essentially, the Netherlands is Europe’s delta. Here three of Europe’s major waterways—the Rhine, the Maas, the Waal, and their tributaries (including the Kil and the Merwede Rivers)—come to empty into the North Sea. Since the earliest seafaring days, products from the rest of Europe have come to this point on their way to the Atlantic Ocean for shipment to markets around the world.

The rivers also serve as natural boundaries that dissect the country into several different topographical regions. The land to the north of the rivers is relatively low; south of the rivers, elevations are somewhat higher, but no spot in the Netherlands would ever be considered mountainous. There is just one modest hilltop peak—only 1,093 feet high—among the rolling hills in the southeast province of Limburg. The central provinces of Gelderland and Utrecht are forested; otherwise most of the countryside is flat green fields. In addition to natural geographical divisions, the rivers also designate religious boundaries. Above the rivers, the population is predominantly Calvinist; below the rivers, most of the people are Catholic.

Austrian Cuisine

Austria has quite a bit of culinary overlap with neighboring Germany. But you have only to consider the scope of the Hapsburg Empire to understand the many influences that have also shaped the national cuisine: the empire once ruled over Switzerland, Holland, Alsace, Burgundy, Spain, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, and happily appropriated many of their ingredients and cooking techniques. This is to say nothing of the Turkish influence that wafted westwards across the Austro-Hungarian empire.

- One constant on Austrian menus is the national dish, **wiener schnitzel**, the classic Viennese veal cutlet which is pounded till thin, breaded, fried and served with wedges of lemon and greens. It can also be made with chicken or pork.
- **Tafelspitz**: A filet of beef (or veal) that is gently simmered with vegetables, and served with applesauce and horseradish. Late spring brings spargel, or asparagus, which are particularly tender and flavorful here. It'll appear as a special on many menus, often served with a delicate hollandaise or just butter, lemon, and toasted bread crumbs.
- **Kasspätzln**: A Tyrolean casserole of chewy, hand-made egg noodles that are mixed with sauteed onions, covered with *bergkäse*, a strong local cheese, and baked till browned. Before serving, it is topped with crispy fried onions and parsley.
- **Speckknödeln**: A bacon dumpling that is often served as an appetizer or in stews or clear soups. It is just one of the dozens of different dumplings that grace the Austrian table.
- **Frittatensuppe**: Or “pancake soup” is a Styrian specialty that is popular all over Austria. It's a bowl of clear beef consommé with strips of cooked crepes or pancakes.
- **Würstelstande**: Or sausage booths. These street stalls are the go-tos for snackers on the go, and the sausage of choice will usually be a wiener sausage, which Austrians will only ever call a “Frankfurter.” You can also ask for a *bratwurst*, a *Käsekrainer* (which is studded with cheese), or a *Debreziner*, which is a lightly-smoked, reddish sausage spiced with paprika.
- **Sachertorte**: A classic chocolate sponge cake layered with apricot jam, and covered in chocolate ganache. It's available all over, but for the quintessential Viennese experience, try it where it originated, at the Sacher Hotel, or at the famed Demel bakery.
- **Mozartkugel**: Small, round candies are balls of pistachio marzipan and nougat, covered with dark chocolate.

One thing Austria can thank the Turks for is coffee. Legend has it that when Hapsburg troops chased the Turks out in 1683, the retreating invaders left behind bags of coffee beans. Within two years the first Viennese coffee house opened, and the rest is history. In 2011, UNESCO designated Viennese coffee house culture as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, saying that the coffee houses have a “very specific atmosphere” and are places “where time and space are consumed, but only the coffee is found on the bill.”

Belgian Cuisine

It's said that in Belgium one can savor food that has the quality of French cuisine, in German portion sizes. Belgians have cosmopolitan tastes, so in addition to dishes that borrow from their neighbors (France, Germany, and the Netherlands), you'll find many ethnic eateries. But there is also an inherently Belgian gastronomy that goes well beyond the famous chocolate and beer.

Perhaps the most iconic Belgian dish is one you may not recognize as Belgian at all: **pommes frites** (fried potatoes) or *frites* for short. Don't call them French fries, because they were invented in Belgium, where they are a national obsession. City streets abound with fry carts (*freitkot*) and fry shops (*friteries* or *fritures*) that serve up paper cones filled with hot, crispy fries, and a dazzling array of toppings. Mayo, ketchup, and curry sauces are common, but the most popular sauce is called **andalous**, a purée of red peppers, tomatoes, shallots and garlic.

- **Moules frites:** Belgium's national dish made of plump and sweet North Sea mussels are steamed in a savory broth of white wine, shallots, parsley, and butter (or sometimes, cream) that you can soak up with your fries.
- **Chicon au gratin:** These endive heads are braised, wrapped in ham slices, and smothered with a Gruyère sauce. It's usually served with mashed potatoes.
- **Waterzooï:** A flavorful fish stew or thick soup with vegetables, herbs, and cream. It can also be based on chicken.
- **Tomates aux crevettes:** Grey shrimp stuffed inside a tomato.
- **Garnaalkroketten:** Grey shrimp that is formed into breaded, cylindrical croquettes served with lemon and parsley.
- **Paling in't groen:** Also known as "eels in the green" in which delicate chunks of (sometimes smoked) eel are simmered in a sauce made of herbs fresh from the riverbanks: usually sorrel, chervil, parsley, and watercress.
- **Carbonnade flamande:** A rich beef stew simmered in Belgian beer with bacon, carrots, and herbs.
- **Vol-au-vent:** This means "windblown," in reference to the light, flaky pastry that tops this deconstructed chicken pot pie, which sometimes also comes with meatballs.
- **Frikadellen met krieken:** Meatballs in a sour cherry sauce. It's a favorite at town fairs or family gatherings as either a main course or dessert.
- **Spekuloos:** These crispy caramel-y cookies are perfect for dessert.
- **Gauffres:** Also known as waffles. Belgian waffles are here called Brussels waffles, and they are large and rectangular.

- **Liège waffles:** These waffles have rounded edges and are flecked with pearls of sugar that caramelize into chewy goodness. You can have *gauffres* with syrup, whipped cream, jam, drizzled chocolate, fruits, and more. Or satisfy your sweet tooth with world-famous, hand-made Belgian chocolate. It shouldn't be hard, since Belgium boasts more than 2,000 chocolatiers.

The only thing more prolific is Belgian beer: there are more than 450 varieties. Trappist beers are strictly regulated and must be brewed in Trappist monasteries. Abbey beers are brewed in the monastic style, but can be made anywhere. In general, Belgian beer is a bit yeastier and higher in alcoholic content than other beers. In 2016, UNESCO added Belgian beer culture to its list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. To that, we say, “*Op uw gezondheid.*” Cheers!

Bulgarian Cuisine

Bulgarians love to bond over their shared meals. During these meals you will find that Bulgarian cuisine shares many characteristics with other Balkan countries, as well as their neighbors to the south, including Greece and Turkey. Foods like yogurt, **sirene** (a Bulgarian type of brined cheese), and sausage accompany most dishes you will encounter.

- **Topcheta:** A Bulgarian meatball soup thickened with egg yolks and yogurt.
- **Shkembe:** This traditional Bulgarian soup is made from tripe and a great hangover cure.
- **Banitsa:** A baked pastry made of layered stuffing and phyllo that can be made with eggs, sirene, and yogurt.
- **Tutmanik:** This is similar to *pita* but is made with yeast dough, milk, and white cheese.
- **Milinki:** This bread roll pastry is made with eggs and sirene.
- **Buhti:** Deep-fried dough balls, served with jam, honey, and sirene.
- **Shopska salad:** This salad has chopped cucumbers, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and is topped with sirene.
- **Tarator:** A cold soup made from cucumbers, garlic, yogurt, and dill.
- **Lukanka:** Spicy salami consisting of minced beef and pork.
- **Pulneni chushki:** Bulgarian stuffed bell peppers.
- **Bulgarian Gyuvech:** This casserole is served in a clay pot and is made with with pork or beef, tomatoes, okra, mushrooms, peas, green beans, potatoes, eggplant, and onions.

Croatian Cuisine

Are Croatia's **Ston oysters** the best in the world? You can decide when you are exploring the Dalmatian coast, which is also famous for mussels, prawns, and all manner of fish and shellfish. The Zinfandel grape originated here, so you may want to try a local wine made from it. Croatia

also has a stronger alcoholic beverage, **rakija**, in several differently flavored or spiced varieties, such as **travarica**, which has added herbs is one regional specialty. Pair it with some well known dishes like:

- **Crni rizot:** A black risotto made with squid.
- **Brudet:** A flavorful fish and tomato stew.
- **Pasticada:** A dish loved by carnivores, is this stuffed beef cooked in wine.
- **Rozata:** This sweet caramel cream is a Dubrovnik specialty.
- **Gregada:** A fish stew often made with fresh scorpion fish or grouper chopped into large chunks with sliced potatoes and lashings of olive oil.
- **Štrukli:** Delicious pillows of dough filled with cottage cheese and slathered in cream that are enjoyed as a dessert or a mid-morning snack.
- **Burek:** Flaky pastries layered with cheese, spinach, apple or meat that are enjoyed any time of day.

German Cuisine

German Cuisine varies greatly from region to region. The southern regions of Bavaria and Swabia share many dishes among them and with their neighbors 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. But the region that is often viewed as having the most classic German cuisine is Saxony.

- **Sauerbraten:** A tangy pot roast that is eaten all over Germany. *Sächsischer Sauerbraten* uses beer instead of wine to marinate the beef before its long, slow braising. *Rheinischer Sauerbraten* is made with raisins and crumbled *lebkuchen* (gingersnaps) to give the tangy gravy a touch of sweetness
- **Dresdner Wiegebraten:** A Dresden meat loaf made with minced pork, veal and beef bound with eggs, breadcrumbs, anchovies, bacon and herbs that gets slathered with butter before roasting.
- **Sächsische Kartoffelsuppe:** (Saxon potato soup), a rich, creamy puree of potatoes and broth studded with onions fried in bacon fat, finely chopped greens, and bacon and sausage bits—all seasoned with ginger, nutmeg, salt and pepper. A special version is made with succulent shrimps and shrimp broth.
- **Leipziger Allerlei:** A casserole of shrimp or crayfish mixed with cauliflower, carrots, peas, asparagus, and mushrooms, baked with a creamy sauce topped with bread crumbs.
- **Buchweizenpfannkuchen:** A buckwheat pancake that may be served with syrup and cranberries, or with salmon and a salad.

