

From the Blue Danube to the Black Sea, through the Iron gates

LINZ – MELK – VIENNA – BRATISLAVA – BUDAPEST – BEZDAN – NOVI SAD – BELGRADE – PASSING THE “IRON GATES” – ROUSSE – GIURGIU – OLTENITA – TULCEA

DAY 1: LINZ (Austria)

Embarkation takes place around 4:00 PM. There is time to settle comfortably into your cabin before meeting the crew during a welcome cocktail reception in the lounge. Dinner will then be served on board as the ship begins an overnight cruise east towards **Melk**.

DAY 2: MELK – VIENNA (Austria)

Breakfast is served on board. Upon arrival in Melk, an optional **excursion is offered to the Benedictine Abbey of Melk. The abbey** is perched 50 meters high on a rocky outcropping overlooking the Danube River and the town of Melk. It is a symbol of Austrian Baroque art and architecture at its finest. Be sure to visit the Emperor’s Gallery, the Marble Hall, the Terrace, the Library with its collection of 80,000 books and 2,000 manuscripts, as well as the abbey’s incredible church. You return back to the ship at the end of the morning and begin sailing on towards **Vienna**, arriving there in late afternoon. Dinner is served on board and you may have a free evening to sightsee on your own in Vienna, or the opportunity to enjoy a **Viennese music concert in the city (optional and subject to ticket availability)**. Overnight is in Vienna.

DAY 3: VIENNA (Austria) – BRATISLAVA (Slovakia)

After breakfast on board, an **optional excursion is offered to the Schoenbrunn Palace, which also includes a panoramic city tour of Vienna.** Schoenburnn used to be the summer residence of the Emperor of Austria and his family. It is also famous for its beautiful park and gardens. Lunch is served on board the ship before sailing begins at about 1:00 PM towards **Bratislava with arrival** scheduled for sometime during the late afternoon hours. **An optional guided coach and walking tour** is offered to the Slovakian capital, or you may wish to sightsee on your own, as the ship docks very close to the city center. The city of Bratislava not only occupies a highly privileged location on the Danube River (between the imperial capitals of Budapest and Vienna), but the city is also favorably influenced from the north by the southern slopes of the Little Carpathian Mountains. The charm of Bratislava lies primarily in its “old town” with its splendid baroque palaces, churches and pleasant squares. Return on board the ship for dinner before we begin an overnight sailing to **Budapest at around 8:00 PM.**

DAY 4: BUDAPEST (Hungary)

Breakfast is served on board before arriving in **Budapest** around 9:00 AM. The morning may be spent on an optional coach tour of this fascinating city which is cut in two by the Danube River. You have Buda with its hills and valleys, while Pest is a flat plain. The panoramic view of the city from the Buda side offers a magnificent panoramic view of the Danube River and Pest. Buda is very laid back with cobblestone streets, colourful shops, Turkish baths and royal palaces. Pest is a bustling city with the main shopping areas, historic sites, major hotels and sophisticated restaurants. The cities were two separate entities divided by the Danube River until their official union in 1872. Both have been awarded World Heritage status by UNESCO. After the tour is completed, lunch is served on board the ship and the afternoon is at leisure for individual sightseeing. The ship pier is conveniently located on the Pest side just a handful of blocks from the major tourist areas. Return back to the ship in time for dinner on board then have a free evening in the city, or you may wish to attend an optional Hungarian **folklore evening** in Budapest. The ship departs later that evening for an overnight sailing.

DAY 5: BUDAPEST / KALOCSA (Hungary) / MOHACS (Hungary) – BEZDAN (Serbia)

Breakfast is served on board before arriving in Kalocsa. An optional tour of the Puszta (great Hungarian plain) is offered. The Puszta tour is quite unique, as it includes a visit to an authentic Hungarian horse ranch where you will enjoy an equestrian show. The real-life Hungarian cowboys and their horses put on a spectacular performance for the tour participants with incredible feats of daring horsemanship. After the tour, it is back on board the ship for lunch and continuation of the cruise to the southern Hungarian city of **Mohacs where you arrive at** around 5:00 PM. Customs control for the European Union is located in Mohacs. Once customs has been cleared in Mohacs, then it is on to **Bezdan**, Serbia for customs control there. After all the necessary formalities, the ship heads towards **Novi Sad**. Dinner is served on board followed by an entertaining evening. The ship is scheduled for an overnight sailing.

