



## Itinerary

### 8 Day Blue Danube River Cruise

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE: Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.**

#### Day 1: Arrive Vienna, Austria – Embark Ship

Welcome aboard our elegant river cruise ship in Vienna! Boarding begins at 6:00 p.m., giving you time to settle into your comfortable cabin. In the evening, meet the crew and fellow travellers at a welcome cocktail, where our captain will introduce the team and share details of the upcoming journey.

At 8:00 p.m., we set sail for Melk, gliding along the Danube under the Austrian night sky. Enjoy a delicious first dinner on board, complete with complimentary drinks.

**MEALS:** Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Croisi River Cruise Vessel

#### Day 2: Melk, Austria ~ Dürnstein, Austria

Wake up to breathtaking views of the Austrian countryside as we arrive in Melk, a town famous for its magnificent abbey.

After our visit, we cruise through the Wachau Valley, a UNESCO-listed region known for vineyards, medieval ruins, and charming villages. In the afternoon, we dock in Dürnstein, a storybook-like medieval town. Enjoy a guided stroll with our hostess through its quaint streets before we continue sailing towards Bratislava.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Croisi River Cruise Vessel

#### OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

***Guided Tour of Melk Abbey*** (Pre-booking required)

Departure by coach in company of your host/hostess towards Melk Abbey. We will meet up with our guides in the inner courtyard to start our visit. The Abbey overlooking the Danube was first built as the Babenberg's fortified castle. It was founded in the 11th century and the current buildings of the Benedictine abbey date from the Baroque era and were designed by architect Jakob Prandtauer.

Melk Abbey now houses a museum in which you'll discover several rooms that have been enhanced thanks to architecture, sound and light as well as the use of various types of media. Computer animations will tell you a story about the construction of the edifices. You will also visit the marble hall, the world-

famous library and the bedchambers where a number of illustrious visitors have slept. Return on board by coach.

## **NOTE**

- Good walking shoes are recommended: from the parking lot to the entrance of the Abbey there are stairs and a 500m cobblestone path.
- Depending on the cruise the visit can be in the morning or in the afternoon.
- Please dress appropriately.
- Depending on navigation schedules passengers could have free time.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.
- Languages: FR-EN-DE.

**DURATION:** 1 hr 45min

## **Day 3: Bratislava, Slovakia – Kalocsa, Hungary**

This morning, we explore Bratislava, Slovakia's capital, where history and culture blend seamlessly.

Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a relaxing afternoon as we sail towards Hungary, passing stunning riverside landscapes.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Croisi River Cruise Vessel

## **OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS**

### ***Guided Tour of Bratislava***

Bratislava, before becoming the capital of independent Slovakia in 1993 was first of all the capital of Hungary from 1536 to 1784 under the name of Presburg. It then belonged to Czechoslovakia before becoming the capital of the "Slovak Socialist Republic" as part of Czechoslovakia between 1969 and 1992.

Along with your guides, you will begin the visit with a panoramic tour of the city which will take you to Bratislava Castle (outsides), which dates from 1811, after the previous castle burned down, and from where you will enjoy a breathtaking view over the Danube and the city. The main historical monuments are located in the Old Town and the coach will drop you off at its entrance to continue the visit on foot.

You will enter through Michael's Gate, which is the only gate still surviving from the Middle-Ages. Then you will head for the central square surrounded by elegant buildings, some in Art Nouveau style, and dominated by the old Bratislava Town Hall. The tour continues with the Primate's Palace (outsides) completed in 1781 for Archbishop Jozef Bathyány.

As you stroll through the streets, you may come across some of the amusing statues that are dotted around the capital. After the guided tour, you will have some free time and will return to the boat on foot or by coach depending on sailing times.

#### **NOTE**

- Good walking shoes are recommended.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 3 hrs

#### ***Hiking in Bratislava: The Little Carpathians***

We'll leave by coach from Devínska Nová Ves for a hike in the Little Carpathians Protected Landscape Area, including the geographically rich Sandberg expanse. From Devin Castle, we'll take in the splendid view of Bratislava. After our hike, we'll return to the ship.

#### **NOTE**

- Good walking shoes are recommended.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 3 hrs

### **Day 4: Kalocsa, Hungary – Budapest, Hungary**

We dock in Kalocsa, famous for paprika production and equestrian traditions.

After lunch, we continue our scenic sail towards Budapest, reaching Hungary's grand capital in the evening.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Croisi River Cruise Vessel

#### **OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS**

## ***Morning in the Puszta***

Departure by coach in the company of your host/hostess in the direction of Kiskunsag Park, at the heart of the Puszta.

The Puszta, also known as the Great Plain of Hungary, is a large, flat grassland that was regarded as the Wild West of Hungary in the 19th century with cowboys watching over colossal cattle herds grazing on pasture. The Puszta has been listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO since 1999.