- **Dresdner Eierschecke:** A three-layered cake filled with custard and cream.
- **Currywurst:** A bratwurst flavored with curry, ketchup and Worcestershire sauce. It was invented in 1946 by Herta Heuwer, a Berlin housewife who decided to spice up her family's diet by trading some booze for seasonings from some British soldiers. *Currywurst* is a classic example of post-war, East German cuisine—a style that arose during a time of severe shortages, when the people of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany) had to get inventive with very economical ingredients.
- **Westfälischer Schinken:** Or Westphalian ham is made from pigs raised solely on acorns. The meat is dry cured and smoked over beechwood and juniper.
- **Dampfnudeln:** A yeasty steamed dumpling with vanilla sauce. If they are topped with *powidl* (a plum jam) and sprinkled with poppy seeds, they are called *germknödeln*. If you prefer your dumplings savory, *dampfnudeln* can be enjoyed with mushrooms and béchamel sauce; or with gravy and rolls of beef stuffed with bacon and pickles called *Rouladen*.
- **Badische Schaeufele:** Smoked pork shoulder simmered in wine with garlic, leeks, juniper berries, and other spices.
- **Maultaschen:** In this dish, pockets of dough are stuffed with spinach, meat or cheese; and eaten as a main course or in a beef broth.
- **Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte:** Or Black Forest Cake. It's a chocolate layer cake filled and frosted with fresh cream and cherries soaked in *Kirschwasser* (cherry schnapps), and decorated with chocolate shavings.
- **Nürnberger bratwurst:** These were the first sausage to receive the European Union's Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) status. To be labeled as *Nürnberger bratwurst*, these small, coarsely-ground pork sausages must be 2 ¾–3 ½ inches long; contain mace and marjoram; and be made within the metropolitan Nuremberg limits. The most popular way to eat them is *Drei im Weggla* or “three in a bun.”

Hungarian Cuisine

It won't take long for you to figure out that paprika (*paprikás*) and sour cream (*tejföl*) figure prominently in many classic Hungarian dishes. But don't be fooled, Hungarian food is delicious and diverse, and even dishes accented with paprika have distinctive tastes, thanks to the eight different grades of “red gold” that are used here.

- **Gulyas:** Or goulash is a saucy beef dish that in Hungary is more like a soup than the stew you may be familiar with.
- **Pörkölt:** A hearty stew of beef, pork, lamb, chicken, or liver simmered with onion, paprika and other spices, and served with a side of chewy *nokedli* (egg noodle dumpling). It's comfort food at its finest, and Hungarians like to say, “It's not a real Sunday without *pörkölt*.” If you thicken the stew with sour cream, you get *paprikás*.

- **Töltött káposzta:** Rolls of pickled cabbage stuffed with seasoned rice and ground pork or beef, in a sauce accented by sour cream. It is a favorite around Easter and Christmas.
- **Halászlé:** Or fisherman's soup, is cooked in a kettle over an open fire. It is based on Danube river fish like carp, catfish, perch, or pike and seasoned with hot paprika, giving it a bright red color. If you order it **a la Baja**, it will have thick pasta and mainly carp. *Szeged*-style will have four types of fish.
- **Lángos:** A popular street food of crispy, chewy, deep-fried flatbread smothered with sour cream and garlic sauce, and topped with grated cheese and sometimes, sausage and bacon.
- **Lecsó:** Similar to the French ratatouille, this dish is a stew of peppers, tomatoes and onions. Some cooks do put meat in it but typically it is served just with bread and a dollop of sour cream.
- **Uborkasaláta:** A salad of thinly sliced cucumbers dressed with white vinegar, dill, and onions.
- **Palacsinta:** Hungary's answer to crepes, they can have sweet or savory fillings, and they are always served rolled. The famous Budapest restaurant Gundel serves their own version filled with a rum-walnut cream which is then flambéed, and drizzled with chocolate sauce.
- **Dobos torte:** This dessert was named after the master confectioner who invented it in 1885. It includes six layers of sponge cake covered in chocolate buttercream with a glistening topping of caramel. It is a staple at the many famous coffeehouses of Budapest (and Vienna), and not to be missed.
- **Somlói galuska:** A cake is topped with chocolate cream, walnuts, rum and whipped cream, and it is another specialty of the renowned Gundel restaurant.

Dutch Cuisine

Until the first half of the last century, the cuisine of the Netherlands had a reputation for being bland. Today, it is surprisingly diverse, thanks to a bounty of ingredients and influences. The modern Netherlands is one of Europe's largest exporters of produce and dairy goods, both of which figure prominently (and freshly) in the national cuisine. Along with continental favorites, dishes from former Dutch colonies, particularly Indonesia, have entered the Dutch diet. And every town has its favorite place for Turkish and Middle Eastern **kebabs**, **shawarma**, and **falafel**.

For truly patriotic fare, nothing beats **hollandse nieuw haring** or "Holland new herring." Every May or June, pop-up shops fly the red, white, and blue Dutch flag to say that Holland "new" herring are here. It's the lead-up to **Vlaggetjestdag** (Flag Day) on June 15th. The traditional way to eat herring is to grab the tail, toss your head back, and pop the fish in your mouth. Or try **broodje haring**: cut-up herring and onions, tucked in a bun with a Dutch flag toothpick.

Right off the bat, you'll notice that Dutch city streets abound with food stalls, kiosks, trucks, and automat-style snack bars called **raampje** (where you select your food from a wall of tiny glass windows.) You might encounter dishes like these:

- **Stamppot:** Which is hot mashed potatoes mixed with veggies such as kale, carrots, leeks, turnips, or sauerkraut. There are even versions made with fruit such as apples (called *hete bliksem* or “hot lightning”). Sometimes stamppot is served with gravy and a side of smoked **rookworst** sausage, or simply with gherkin pickles.
- **Snert:** Or pea soup is the quintessential Dutch comfort food—a thick stew of split peas, bacon, celery, onions, carrots, potato, and slices of smoked **rookworst** sausage. What sets it apart from other pea soups are the spices—ginger, allspice and cloves.
- **Hachee:** A hearty stew of beef and caramelized onions.
- **Hutspot met klapstuk:** (“hotpotch”) A mix of potatoes, onions, and **winterpeen** (a sweet, winter carrot), served with braised beef. It’s as close to a Dutch national dish as it gets, eaten every October 3 to honor the 1574 siege of Leiden.
- **Stroopwafel:** Two wafer-thin waffles sandwiched with caramel or syrup. They come in convenient discs to top your cup of coffee and keep it warm.
- **Poffertjes:** Tiny, yeasty buckwheat pancakes dusted with sugar and smeared with butter. You can also get toppings like **stroop** (syrup), **slagroom** (whipped cream), or **aardbein** (berries).

Romanian Cuisine

If you like unpretentious food with robust flavors, you’ll love what arrives on your plate in Romania, whose cuisine weds fresh local ingredients with the culinary influences of Turkey, Hungary, Saxon Germany, Austria, Greece, and Russia.

Certain ingredients make a regular appearance at the Romanian table, such as **smantana**, a sour cream. It’s the base for **mujdei de usteroi**, a ubiquitous garlic sauce. Perhaps, like the Romanians, you’ll grow to love **lovage**, a Mediterranean herb that’s a cross between parsley and celery. You can also expect to see a green pepper (raw or pickled) on the side of your plate or soup bowl. The most popular meat here is pork, especially around Christmas when it was traditional to slaughter a hog and use it, nose to tail, to make a whole array of holiday dishes. **Tochitură** is one of them (*but now available year round*)—a thick pork stew cooked in tomatoes and wine, and topped with a fried egg.

Romanian pastrami may be the pride of every New York deli, but here where it originated, you will find that the **pastrama** method of brining, seasoning, and smoking is applied to a whole variety of meats, including veal, mutton, beef, pork, or even goat. In fact, the pastrami that Romanian Jews first brought to New York in 1872 was originally made with cured goose breast. You’ll find that here, too. Romanians like their *pastrama* thinly sliced as an appetizer; or as an entrée served with **mămăligă** (Romanian *polenta*) and garlic sauce.

- **Sarmale** (or **sărmăluțe**): This national dish is made from cabbage rolls stuffed with pork and rice.

- **Pastrav:** This Romanian trout is perfect for fish lovers, which is served at countryside trout farms called *pastavarie*.
- **salată roșii:** Or tomato salad, that includes a huge array of pickled vegetables.
- **Salată castraveți:** Cucumber salad made from thinly sliced cucumbers, onions, olive oil, salt, tarragon, and cider vinegar.
- **Salata de vinete,:** A creamy eggplant spread made from very few ingredients.
- **Ghiveci de legume:** A savory stew that can contain over 20 braised vegetables.
- **Mititei** or **mici:** The name means “little ones,” but these small, skinless sausages pack a big flavor punch and can be found at food stalls.
- **Covrigi:** A Romanian pretzel.
- **Papanasi:** A bombshell of fried dough and sweetened curd cheese, topped with jam and cream.
- **Placinta:** These are similar to crêpes. There are savory versions but most popular are the sweet ones filled with sweet cheese, apples, sour cherries, Nutella, or jam.
- **Cozonac:** A traditional holiday sweet bread filled with walnuts, poppy seeds or cream cheese.

There are good Romanian wines to pair with your meal. But a true Romanian would advise you to “aid your digestion” with a glass of **tuica** plum brandy. *Pofta mare*, or “hearty appetite!”