Riding aboard a charabanc - a traditional horse-drawn carriage with wooden benches - you'll be amazed by the wonderful landscapes and unusual fauna of the Puszta. In a small part of the Hungarian Steppe, you'll get to observe Racka sheep with their spiral-shaped horns, Mangalica pigs with their curly coats and Hungarian Grey cattle with their long, curved horns, as well as rare species of birds. In the course of your visit, you'll get the chance to attend a traditional equestrian show while tasting\* "palinka" (plum eau-de-vie) and some "pogacsa" (small savory buns) as well as mineral water, sheltered from the sun under a thatched roof. The csikós, the mounted horse-herdsmen of Hungary dressed in traditional blue attire, will invite you to take part in their "games of skill and ability". Return on board by coach.

### **NOTE**

- Good shoes, sunglasses, caps and a bottle of water are recommended.
- \*Alcohol can be harmful to your health. Please drink in moderation.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 4 hrs

## **Day 5: Budapest, Hungary**

Today, we explore Budapest, the Pearl of the Danube! You can spend the day on your own, or join an optional excursion.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Croisi River Cruise Vessel

### **OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS**

#### ***Guided Tour of Budapest***

In the company of our guides, we will leave for a panoramic tour of Budapest, the Pearl of the Danube. First, we will head for the hills of Buda by crossing the Elizabeth Bridge and we will go up to the Castle quarter, from where we'll enjoy a fantastic panoramic view of the city. We will walk round the castle quarter and on to the Fisherman's Bastion, built in neo-Roman style in 1902 for the simple pleasure of offering a panoramic view over the city and the Danube. Behind the Bastion, we will find Matthias Church

which notably was the venue for the coronation of Emperor Franz Joseph and his wife "Sissi". Our coach will then take us down to the plains of Pest. There, we will visit Heroes' Square whose central monument depicting Prince Arpad and the chieftains of seven Magyar tribes was built for the millennium of Hungary. We will pass by the famous Szechenyi thermal baths, the zoo - a true piece of architecture - Vajdahunyad Castle and more. We will walk through the famous Andrassy Avenue and pass by St. Stephen's Basilica whose construction began in 1851 and was only completed in 1905. We will walk along the river and see the famous Parliament building overlooking the Danube with its white silhouette in the Byzantine and neo-Gothic styles. Return on board.

## **NOTE**

- Panoramic tour with stops to take pictures.
- Entrance tickets for these monuments are not included.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 4 hrs

### ***Gellert Baths & Spa***

You'll set out with your guide to visit the famous Gellert Baths and Spa. Now part of the famous Hotel Gellert in Buda, references to the spa's healing waters have been found from as early as the 13th century. The current spa was founded in 1918, and a visit to the Art Nouveau thermal baths is a beautiful and historical experience. The special attractions are its indoor and outdoor swimming pools, wave bath, sunbathing terrace and thermal spa. After our tour, take some time to relax and enjoy the saunas, the terrace looking at Gellert Hill, or the geothermal pools with some beer, wine, or champagne in hand. This is an exceptional tour in one of the most historical places in the city, but don't take our word for it, come and see for yourself. Afterwards, we'll return to the ship.

(Don't forget to bring your swimsuit!)

## **NOTE**

- Good walking shoes are recommended.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 3 hrs

### ***Budapest Market Halls***

We'll leave on foot for the Budapest Market Halls. The Great Market Hall is the largest and most spectacular of the five market halls built in the 19th century. You can indulge in all types of goods at the more than 180 stands spread out over three stories. One of the market's distinctive features is the colourful Zsolnay tiling on the roof. Some residents will spend hours on public transportation to shop at the Központi Vásárcsarnok. You'll find a wide variety of food, including fruits, vegetables, local cold cuts, and garlands of paprika on the ground floor. The second-floor houses restaurants where locals and tourists mingle. The recently renovated basement contains exhibits of high-quality Hungarian products for purchase at the market. At the end of the visit, tasting of traditional Hungarian products. After our tour, we'll return to the ship on foot.

#### **NOTE**

- Times are approximate.
- The order of the visits can change.

**DURATION:** 2 hrs 30min

#### ***Traditional Evening in Budapest***

Transfer by coach in the company of your guides to a theatre downtown for a traditional Hungarian show. This one-and-a-half-hour show will take you across all the regions of Hungary through its folklore and Gypsy dance and music. After this show, the traditions and folklore of this beautiful country will no longer hold any secrets! Return on board by coach.

#### **NOTE**

- Depending on the number of participants the show can take place at another location.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 2 hrs

### **Day 6: Esztergom, Hungary**

This morning, we dock in Esztergom, one of Hungary's oldest cities. Enjoy free time to explore its majestic basilica before reboarding for lunch on board.