Serbian Cuisine

Serbians love their meat—especially when it’s cooked **pod sac** style, in a covered pan until it’s fall-off-the-bone tender. But Serbian food isn’t all meat all the time! Vegetables and dairy get attention too, like the **shopska salad**. Some key dishes to look for include:

- **Pljeskavica:** A “Serbian hamburger” that consists of a spiced meat mixture of pork, beef, and lamb that is used as the “burger” patty.
- **Karadjordjeva šnicla:** Or schnitzel, a breaded veal cutlet smothered with tartar sauce.
- **Knedle:** Potato-dough dumplings stuffed with a plum and rolled in sugar and cinnamon.
- **Cvarci:** A great snack made from crispy, salty pork rinds.
- **Ajvar:** This garlicky, red pepper relish is served with most of the dishes above.
- **Prebranac:** A baked bean soup.
- **Kajmak** or **mladi sir:** These are soft or unripened cheeses similar to cottage cheese.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. 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 is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, 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 or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

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!

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

Belgium

Popular items include porcelains, Belgium (the most famous laces to look for are *bloemenwek*, *rozenkant*, and *toveresseteek*), European antiques, leather goods, and edibles like chocolates, pralines, and the thin, spicy biscuits called *speculoos*.

Bulgaria

Traditional items include rose oil (or rose water), ceramics, *kilims* (a colorful, flat woolen rug), copper, wood carvings, woolen items, jewelry, tablecloths and lace, and bells.

Croatia

Typical Croatian souvenirs include gingerbread hearts (*licitar*), lavender oil, olive oil, and red coral jewelry (note that red coral is illegal import into the U.S. but allowed if in jewelry). Dry skin? Locals swear by the lanolin-based *Zagrebacki melem* ointment. Remember that the cravat was invented here, so be on the lookout for unusual and beautifully made neckties.

Germany

Popular German buys include Nymphenburg porcelain, cutlery, high-quality cameras and binoculars, loden clothing, goose-down comforters, Rosenthal china and glassware, and chocolate. Munich is Germany's fashion capital—there are plenty of chic boutiques, especially on Theatinerstrasse, Maximilianstrasse, and Schwabing's Leopoldstrasse.

Value Added Tax: Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of Germany's 16% Value Added Tax (VAT). You must obtain a special form for VAT from the store. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details, and be sure to save all receipts for Customs.

Hungary

Look for exquisite Herend porcelain, cut glass, fine peasant embroidery and needlework, homespun cloth, carpets, charming carved wood objects and, of course, dolls in national dress. Other excellent buys are recordings of classical and folk music.

Netherlands

There is an abundance of art/prints and antiques available in the Netherlands, in addition to bargains on clothing and textiles. Keep an eye out for traditional items like *stroopwafel* (a cookie consisting of two thin wafers filled with caramel syrup), Delftware (famous blue and white pottery), Dutch cheese, wooden clogs, and salted licorice.

Romania

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

Serbia

Slovenia claims to have the finest wines of the region, but up-and-comer Serbia offers some wonderful options too—especially from the Oplenac region, considered the “Serbian Tuscany.” Other souvenirs you will want to bring home with you include: Yugoslavia memorabilia, traditional Serbian pottery, local honey, ajvar (red pepper dip), Licider heart (a traditional heart shaped cookie), handmade jewellery, ratluk (the Serbian answer to Turkish delight), and pirot kilim (handmade flat tapestry rug made in Pirot).

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

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

The top three points to know are:

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

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Austria

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 32,382 square miles
- **Capital:** Vienna
- **Languages:** German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
- **Location:** Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
- **Population:** 8,665,550 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 73.8%, Protestant 4.9%, Muslim 4.2%, Orthodox 2.2%, other 0.8%, none 12%, unspecified 2%
- **Time Zone:** Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

National Holidays: Austria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Austria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/26 National Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Austria: A Brief History

Austria has been populated since Neanderthal times, but its most significant early culture was the Hallstatt, which arose around 400 BC when Celtic people settled along the shores of the Hallstatter See. The Celts formed a confederation called Noricum, established a prosperous salt trade, and forged iron implements. When Romans arrived in 15 BC, they made the area a province. In exchange for their excellent Noric steel (which the Romans used for swords), the Celts received protection—and they needed it, as Germanic Teutons and other tribes invaded.

When Charlemagne arrived in the 8th century and created a zone in the Danube Valley called the East March. In 976, the Babenburg dynasty became the margraves of this “eastern realm” or Österreich, German for “Austria.” The Babenburgs extended the territory and made Vienna their capital. When they died, Rudolf I took over in 1278, ushering in the dynastic powerhouse that dominated Europe for 500 years. Consolidating power through strategic marriages, they built a network from Spain to the Netherlands to Germany. The Hapsburgs were all prince-electors of the Holy Roman Empire, and from 1452 they elected their kinsmen as its Emperors. But holding power was not easy. In 1618 Europe erupted into a Thirty Years War that caused nearly eight million deaths. It was largely a contest between Bourbon and Austro-Spanish Hapsburgs. Things further destabilized when the Turks advanced to Vienna. They remained a threat until 1699.

Austria bloomed during the Enlightenment reigns of Maria Theresa and her son, Joseph II. They instituted reforms, and were patrons of the arts (with Mozart as their court composer). Decades later, a result of the Napoleonic wars was that the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806. But the Hapsburgs survived, creating a German Alliance of hundreds of small states. In 1867, Austria and Hungary united as a dual monarchy—and reveled in the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s cultural flowering. Vienna, newly magnificent after a flurry of building, was its epicenter. The Empire prospered until Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, sparking World War I. The 1919 defeat of the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey, and Bulgaria) ended the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which split into several nations per the Treaty of Versailles.

Austria became a republic, but suffered inflation, unemployment, and the loss of a national identity. Political tensions erupted into violent street fights, and in 1934, a Conservative government took legislative powers from the parliament, making Austria a fascist country. Though the Treaty of Versailles had expressly forbidden the reunification of Germany and Austria, Hitler (himself an Austrian) had other ideas about this Anschluss. When the Nazis goose-stepped into Austria in 1938, they were welcomed by cheering crowds. Austria’s military, economy, and political infrastructure were integrated into Germany’s war efforts; the execution of Jews and resistors stepped up; and many Austrians participated in the Nazi’s crimes.

Austria was liberated by Allied and Soviet troops in 1945, a second republic was established, and Austria remained under occupation. In 1955, Russia demanded that Austria declare its neutrality as a condition for ending Soviet occupation. This status enabled Austria to be a bridge between East and West during the Cold War. But the nation never came to terms with its war history. That started in 1986, when former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim ran for president. He won and served until 1992, and investigations into his wartime activities were inconclusive.

Austria joined the EU in 1995, adopted the euro in 1999, and is one of Europe’s most prosperous nations. It is considered a liberal democracy, and consistently ranks high for its quality of life.

Belgium

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 11,780 square miles
- **Capital:** Brussels

- **Language:** Dutch, French, and German are the official languages.
- **Location:** Belgium is bordered by France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands
- **Geography:** Belgium is located on the western edge of continental Europe. It has about 40 miles of seacoast on the North Sea, at the Dover Strait. France is south of Belgium, the Netherlands is directly north. The country measures only 150 miles across from the sea to the Ardennes.
- **Population:** 11,323,973 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 75%, other 25%
- **Time Zone:** Belgium is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in New York, it is noon in Brussels. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

National Holidays: Belgium

In addition to the holidays listed below, Belgium celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

07/21 Belgian National Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Armistice Day

12/25 Christmas Day

Belgium: A Brief History

The modern state of Belgium was officially born in 1830, but its story begins long before that, and is inextricably entwined with those of its neighbors. It has been called the “crossroads of Europe” and the “battlefield of Europe.” The Romans were the first organized invaders to experience it as both. Julius Caesar arrived here in 57 AD and made the unhappy acquaintance of the native tribes, whom he called “Belgae.” The name stuck even longer than the Romans did, who remained in Gallica Belgica for 500 years.

Germanic Franks swept into the north in the 5th century AD, while the southern part of the region was overtaken by the Romanized Merovingians, who were Latin-based. This established the linguistic (and cultural) divide between the Germanic Dutch (Flemish) speakers of Flanders and the French speakers of Walloon that still exists today. During the 9th century, Vikings made frequent raids, prompting the fortification of many towns.

As the control of French kings and Holy Roman Emperors waned, Belgium was divided into feudal states. Coastal Flanders was the wealthiest, thanks to its burgeoning trade. In the 12th and 13th centuries, cities like Bruges, Ghent and Ypres became important cultural centers, dominated by a rich merchant class that gained increasing political power and challenged the local counts. But the nobles prevailed by calling in the French army to squelch any dissent.

The Dukes of Burgundy ruled for less than a century but had a profound impact. The Burgundian Duke Philip, the wealthiest man in Europe, built an elegant palace in Brussels, established a university in Leuven, and sponsored Flemish artists. He is known as the Conditor Belgii (founder of Belgium.) The Hapsburgs eventually took all Burgundian holdings. Their heir, Charles V, was born in Ghent and set up court in Brussels. But he abdicated in favor of his son, the Spanish King Philip II. Philip was widely unpopular, a fanatical Catholic who imposed harsh anti-Protestant edicts, and sent Spanish mercenaries to enforce them. When Protestants reacted violently in the 1566 Iconoclastic Fury, Philip doubled down by sending 10,000 troops under the Duke of Alba.

War continued for eighty years and by the end, the Netherlands won independence from Spain. But present-day Belgium remained part of Philip's Spanish Netherlands, and Protestants were expelled. Later, during the Wars of the Spanish Succession, the Spanish Netherlands were handed over to the Austrian Hapsburgs. Their reign (1713–94) was comparatively enlightened, and the region was allowed a fair amount of autonomy. The revolutionary French invaded in 1794, but French rule ended in 1815 when Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, near Brussels.

After this, the Congress of Vienna declared Belgium and Luxembourg as part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. King Willem I (of Orange-Nassau) divided his time between Brussels and The Hague, but he made enemies on the Belgian side when he tried to impose Dutch as the national language. Ironically, this also infuriated Flemish speakers, who saw their language as distinct from Dutch. The Belgians revolted during an opera performance in 1830. By 1831 it was over, and an independent Belgium declared Léopold of Saxe-Coburg Gotha King Léopold I of Belgium. He proved to be a competent ruler and helped Belgium prosper through the Industrial Revolution.

Léopold's heir, Léopold II, was committed to expanding upon his father's legacy. Through a series of shifty treaties, he personally acquired a bloc of Central Africa that was 70 times larger than Belgium. The "Congo Free State" was anything but free. Though Leopold paid lip service to abolishing the slave trade, his subjects in Congo were forced to work under abysmal conditions in rubber plantations. Almost half of the Congolese population died, directly or indirectly, due to Léopold's rule. Embarrassed by the world's condemnation, Belgium stripped Léopold of his property in 1908. But Congo remained a Belgian colony until 1960.

Belgium was a major World War I battleground. Germany invaded in 1914, despite Belgium's declaration of neutrality, and the Belgians put up a valiant defense led by their beloved King Albert. But Allied troops were bogged down in Belgian trenches for four horrific years. Thousands died and Belgium was stripped bare of its industrial infrastructure. The Germans returned during WWII in 1940 with a brutal air blitz. This time, the king, Léopold III, quickly surrendered. But the Belgian government objected and fled to London to operate in exile. Belgium had a strong

but fragmented resistance. There was also significant collaboration from Belgian fascists, and from both militant Flemish and Walloon groups. Belgium was liberated in September, 1944, but fighting continued until January 1945 with the Battle of the Ardennes.

After the war the country was wracked with angst about Léopold III's wartime actions. Many believed him to be a collaborator and he remained in exile in Switzerland until 1950. In 1951, under pressure from Walloon socialists, he abdicated in favor of his son Baudouin I. Belgium struggled with reconstruction but emerged as a key international political player. In 1958 Brussels became the seat of the European Commission, and in 1967, the headquarters of NATO.

In the latter part of the 20th century a huge public debt and high unemployment crippled the economy. Frustrated with 40 years of mismanagement, in 1999 the nation voted out the ruling Christian Democrat party and experimented with a new era of liberalism. Liberals, Socialists, and Green Party coalitions have led most governments since the turn of the century, but with increasing challenges from far right-wing groups (often with anti-immigrant platforms), Flemish separatists, and other nationalist parties.

Bulgaria

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 42,811 square miles
- **Capital:** Sofia
- **Language:** Bulgarian is the official language. English is usually understood in major hotels and restaurants but it is infrequently used in other settings. It is important to note that in Bulgaria, nodding the head means “no” and shaking the head means “yes.”
- **Location:** Bulgaria lies on the Black Sea in southeastern Europe, on the eastern part of the Balkans, with beautiful beaches on its coastline, the mountainous Balkan Range inland, and the fertile plains of the Danube in the north. Its borders touch Romania, Greece, Turkey, the Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia. Within the two great valleys of this country are nestled small villages where carts, not cars, are the main form of transportation.
- **Population:** 7,186,893 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Eastern Orthodox 59.4%, Muslim 7.8%, Other 1.7 %, None 3.7%, and unspecified 27.4 %
- **Time Zone:** Bulgaria is on Eastern European Time, which is seven hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in Washington D.C., it is 7 pm in Sofia. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

National Holidays: Bulgaria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Bulgaria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

03/03 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/06 St. George's Day

05/24 Culture and Literacy Day

09/06 Unification Day

09/22 Independence Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

Croatia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 21,851 square miles
- **Capital:** Zagreb
- **Government:** Presidential/parliamentary democracy
- **Language:** Croatian (Hrvatski), with Italian, German, and English also spoken by some.
- **Location:** Croatia is situated between the Pannonian Plain and the Adriatic Sea in southeastern Europe. Irregularities of its Adriatic coastline have created over 1,000 islands. The region in the north of Croatia is a highland area with a mountainous climate.
- **Geography:** Croatia is located in Southeastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. The terrain of Croatia is geographically diverse; flat plains along Hungarian border, low mountains and highlands near Adriatic coast, coastline, and islands.
- **Population:** 3,878,981 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 79%, Orthodox 3.3%, other Christian 4.5%, Muslim 1.3%, other 1.8%, unspecified 3.8%, none 6.3%
- **Time Zone:** Croatia is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

National Holidays: Croatia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Croatia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Corpus Christi. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

03/20 Bajram

04/05 Easter

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/30 Statehood Day

08/05 Homeland Thanksgiving Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/08 Independence Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/18 Remembrance Day

12/25 Christmas

Croatia: A Brief History

Though Croatia defines itself along ethno-nationalist lines, the first Croat tribes did not arrive here until the 6th century. Little is known about them, but they were likely Slavic people from the marshlands of Ukraine who migrated to the Pannonian plains and Dalmatian coast.

The Croats came after the Illyrians, Greeks, Celts and Romans, who arrived in 11 BC and ruled for 500 years, expanding their colony from the Adriatic to the Danube. In the decades after the Western Roman Empire fell in 476 AD, the Croats began to move in, banding with other groups in a series of shifting allegiances, and organizing around powerful clans. When Charlemagne came in 800 AD, he Christianized the Dalmatian Croats. Though the Byzantine Empire held political power, the Christian Croats still looked to Rome for cultural and spiritual leadership—a connection that endures today, with most Croats identifying as devout Roman Catholics.

In 925 AD, Tomislav united the Dalmatian and Pannonian Croats, establishing a unified kingdom that included modern-day Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro. Venice invaded Dalmatia, but the Croat kingdom lasted until 1102, when it merged with the kingdom of Hungary. By the mid-1400s, under widespread Ottoman occupation, the Croatian Assembly invited the Hapsburgs to assume control. The Hapsburgs ousted the Turks by the 18th century. But the dream of an independent Croatia reawakened during the mid 1800s, as Europe was swept by a wave of romantic nationalism. This brought a flowering of Croatian language and art.

Following World War I and the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1918 the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes united as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Axis takeover of Yugoslavia during World War II gave power to Croatia's far-right Ustase party, which built eight concentration camps to exterminate hundreds of thousands of Jews, Roma, and Serbs. Antifascist resisters rose up, but many, the Serbian Chetniks among them, enacted massacres against the Croats, exacerbating political and ethnic tensions.

The most effective partisans were led by the communist Josip Broz (aka “Tito”), who forced the Nazi retreat and became the architect of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, established in 1944. Though initially aligned with Moscow, Tito openly critiqued Stalin and continually asserted Yugoslavia’s independence. In 1961, he founded the Non-Aligned Movement, positioning its members as serious bargaining partners between the Soviet and western blocs.

Tito was determined to create a state in which no ethnic group dominated, and where church and state were separated. It was a fragile balance he maintained through a one-party system that suppressed all opposition. When he died in 1980, old tensions among the six Yugoslav republics resumed. In 1989, with the fall of communism, Yugoslavia fell apart. In 1990, Croatian nationalist Franjo Tudjman was elected President, and a year later, Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia. Conflicts between Serbs and Croats escalated, and within a month, war broke out.

The United Nations mediated a cease-fire in 1992, but hostilities resumed the next year when Croatia tried to regain lost territories. Multiple offensives and cease-fires ensued until 1995, when Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian governments signed the Dayton Peace Agreement, committing to a permanent cease-fire, regional cooperation and further democratization. When President Tudjman died in 1999, the subsequent coalition government brought major changes. Since then, Serbs and Croats have maintained a stable, albeit wary peace. Croatia joined NATO in 2009, and since joining the EU in 2014, its economy, powered by tourism, has grown.

Germany

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 137,846 square miles
- **Capital:** Berlin
- **Languages:** German is the official language; Turkish is also spoken in Berlin.
- **Location:** Germany is bordered by Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea.
- **Geography:** Located in central Europe, Germany is bordered on the west by the Benelux countries and France, and on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic. Switzerland and Austria are to the south. Germany’s northern coastline is met by the North Sea and the Baltic.
- **Population:** 80,854,408 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, other 28.3%
- **Time Zone:** Germany is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Berlin. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

National Holidays: Germany

In addition to the holidays listed below, Germany celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. There are also some holidays that are not national holidays, but are widely observed. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 May Day

10/03 Day of German Unity

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Germany: A Brief History

For many contemporary travelers, the history of Germany has been overshadowed by its role in the two World Wars of the past century. But that belies the two millennia of history and culture that is the legacy of Europe's Germanic people, and which awaits your discovery.

During the Bronze and Iron Ages, Germanic tribes from southern Scandinavia and Northern Germany expanded, mixing and clashing with Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, Gaul, and Indo-European people. Settling east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, in a region the Romans dubbed "Germania," they never unified. But they repulsed nearly all efforts of Rome to colonize them. The Romans were only ever able to subdue Germania's southern and western flanks.

With the 5th century fall of the Western Roman Empire, Germanic Franks rose as the largest tribal confederacy of the middle Rhine. They spread to Gaul, absorbing all of France; and as far west as Poland. There was no unified German nation but by 800 AD, there was a Holy Roman Empire with the Frankish king Charlemagne as Emperor. For 1,000 years, the Holy Roman Empire mostly controlled Europe, and German prince-electors mostly controlled the Empire.

The Holy Roman Empire became a collection of duchies, principalities, Free Imperial Cities, and ecclesiastical states that spread across the larger kingdoms of Germany, Italy, Bohemia, and Burgundy. In 1440, the Austrian Hapsburg dynasty took control of the Holy Roman Empire (and held it until 1806). But all the imperial states became embroiled in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), which was sparked by a revolt of Bohemian Protestants, but grew into a deadly struggle between Bourbon and Hapsburg powers. Most of Central Europe was devastated by the conflict.