Spend the afternoon cruising towards Vienna, taking in the serene Danube landscapes. Tonight, we gather for a special Gala Dinner, an elegant evening of fine cuisine and entertainment.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Croisi River Cruise Vessel

### **Day 7: Vienna, Austria**

Welcome to the imperial city of Vienna, a cultural capital renowned for music, art, and historic palaces.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Croisi River Cruise Vessel

## **OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS**

### ***Guided Tour of Vienna & Schönbrunn Palace*** (Pre-booking Required)

You will begin the tour by taking the famous Ring to reach Schönbrunn Palace. The "Ring" was one of the personal projects of Emperor Franz Joseph. In 1857, he decided to take down the ramparts that enclosed the city centre and had this boulevard built lined with fine buildings. Along the Ring you will admire this architectural showcase of the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy, including: the State Opera; the Hofburg Palace; the Natural History Museum; the City Hall; the Burgtheater and more.

When you arrive at Schönbrunn Palace, you will be guided through the numerous rooms of the Hapsburgs' summer residence, which bear witness to the splendour of the Court at the time of Maria Theresa. You will also have some time to wander through the Palace gardens.

You will then return to the coach, which will take you to the city centre to enjoy some free time in the area around St Stephen's Cathedral. You will then return to the coach, which will take you back to the boat, via the Ring.

## **NOTE**

- Comfortable shoes are recommended.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 4 hrs

### ***The High Art of Viennese Living: Music & Viennese Cafés***

Our guide will meet us at the ship, where we'll set off on foot for the subway station to discover the high art of Viennese living. We'll stroll through the city and visit backstage in the Konzerthaus concert hall, which has the Vienna Symphony, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Wiener Singakademie and Klangforum Wien in residence. We'll tour the prominent institution that features about 750 events per year with our guide who will explain the hall's history. We'll head backstage where we might be able to catch a glimpse of a performer or two! After our tour, relax in one of the local cafés and enjoy a steaming cup of Vienna Coffee and a delicious pastry. After our tour, we'll return to the ship on the subway.

## **NOTE**

- Good walking shoes are recommended.

- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 3 hrs 30min

***Guided Tour of Hofburg Palace & Sisi Museum*** (Pre-booking Required)

Departure by coach with your local guide. You will discover the Hofburg, which is also known for having been during 600 years the "Winter Residency" of the Habsburgs. Over the course of their reign, they turned this small 13th century fortress into a colossal and beautiful palace. The different buildings today mostly house museums and the gardens, dotted with monuments, have become the Volksgarten and the Burggarten.

We will climb up the Emperor's Staircase to reach the Sisi Museum which extends over six rooms that have been equipped to solely centre on Elisabeth's private life. Here numerous personal items that once belonged to Elisabeth are used to help illustrate the true personality of the frequently misunderstood Empress. The sensitively designed exhibits are inspired by the monarch's poetry and illustrate how the once light-hearted young girl, Sisi, became a restless, unapproachable and melancholic woman. The more than 300 items on display in the museum include parasols, boxes and gloves which once belonged to Elisabeth, along with a reconstruction of the evening dress worn by 16-year-old Sisi in 1854 before she left her home in Munich, and a replica of a section of her imperial railway carriage.

We'll then move on to Imperial Apartments and access the 19 official and private rooms that once belonged to Franz Joseph and Elisabeth. The Imperial Apartments are a reflection of the monarchic splendour. You will get to see the Emperor's Audience Chamber, his Conference Room, and his bedroom before peering through Elizabeth's apartments with her salons, lavatory and bathroom and her dressing and exercise room where Elizabeth spent most of her time.

Return to the boat.

**NOTE**

- Before arriving to the Hofburg, a 5-minute walk is necessary.
- There are stairs to access the Hofburg.
- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.

**DURATION:** 3 hrs

***Concert of Viennese Music*** (Subject to Availability)

Departure by coach in the company of our host/hostess towards Vienna's Kursalon where the concert will take place. Famous waltz melodies will take you back to the era of Franz Joseph and Sisi. The first half of



the concert will be devoted to Mozart compositions, and the second half to Strauss. The orchestra consists of eight to thirteen musicians, two singers and two dancers who will all make sure you have a good time. During intermission, a free drink will be served (orange juice or sparkling Austrian wine\*). Return on board by coach.

#### **NOTE**

- Please dress appropriately.
- Times are approximate.
- \*Alcohol can be harmful to your health. Please drink in moderation.

**DURATION:** 3 hrs

#### **Day 8: Vienna – Disembarkation**

Enjoy a final buffet breakfast as we bid farewell to our cruise adventure. Disembarkation at 9:00 a.m. marks the end of an unforgettable journey through Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary.

**MEALS:** Breakfast