The prospect of a unified German nation began to coalesce during the Seven Weeks War in 1866, when the Prussian army under Otto von Bismarck defeated Austria. Prussia's superior firepower convinced other German states that Austria was no longer a force. Bismarck then formed a North German Confederation without Austria—the forerunner to the unified German Empire of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Bismarck fostered alliances and instituted universal health care, pension plans, and other social welfare programs. But after Wilhelm I died in 1888, his grandson Wilhelm II rejected liberal reforms in favor of imperialism, which led to Germany's involvement in World War I. Its defeat ended of the German Empire with the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

The punitive provisions of the Versailles agreement opened the door for the Nazis. In 1933, a government was formed with Hitler as Chancellor. By 1934, Hitler took over as Fuhrer and established a totalitarian regime. German Jews were targeted by vicious propaganda and stripped of their rights. By 1939, half of Germany's 500,000 Jews had fled. The Final Solution was implemented in 1941, and the ensuing Holocaust killed 6 million Jews and 11 million others. Meanwhile, Germany began annexing territories and the world was drawn into war.

The Allies defeated the Axis powers in 1945, leaving a partitioned Germany with a decimated political, social, and economic infrastructure. Yet despite its ruin and enormous burden of shame, the Federal German Republic (West Germany) became a parliamentary democracy, a NATO member, a founding member of the European Union, and one of the world's richest countries. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) demanded reform. German reunification took place in 1990. Since then economic integration of East Germany has been difficult, but progressing. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor from 2005 to 2021, helped Germany retain its position as a leader of the EU, and indeed, of the free world.

Merkel stepped down from her position following the COVID-19 pandemic and was succeeded by Olaf Scholz, who has since weathered the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine. Scholz responded to the invasion by significantly increasing Germany's defense budget and supplying weapons to the Ukraine resistance.

Hungary

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 35,911 square miles
- **Capital:** Budapest
- **Languages:** Hungarian (Magyar) is the official language.
- **Ethnicities:** Hungarian 85.6%, Roma 3.2%, German 1.9%, other 2.6%, unspecified 14.1%
- **Location:** Hungary is located in central Europe
- **Geography:** Hungary is a landlocked country that has borders with seven countries: Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia to the east; Serbia and Romania to the south; Ukraine to the northeast; and Slovakia directly to the north. Most of Hungary is a fertile, rolling plain lying east of the Danube River, and drained by the Danube and Tisza Rivers.
- **Population:** 9,897,541 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 37.2%, Calvinist 11.6%, Lutheran 2.2%, Greek Catholic 1.8%, other 1.9%, none 18.2%, unspecified 27.2%
- **Time Zone:** Hungary is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Budapest.

National Holidays: Hungary

In addition to the holidays listed below, Hungary celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

03/15 1848 Revolution Memorial Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/20 Hungary National Day

10/23 1956 Revolution Memorial Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Hungary: A Brief History

Hungary has been populated for half a million years. It was settled by Illyrians, Thracians and Scythians, and the Celts arrived around 400 BC. Romans established a province in western Hungary called Pannonia, but left in the 2nd century AD, when Attila the Hun briefly took over.

The progenitors of modern Hungarians were the Magyars. In 895, seven Magyar tribes under the leadership of Árpád formed an alliance. (These chiefs are depicted in the iconic statues of Budapest's Heroes' Square.) They were fierce and superior horsemen who conquered lands as far west as Spain. But the Magyars realized that their survival depended on forming ties with more powerful entities—namely, Byzantium or the Holy Roman Empire. They chose Rome.

Magyar rule was solidified in 973, when Géza, the great-grandson of Árpád, had himself and his grandson Vajk baptized—gaining the favor of Rome. Vajk took the Christian name Stephen (István) and in 1000 he became the first King of Hungary. His kingdom lasted 500 years and its endurance gave Hungary a strong taste for sovereignty. But by 1526, nearly all of Hungary was occupied by Ottoman Turkey. The remaining western and northern parts gained the protection of Austria. But when the Hapsburgs drove the Turks out in 1686, they also made the rest of “liberated” Hungary an Austrian province. Over time there were setbacks (and revolts) under the Hapsburgs, but also an economic and cultural flowering that continued into the 20th century.

In 1848, Hungary revolted against Hapsburg rule and failed. But in 1867, Austria and Hungary formed a federated dual monarchy with two parliaments, two capitals (Vienna and Budapest) and a hyphenated name: Austria-Hungary. Hungary was industrialized, and its economy soared. When Austrian Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, Hungary entered World War I as a German ally. Losses were enormous, the empire dissolved, and unrest broke out. Large minorities within Hungary's borders clamored for independence, and got it, thanks to the Treaty of Trianon. It gave lands to the new nations of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, reducing Hungary to 40% of its traditional size—a loss many Hungarians still mourn.

To recoup its former lands, the increasingly right-leaning Hungarian government of Miklós Horthy turned to fascist Italy and Germany. Hungary did recover some lands, but it was also drawn into World War II as an Axis ally. After the Hungarian army was virtually decimated, Horthy tried to negotiate a separate peace with the Allies. But Hitler invaded, installed the

pro-Nazi Arrow Cross party, and resumed the murder of thousands of Jews, partisans, Romani, and intellectuals. In December 1944, the Red Army had encircled Budapest and a two-month siege began. By the time the Nazis surrendered in April 1945, much of Budapest had been destroyed.

The Soviets occupied Hungary after the war and made it a satellite state. In October 1953, 50,000 Budapest students began an anti-Soviet demonstration calling for Hungary's liberal-minded Imre Nagy to be Prime Minister. The secret police fired on them and overnight, Hungary was in revolt. Nagy formed a government and offered amnesty to those involved in the violence. But when he announced that Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact and pursue neutrality, the Soviets stormed in with tanks. The world watched in horror as nearly 20,000 Hungarians died.

Communism fell in 1989 and on October 23—33 years after the 1956 Uprising—Hungary became the Republic of Hungary. The new Hungary joined NATO in 1999; and the EU in 2004. The current Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, a onetime anti-Communist, now serves his fourth term. He has moved far right and been criticized for increasing authoritarianism.

Netherlands

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 16,034 square miles
- **Capital:** Amsterdam
- **Language:** Dutch is the official language. A large percentage of the Dutch are also fluent in English and German.
- **Location:** Situated on the coast of the North Sea, the Netherlands borders Germany to the east and Belgium to the south.
- **Population:** 16,947,904 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 28%, Protestant 19%, other 11% (includes about 5% Muslim and lesser numbers of Hindu, Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness, and Orthodox), none 42%
- **Time zone:** The Netherlands is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST: when it's 6 am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Amsterdam.

National Holidays: Netherlands

In addition to the holidays listed below, the Netherlands celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day
04/27 King's Birthday
05/05 Liberation Day
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 Second Day of Christmas

The Netherlands: A Brief History

Peaceful, tolerant, and prosperous, the Netherlands enjoys an enviable level of comfort and influence. But as its history proves, its success was hard won.

Germanic and Celtic tribes lived here by 750 BC, protected from invasion by the area's extensive wetlands. This changed in 57 BC, when Julius Caesar conquered the south, and established a military post in Nijmegen. Under the Romans, there was relative stability for 400 years. Franks came in the 5th century, bringing Christianity with them. By 800, the Emperor Charlemagne had a palace in Nijmegen. After his death, the Low Countries were split amongst various nobles.

With increasing attacks by Viking raiders, local rulers fortified their towns. These feudal lords also enlisted their subjects to fight against rival lords, and in return they granted certain rights that were set down in charters. By the 12th century, many Dutch trade towns were enjoying limited self-government as communes. Many joined the Hanseatic League, and a strong merchant class grew. But their prosperity was threatened by constant wars.

In the 14th century, the dukes of Burgundy rose to power, and generally dismissed the local charters. There were frequent rebellions but eventually, the communes grudgingly accepted the unity provided by the Burgundians. Shipbuilding thrived, and there was a brisk trade. The Dukes were patrons of the arts, and this ushered in the cultural flowering of the Northern Renaissance. In 1425, Jan van Eyck became the court painter of Duke Philip the Good. Italian financiers settled in the area, strengthening trade and cultural links with Italy, and commissioning artworks.

When the Hapsburgs inherited the Burgundian territories in 1482, their ruler, Charles V (born in Ghent), cherished the Low Countries and business went on as usual—until he abdicated in 1555 and gave the region to his son, Philip of Spain. The Reformation had taken hold in the Netherlands and Philip, a staunch Catholic, began a brutal Inquisition. Religious violence erupted, and Philip sent the Duke of Alba to slaughter thousands. This caused great resentment against Spanish rule, and a sense of Dutch nationalism arose, even among some Catholics.

What followed was an Eighty Years War for independence. But a hero emerged in Prince William of Orange, who went into exile; hired pirates to attack Spanish ships; and led a revolt. The first Dutch victory occurred when rebels drove the Spanish from Leiden in 1574 after a year-long siege. William's victorious forces distributed bread and herring to the starving residents—an event still celebrated today. In 1581, the Union of Utrecht proclaimed the "United Provinces" independent from Spain. In 1648, Spain finally recognized Dutch sovereignty.

Despite the wartime destruction, Amsterdam experienced tremendous growth, fueled by waves of immigrants. Trade expanded; intellectuals flocked to the city; and Dutch explorers charted new courses and established colonies around the world. In 1602, the Dutch East India Company became the world's first global corporation. By the mid-17th century, the republic was the biggest maritime power of Europe, and arguably the wealthiest and most scientifically advanced. Calvinism was the official religion, but other Protestants, Jews, and Catholics were allowed to worship. In a society dependent on trade, freedom and tolerance were essential.

The Golden Age began to tarnish as conflicts arose with Britain and France, and the United Provinces erupted into civil war in 1785. Enter Napoleon, who established the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1806. It passed in 1815 to Willem I (of Orange-Nassau), whose dynasty continues today. As nationalism swept 19th-century Europe, the Netherlands made constitutional reforms, beginning the liberal, modern state, and sustaining a slow but constant economic growth.

During World War I, the Netherlands remained neutral. They tried to do this again during World War II, but the Nazis leveled Rotterdam in 1940 and within days, the rest of the country fell. Queen Wilhelmina fled to England, and broadcast inspiring messages via the BCC and Radio Orange. But Dutch resistance was slow to rise in the face of a harsh occupation, the mass deportation of Dutch Jews, and pervasive collaboration. Towards the end of the war, resistance gained momentum as the Nazis forced thousands of Dutch men to work in German factories. As the Allies advanced, Dutch defiance grew. The "Hunger Winter" of 1944-45 was especially brutal, as the Nazis deliberately cut off food supplies, causing mass starvation. Many Dutch people had to eat tulip bulbs to survive. Canadian troops liberated the country in May, 1945.

The postwar years were times of material hardship and moral reckoning. As reconstruction got underway, 66,000 Dutch collaborators were tried in war trials. Many more never saw justice. To provide basic necessities, Prime Minister Willem Drees extended the welfare state. When the North Sea flooded in 1953, massive public works programs enabled the reclamation of 6,800 square miles of land, while providing jobs.

In the '60s, Dutch baby boomers came of age, demanding change. Social welfare programs reduced people's reliance on the "pillarization" that once kept them beholden to sectarian groups. New ideas about equality, the environment, religion, sex, and drugs gained credence. Ever pragmatic, Dutch authorities adopted a policy of tolerance for things that couldn't be enforced without causing more harm. Called *gedoogbeleid*, it persists to this day, but not without challenges.

Many immigrants arrived over the ensuing decades, often from Muslim countries, for family reunification, political asylum, and economic opportunity. After the assassination of two anti-immigrant/anti-Islamic Dutch figures—politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002, and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004—far-right populists have preyed on the anxieties of their countrymen to challenge multiculturalism. The elections of 2010 saw a shift when the coalition government included the far-right Freedom Party of Geert Wilders, who decries the "Islamicization" of the Netherlands and advocates against the EU. Mark Rutte, who has been Prime Minister since 2010, leads the centrist People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, or VVD.

Romania

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 91,699 square miles
- **Capital:** Bucharest
- **Languages:** Romanian is the official language. Hungarian and German are also spoken.
- **Location:** Romania's location is sometimes described as being in central Europe or sometimes a southeastern Europe.
- **Geography:** The Carpathian Mountains cross the northern half of Romania and connect with the Transylvanian Alps near the central region of the country. Northwest of this mountainous arc is the Transylvanian plateau, and the great plains of Moldavia and Walachia lie to the southeast. The Danube River forms the southern boundary with Bulgaria, and then flows north and then east through Romania, entering the Black Sea through its large delta just south of Ukraine.
- **Population:** 21,666,350
- **Religions:** Eastern Orthodox 81.9%, Protestant 6.4%, Roman Catholic 4.3%, other (mostly Muslim) 0.9%, none or atheist 0.2%, unspecified 6.3%
- **Time Zone:** Romania is seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Bucharest.

National Holidays: Romania

In addition to the holidays listed below, Romania celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Pentecost. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 Day after New Year's Day

01/24 Unification Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/15 St Mary's Day

11/30 St. Andrew's Day

12/01 National Holiday

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

Romania: A Brief History

The country we call "Romania" did not come to be until the 19th century, and since then, its borders have fluctuated. Individual Romanians may trace their lineage to the various groups who held sway here—Greeks, Turks, Slavs, Magyars, Saxon Germans, and Russians—but the national heritage is linked to the Dacian people. They likely migrated from Thrace and settled in Romania

around 3,300 BC. By 300 BC, they had formed a military democracy. But Dacia died with its last king, Decebalus, who was defeated by the Roman emperor Trajan. Today Decebalus is a Romanian national hero symbolizing freedom and resistance to imperialism.

Rome occupied Dacia for less than 200 years, but their intense Romanization program left a lasting impact. Settlers from Rome were moved here. The local language was replaced with Latin. And the Romans mingled with the Dacians. Rome withdrew in 271 AD, unable to stem the tide of new invaders: Huns, Goths, Slavs, Bulgars, and Magyars. By the 10th century, a fragmented feudal society had emerged, with the nobles from outside ethnic groups, and serfs who were Romanian peasants. In the 14th century the first Romanian principality was formed, Wallachia, followed by Moldavia. Transylvania was a principality under the Hungarian crown.

These fiefdoms had shifting allegiances, but resisted the Ottoman Turks (even uniting briefly under Michael the Brave in 1600.) Still, they all became Ottoman vassals. When the Turks were beaten back from Vienna in 1683, Transylvania reverted to Hungarian (Hapsburg) rule. Wallachia and Moldavia remained part of the Ottoman Empire, but after the Russo-Turkish War of 1828, they became Russian protectorates. In 1859 the two principalities united under a single prince, Alexander Ioan Cuza. The new state was named Romania, and it became a kingdom in 1881.

Romania declared its neutrality during World War I. But towards the end it sided with the Allies and by so doing, it recouped much lost territory, including Transylvania. King Carol II was crowned in 1930 and set up a dictatorship, setting the stage for a takeover by the Fascist Iron Guard in 1940. Romania signed the Axis Pact and joined the Nazi's assault on the Soviet Union. The Red Army "liberated" Romania in 1944, and a Communist government was elected in 1946.

Throughout the '50s Romania suffered a Stalinist terror during which most prewar leaders, intellectuals, and dissidents were imprisoned or killed. Even the Romanian language came under fire, as the Soviets changed street and city names and imposed a Slavic orthography. When Soviet troops withdrew in 1958, Romania's obeisance to Moscow eroded. Its independent foreign policy was exemplified in 1968, when the leader Nicolae Ceaușescu refused to send Romanian troops to support the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Ceaușescu's anti-Soviet stance earned him the admiration of the West, but his regime was corrupt and repressive.

By the 1980s, Ceausescu's Romania was in severe debt and suffering severe shortages of food and fuel. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, a Bucharest rally of 100,000 turned against him. The dictator was forced to flee by helicopter, but ended up in army custody and was executed.

Romania's transition to democracy and a market economy was difficult, and the 90s and early aughts saw several governments fall amidst public dissatisfaction. The country joined NATO in 2004, and the European Union in 2007. Though hit hard by the 2008 financial crisis, Romania's economy has been relatively stable since 2011. The current Prime Minister, economist Florin Cîțu, took office in December, 2020.

Serbia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 29,913 square miles
- **Capital:** Belgrade
- **Language:** Serbian is the official language. Albanian is also spoken.
- **Location:** Serbia is a landlocked country in central and southeastern Europe, covering the central part of the Balkan Peninsula and the southern part of the Pannonian Plain. Serbia borders Hungary to the north; Romania and Bulgaria to the east; the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania to the south; and Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the west.
- **Geography:** Serbia's is slightly smaller than South Carolina, and its northern region is rich with fertile plains, where as its eastern region has limestone ranges and basins. The southeast features a mountainous landscape.
- **Population:** 6,926,705 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Serbian Orthodox 84.6%, Catholic 5%, Muslim 3.1%, Protestant 1%, atheist 1.1%, unknown 4.5%.
- **Time Zone:** Serbia is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of North American Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time goes from the last Sunday of March to the last Sunday of October.

National Holidays: Serbia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Serbia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/07 Orthodox Christmas Day

02/15 Statehood of the Republic of Serbia

02/16 Statehood of the Republic of Serbia (Day 2)

05/01 Labour Day

05/02 Labour Day (Day 2)

11/11 Armistice Day

Serbia: A Brief History

Like its neighbors, Serbia was settled by Illyrians and Celts; subsumed into the Roman Empire; and inhabited by waves of Slavic people. The Slavs merged with native Illyrians, Thracians and Dacians to form the ethnic base of the Serbian people. The next nation-shaping event occurred in AD 395, when the Roman Empire split into eastern and western spheres, and Serbia became part of the eastern realm. Subsequent proselytizing by saints Cyril and Methodius led the Serbs to embrace the Orthodox religion, which is still the heart of the Serb national identity.

That identity began forming in 1166 when Stefan Nemanja, a Raskan chief, formed the first Serbian kingdom. His successors in the Nemanjic dynasty expanded it from the Danube to the Peloponessus. Through shrewd diplomacy, King Stefan was recognized by the Pope Honorius III, and his brother Sava was granted an archbishopric by the Patriarch of Constantinople. This established the first independent Serbian Orthodox church, with Saint Sava as its head.

In 1389, the Serbs fought the Ottomans at the Battle of Kosovo. Though the battle ended in a draw, for Serbs it took on mythic proportions: Kosovo came to symbolize their national suffering, in which Serbs sacrificed their lives for their religious ideals. In truth, the Serbs were granted several decades to recover, as the Turks had suffered too many casualties to push on. It was only in 1459 that the Ottomans resumed their takeover; by 1521, Serbia was fully occupied.

The Ottomans dismantled most of Serbian society—except for the Serbian Orthodox church. The Ottoman administrative system revolved around the extraction of revenues and was not concerned with converting subjects to Islam. Instead, they required the Christian ecclesiastical authorities to serve as their functionaries. Still, frequent Serbian peasant uprisings broke out and a revolt in 1815 gained the Serbs a degree of autonomy; by 1878, Serbia achieved full statehood. When the first World War ended and with it, the Hapsburg dynasty, a new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes emerged. It became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929.

When the Nazis invaded in World War II, the Yugoslav state was divided among the Axis nations. The Croatian Ustase government, who were Nazi puppets, waged a genocidal campaign against Jews, Serbs, and Roma people. Two major resistance groups emerged: the communist partisans under Tito, and the Chetnik royalists. They were so bitterly opposed that they turned on each other. By 1944, the communist partisans (with Allied support) overwhelmed the Nazis. Serbia joined the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito.

In the postwar years, the crimes committed by the various Yugoslav groups during World War II were never addressed. After Tito's death, Serbian nationalists began to push for a "Greater Serbia" that included ethnic Serbian communities in neighboring republics. As one after another of the six Yugoslav republics declared independence, the Serbian controlled Yugoslav army reacted with violence, and the peninsula was ravaged by ethnic cleansing. It mainly affected Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the Serbs repeated the same tactics in 1998 when they attempted to suppress cries for autonomy in Kosovo. It was only after weeks of NATO air strikes against Serb military targets that Serbia agreed to a peace proposal.

This century saw the complete dissolution of Yugoslavia with the independence of Montenegro and Kosovo. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was tried for war crimes, but died before he could be convicted. Serbia has normalized relations with Kosovo, and both nations are candidates for accession to the EU, with hopes for full membership by 2025.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

General

The Bridge at Remagen by Ken Hechler (History) A detailed, compelling description of how the Rhine was amazingly breached on March 7, 1945—an event which lives on in history as one of the great episodes of WWII.

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.

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

Austria

The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty by Benjamin Curtis (2013, History) Discover how this Austrian family gained power—and held it—for more than 500 years, shaping all the nations featured on this adventure.

When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel of Obsession by Irvin D. Yalom (2013, Fiction) Set in 19th-century Vienna, this novel is built upon a clever conceit: the psychoanalytic sessions between the impoverished and suicidal philosopher, Frederic Nietzsche; and distinguished physician Josef Breuer, who is undergoing his own existential crisis. The twist is that Nietzsche, too proud to seek help, does not know that he is Breuer's "patient." As the two meet in Vienna's salons and coffeehouses, we encounter the personalities of the day, including Sigmund Freud, and gain a sense of the healing power of connection.

The Age of Insight by Eric Kandel (2012, Art) This book takes us to Vienna in 1900, where leaders in science, medicine, and art began a revolution that changed forever how we think about the human mind—our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions—and how mind and brain relate to art. Kandel traces the ideas and advances of Vienna, in rich and rewarding detail, and their enduring influence today.

The Painted Kiss by Elizabeth Hickey (2005, Historical Fiction) The author, an art historian, imagines the relationship between the artist Gustav Klimt, and his younger model-mistress, the couturier Emilie Flöge. She was the inspiration for his famous work, *The Kiss*, and it was her name that he uttered as his dying words.

The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey by Gordon Brook-Shepard (1996, History) A noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Hapsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

Belgium

The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement by Laura Swan (2016, History) *Beguines* were medieval residences set up to house unmarried women, called *beguines*, who dedicated themselves to a communal life and service to the poor. *Beguines* often earned their own living working in local industries, and though not part of any religious order, they were often guided by spirituality. This book explores the phenomenon, which was especially prevalent in the Low Countries.

War and Turpentine by Stefan Hertmans (2013, Biography/Memoir) An unusual hybrid book about an unusual life—one with a Dickensian childhood, service in World War I, a sad love story, and a passion for art. The author's grandfather left behind several notebooks with his memories, which Hertmans reworked and edited as if his grandfather is telling his life story to the reader.

The Lady and the Unicorn by Tracy Chevalier (2003, Historical Fiction) The author here does what she did for her novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring*: weaves together fact and fiction to reveal the lives behind a masterful work of art. In this case, it is the titular series of six allegorical and erotically charged tapestries that were created in Brussels, and now hang in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. Meticulously researched, it offers a vivid portrait of life in the Low Countries (and France) circa 1500.

The Factory of Facts by Luc Sante (1998, Memoir) Born in Belgium in 1954 and transplanted to New Jersey at age five, Sante reminisces about his upbringing in evocative passages about his national past and glimpses of his American experiences. The cumulative effect is a portrait not only of himself, but also of both his homelands.

The Abyss by Marguerite Yourcenar (1968, Fiction) The alchemist Zeno of Bruges is on a quest for knowledge, one that faces many physical and philosophical detours as he roams 16th-century Flanders, and far beyond. Zeno encounters the religious upheavals of the Reformation and counter-Reformation, the Black Death, the military might of Ottoman Turkey, and the brilliance and treachery of the 16th-century's greatest minds.

Bulgaria

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

Croatia

Girl at War by Sara Novic (2016, Fiction) Ana, a New York college student, flashes back to her childhood in the former Yugoslavia in 1991. As civil war descends, ten-year old Ana's carefree existence dissolves in tragedy and she must become a child soldier. Later, even as she builds a seemingly normal new life in America, her war never ends. A moving meditation on family, identity, memory and redemption.

Chasing a Croatian Girl by Cody McClain Brown (2015, Memoir) An incisive and often hilarious journey into everyday Croatian culture. The author, an ex-pat American and professor of political science, marries a Croatian woman and struggles to understand his indomitable mother-in-law, endless coffees with friends and neighbors, and a vast catalog of quirky customs.

The Walnut Mansion by Miljenko Jergovic (2015, Fiction) A 97-year-old matriarch recalls five generations of her Yugoslav family—vividly drawn characters whose lives play out against the fall of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, two world wars, the rise of communism, and the dangers of war-torn Dubrovnik as one nation dissolves, and another emerges.

The Hired Man by Aminatta Forna (2014, Fiction) Well reviewed novel about a family of newcomers from England who renovate a farmhouse in the Croatian village of Gost, befriend a local handyman, and unwittingly dredge up secrets of the village's dark past.

Dubrovnik, A History by Robin Harris (2003, History) A scholarly but readable history of Dubrovnik from its origins in the 7th century, until the collapse of the Republic in 1808. Recommended for the history buff.

Germany

Tschick by Wolfgang Herrndorf (2014, Fiction) Two unpopular teenagers—one German and one Russian—"borrow" a car and go on a joyride across Germany. Although the protagonists are young, the story seems to delight adults too—it was recommended by the ambassador of Germany has one of the best modern stories from his country.

In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin by Erik Larson (2011, History) Acclaimed historian and author Larson follows the experiences of the American ambassador to Germany in 1933 as he and his family slowly come to realize the menace and danger that is Hitler's Third Reich.

Martin Luther: A Life by Martin E. Marty (2004, Biography) A brief but engrossing biography of the fiery Protestant reformer who transformed western thinking, sending shock waves across Europe's political as well as religious landscape.

Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s by Otto Friedrich (1995, History) A noted historian describes the raucous social, cultural and political scene in this most vibrant city, when Christopher Isherwood, Marlene Dietrich, Albert Einstein, Greta Garbo, Berthold Brecht Walter Gropius, Vassily Kandinsky and so many others made their home here.

The Silent Angel by Heinrich Boll (1992, Fiction) A German WWII deserter returns to his home town of Cologne after it has been carpet bombed, and encounters a city filled with shell-shocked people trying to survive both physically and spiritually. Nobel Prize winner Boll, a Cologne native, drew from his own postwar experiences to create this moving portrait.

Hungary

Budapest: A Critical Guide by András Török (2016, Guidebook) Frequently updated and widely loved, this is more than your average travel guide, but a witty insider's look at the quirks and pleasures of Hungary's most dazzling city. Even if you never went here, this book would be fun to read.

Budapest Noir by Vilmos Kondor (2012, Mystery) The death of a call girl in a seedy neighborhood a few days after the death of Hungary's Prime Minister doesn't seem to be of interest to anyone, except a dogged reporter. A classic noir-style mystery that unravels in 1930s Budapest.

Fatelessness by Imre Kertész (1975, Literature) This semi-autobiographical novel follows the experiences of a young Hungarian Jewish boy imprisoned at Auschwitz. Kertész drew on his own experiences there, and went on to be the only Hungarian to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2002.

The Bridge at Andau by James Michener (1957, Nonfiction) For a brief time in 1956, the bridge at Andau became an escape route for Hungarians fleeing the Soviet suppression of the famous popular revolt that wracked Budapest and riveted the world. Historian Michener was living at the Austrian-Hungarian border at the time, and captures here the dramatic nature of the true-life events surrounding the revolt and the plight of the refugees.

Netherlands

Lonely Graves by Britta Bolt (2012, Mystery) The first in a series, this mystery follows Pieter Posthumus of the "Lonely Funerals" team—the people who arrange funerals for the unknown—as he looks into the death of a Moroccan immigrant.

Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age by Anne Goldgar (2007, History) The 17th-century speculation that caused a bubble (and a bust) of the Dutch tulip market is often presented a cautionary tale of capitalism gone wild. The author here debunks the hyperbole around this phenomena and instead explores how tulipmania reflected deep anxieties about the transformation of Dutch society during the Golden Age.

Girl with a Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier (1999, Historical Fiction) This book—which was a worldwide best seller—imagines the story behind the famous Vermeer painting by the same name.

Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City by Geert Mak (1994, History) A Dutch journalist and native of Amsterdam offers a delightful survey of Amsterdam's past and present, incorporating elements of politics, economics, and art history.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank (1947, Memoir) Arguably the most famous Holocaust book, this real diary shares the musings of Anne, a young Jewish girl who is hiding from the Nazis in an Amsterdam attic during World War II. If you'd like an adult's perspective on Anne and her family, look for *Anne Frank: The Biography* by Melissa Muller.

Romania

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

Red Horizons: Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief by Ion Mihai Pacepa (1987, True Crime). A former member of the Securitate, the secret police of Communist Romania, Ion Mihai Pacepa reveals the corruption and oppression inherent in the Nicolae Ceausescu government, which ruled Romania from 1974 to the dictator's execution in 1989.

Serbia

Serbia: The History of an Idea by Stevan K. Pavlowitch (2002, History) A readable history focusing on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Serbia.

With Their Backs To The World: Portraits from Serbia by Åsne Seierstad (2000, Nonfiction) Norwegian journalist Seierstad conducted extensive interviews with ordinary Serbs from across the political and ethnic spectrum—a farmer, a rock star, a priest and more—to create this detailed tapestry of modern Serbian life.

Suggested Films & Videos

Austria

The Woman in Gold (2015, Drama) Helen Mirren stars as Maria Altmann, an Austrian-Jewish Holocaust refugee who successfully sued the Austrian government for the return of a major artwork that was stolen from her family by the Nazis: Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bauer-Bloch*, who was her aunt. Based on a true story.

Museum Hours (2012, Drama) A lonely guard at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Art Museum befriends an enigmatic American visitor, who has been called here due to a family emergency. Through conversations sparked by the art they both admire, the two begin sharing their lives, and the life of Vienna.

Before Sunrise (1995, Comedy/Drama) Two strangers meet on a rain and decide to get off in Vienna for just one evening. As they explore some of the city's most evocative landmarks, their conversations go from wryly philosophical to deeply personal, before they must decide to go their separate ways. Stars Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke collaborated on writing the sparkling dialogue.

Amadeus (1984, Drama) The pious Italian composer Antonio Salieri is obsessed with his rival, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whom God has favored with divine talent and worldly success—despite Mozart’s immaturity and vulgarity. The Oscar winner for Best Picture, this epic from director Milos Forman is gorgeously filmed, and lifted by its pitch-perfect performances by F. Murray Abraham (as Salieri) and Tom Hulce (as Mozart.)

Belgium

The Brand New Testament (2015, Comedy) God is alive and living in a Brussels apartment, stomping around in his ratty bathrobe, tapping away at his outdated DOS computer, and gleefully inventing laws to frustrate humanity. (Dropped toast will always fall on the jam side. Whatever line you are in, the other will move faster.) His teenaged daughter Ea thinks Dad is doing a terrible job, so she hacks his computer, and leaks everyone’s death date. People begin living their lives in unexpected and exhilarating ways. This religiously incorrect satire may offend some viewers, but others will appreciate its big-hearted message about freewill vs. determinism, and its uniquely Belgian irreverence.

The Monuments Men (2014, Drama) Based on the real-life Army platoon whose mission it was to find and rescue the vast cache of priceless art stolen by the Nazis. Here, George Clooney, Matt Damon, Jean DuJardin, Bill Murray, Cate Blanchett and friends are on the hunt for two Belgian masterpieces: *The Mystic Lamb* altar panels of Ghent by Jan Van Eyck, and Bruges’ *Madonna and Child* by Michelangelo.

In Bruges (2008, Comedy) In this dark comedy, Irish hit men Ken and Ray seek shelter in Bruges, Belgium, after a job gone wrong in London. While in Bruges, Ken gains a new appreciation for life as he takes in the sights of the medieval city. Meanwhile, things start to change for Ray when he meets a woman named Chloe. Both attempt to carve a new life for themselves, but can’t escape their past as they are obligated to take the next order from their boss.

The Factory of Facts by Luc Sante (1999, Memoir) Born in Belgium in 1954 and transplanted to New Jersey at age five, Sante reminisces about his upbringing in evocative passages. The effect is a portrait of himself and also of his natal homeland.

Peace in the Fields (1970, Drama) A French-language Belgian film directed by Jacques Boigelot, *Peace in the Fields* takes place around 1925, and revolves around the troubles of a middle-aged farmer whose mother has been accused of being a witch.

Bulgaria

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

Stolen Eyes (2005, Drama) This film by Bulgarian director Radoslav Spasov pulls no punches in depicting a black period of recent Bulgarian history—the late 1980s. The film tells a story of an impossible love between a Turkish woman, Ayten, and a Bulgarian man, Ivan. The unlikely pair first meets at the “regeneration process,” (when ethnic Turks’ names were forcibly changed to Bulgarian ones.) Although they have many cultural differences, they gradually overcome their animosity and are drawn toward each other. The question is—will the people around them accept their choices?

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

Croatia

The Diary of Diana B. (2019, Drama) This film follows the unique and heartbreaking story of humanitarian Diana Budisavljevic, who rescues thousands of children from the Utasha camps in Nazi-occupied Croatia during World War II. This historical piece combines dramatized reenactments with archival material and interviews with survivors to create a harrowing retelling of Diana’s perilous efforts.

The Eighth Commissioner (2018, Comedy) Filmed on the Dalmatian coast islands of Brač, Hvar and Zlarin, this endearing film follows an arrogant politician whose career is derailed by scandal. Banished to a remote island with no telephone or internet, he is given the impossible task of organizing a local government. The islanders are as quirky as their incomprehensible dialect, and other residents include Italian smugglers, a Ukrainian porn star, and the previous Commissioner.

What is a Man Without a Mustache? (2005, Romantic Comedy) A Croatian guest worker suffers a fatal fall in Germany, and his widow Tatjana uses her settlement to purchase a hillside in an idyllic Dalmatian Coast village. Magical things happen, including Tatjana falling madly but inexplicably in love with the hapless village priest. A sunny romance with an even sunnier setting.

Harrison’s Flowers (2000, Drama) This French film is about a *Newsweek* photojournalist who travels on his last assignment to Yugoslavia in 1991, during the Croatian War of Independence. He is presumed to be killed, but his wife (played by Andie MacDowell) searches for him through the war-torn landscapes and witnesses some of the horrors of the period. French with English subtitles.

Germany

Look Who’s Back (2015, Comedy) Can Germany escape the specter of Nazism? Not according to this biting satire, in which der Fuehrer magically reawakens in 2014 in the square where his bunker once stood. He is horrified to learn that the country is led by a woman, Poland is a free state, and the Fatherland is full of immigrants. An out of work filmmaker thinks this eccentric

character is just a comic Hitler impersonator, and he builds a reality show about him. As Hitler becomes a media sensation, others are shown to share his ideas about the future of Germany. Filmed *Borat*-style, many scenes feature real people reacting to this putschy provocateur.

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

Schindler's List (1993, Drama) Spielberg's masterpiece about a callow industrialist, Oskar Schindler, whose life is transformed as he gradually, then unceasingly works to save his Jewish workforce during World War II.

Cabaret (1972, Musical/Drama) Directed by Bob Fosse, this movie has it all: a killer Broadway score, a perfect cast, Fosse's sultry choreography, pointed social commentary, and an electrifying portrait of lost souls struggling to survive in Weimar-era Berlin on the cusp of Nazism. It did not win Best Picture, but took eight other major categories including Best Actress (Liza Minelli), Best Supporting Actor (Joel Grey), and Best Director (Fosse).

Immortal Beloved (1994, Drama) After the death of Ludwig van Beethoven (Gary Oldman), the life and loves of the great composer are revealed in flashbacks as his friend and executor tries to solve the mystery of an unmailed letter to a mysterious lover.

Hungary

Son of Saul (2015, Documentary). Winner of the Cannes Grand Prix, Oscar, and Golden Globe awards, this film by László Nemes follows a day and a half in the life of Saul, a Hungarian inmate at Auschwitz forced to work as a *Sonderkommando*—a prisoner ordered to remove corpses from the gas chamber.

Mephisto (1981, Drama) This retelling of the Faust legend takes place in 1930s Germany, where amoral actor Hendrik Höfgen rapidly rises to become Germany's most famous actor, and head of the State Theater, by currying favor with the Reich. Sharply observant, yet untroubled by scruples, Höfgen realizes that his best performance is the one that takes place off stage as he acts the role of a loyal Nazi. Buoyed by the electrifying performance of Klaus Maria Brandauer, this gem by István Szabó was the first Hungarian film to win an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

Netherlands

Black Book (2006, Thriller) A young Jewish woman becomes a spy for the WWII resistance in German-occupied Holland, leading a dangerous double life. Paul Verhoeven's drama shows how an ordinary person is capable of doing extraordinary things when it's a matter of life and death.

Girl with a Pearl Earring (2003, Drama) Griet (Scarlett Johansson), a mysterious teenage girl, leaves her home to become a servant in the household of painter Johannes Vermeer (Colin Firth). Her thoughtful attention to detail catches Vermeer's notice. But she is also caught between the

suspensions of Vermeer's wife, the predatory lust of Vermeer's greatest patron, and the cruel gossip of the town. Griet risks her reputation, but gains a place in history as the subject of one of the Northern Renaissance's most enduring portraits.

Rembrandt (1999, Docudrama) Klaus Maria Brandauer stars as the Dutch Master who changed the art world with his advances in painting, drafting, and printing.

Antonia's Line (1996, Comedy/Drama) This Oscar-winner is a delightful feminist fable about a widowed, prodigal daughter who returns to her small Dutch town after World War II. The townsfolk cannot understand why she wants to live independently. But Antonia takes several quirky souls under her wing, and brings warmth and joy over several generations through her growing and inclusive matriarchal community.

A Bridge Too Far (1977, Drama) This World War II epic is based on the book by Cornelius Ryan about Operation Market Garden, a daring but ultimately failed attempt to break through occupied Belgium and the Netherlands into Germany. Success depended on the capture of key bridges, but the mission was stopped at Arnhem. Whoever was your favorite 1970s male actor, he is likely in this all-star cast which includes Dirk Bogarde, Sean Connery, Michael Caine, Laurence Olivier, Robert Redford, Ryan O'Neal, James Caan, Anthony Hopkins, and more.

Romania

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

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

Serbia

Circles (2013, Drama) Inspired by the true story of a Bosnian-Serb soldier who was murdered protecting a Muslim civilian from three fellow soldiers during the Bosnian War, this film delves into the deep repercussions of this tragic act through three parallel perspectives. Nebojša, who witnessed the death of his best friend, overcomes his guilty conscience; Haris risks everything in order to return the favor to the person who saved his life; and the murderer's son meets the fallen hero's father.

Fuse (2003, Comedy) Two years after the Bosnian civil war, a small town that is plagued by corruption, prostitution, and organized crime must quickly organize a democracy when it's announced that U.S. President Bill Clinton will be paying a visit.

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Forum (tips from previous travelers)

www.gct.com/forum

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions

www.gct.com/faq

**International Health Information/CDC
(Centers for Disease Control)**

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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from Edisto Island, SC



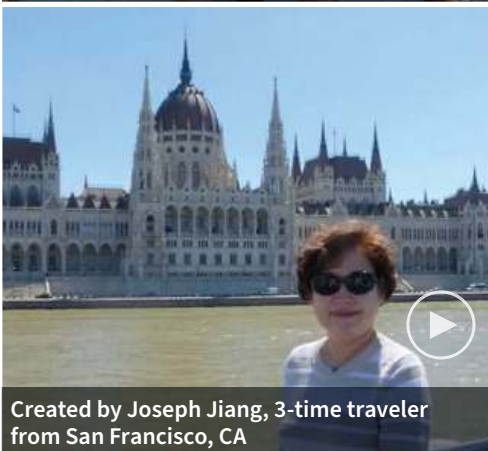
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