DAY 6: NOVI SAD (Serbia) – BELGRAD

We arrive in **Novi Sad** around 7:00 AM with breakfast served on board. This morning, an optional coach **excursion** is offered to Novi Sad where you will catch a glimpse of the **Petrovaradin Fortress**. **Novi Sad**, located in the southern part of the Great Plain and the region of Baga, is the capital of Vojvodina. The city is formerly known as “the Athens of Serbia”, due to its cultural splendor during the Turkish occupation. After the tour is complete, return back to the ship for lunch on board before sailing on to **Belgrad**. The afternoon is spent cruising with arrival in the Serbian capital later in the evening. Dinner is served on board followed by an **optional traditional folklore evening in Belgrad**. **Overnight is in Belgrad.**

DAY 7: BELGRAD – DONJI MILANOVAC (Serbia)

Breakfast is served on board and the morning may be spent on an optional coach and walking tour of the city of **Belgrad**. In the Serbian language, Beograd means “white castle” or “white city”. Belgrad lies at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube Rivers, near the Morava corridor which links the lower regions of the Danube to the Aegean Sea. It combines a fortress perched on a promontory, a busy city and important river port facilities. Belgrade is a modern city in which the Terazije and Republike Squares form the lively centre. Be sure not to miss the historic “Montmartre” quarter! Return on board the ship late morning and enjoy lunch on board before spending the afternoon sailing on to reach the town of **Donji Milanovac at** around 9:00 PM. Dinner is on board the ship with an overnight in Donji Milanovac.

DAY 8: DONJI MILANOVA (Serbia)

We get an early morning cruise start with breakfast served on board. The entire day will be spent sailing on the Danube River before crossing the Serbian custom’s post and entering into Bulgaria. We pass through **the legendary Iron Gates which were** formed by the gorges on the Danube River flowing between the Little Carpathians and the Balkans. It is truly an amazing stretch with white cliffs towering over both sides of the river. The most striking section of the gorge was named “the Cauldron” by sailors, due to the fact that the water of the Danube is so tightly squeezed between the steep walls of the mountains that it literally seemed to bubble! A clearer landmark on the Serbian bank of the river is without a doubt the “Tabula Traina”, a huge marble plaque which reminds all of those who pass by, of the Roman-built road that once linked the city of Rome to the ancient Province of Dacia. Once we are past this point, we are in the very heart of the cauldron, as the passage narrows, then suddenly opens up again giving the impression of travelling on a mountain lake. This marks the point where the **Mracona** River flows into the Danube. An elegant viaduct spans the river mouth high above and if you look carefully, you will see the portrait of Decebal that is carved out of the rock. Lunch and dinner will be served on board. After dinner, a gala evening is planned.

DAY 9: ROUSSE (Bulgaria)

Breakfast is served on board as we reach **Rousse**, one of the great Bulgarian ports, at around 8:00 AM. This city is a perfect blend of Bulgarian and Romanian culture. Its wide avenues, large squares and majestic buildings, bear witness to the **Bulgarian National Renaissance**. You may enjoy some free time for individual sightseeing, or take an optional coach **tour** of the Roussenki-Lom Valley, located near the village of Ivanovo. In this location, you can admire the churches and monastery chapels which were dug out of the rock by the first hermits to settle in the area in the 12th century. The wall paintings which date back to the 14th century bear witness to the exceptional artistic talent of the Tarnova School of painting. Return back to the ship for lunch on board and time at leisure. There is also an **optional city tour of Rousse** offered, followed by a folklore evening. Overnight is in Rousse.

DAY 10: ROUSSE (Bulgaria) -GIURGIU (Romania) – OLTENITA (Romania)

We get an early morning start and breakfast is served on board while cruising to reach the Romanian town of **Giurgiu**. From there a full day optional coach **excursion** is offered to **Bucharest**. This optional tour of the Romanian capital also includes lunch at a local Romanian restaurant. Bucharest is a cultural and economic hub of national importance which was founded 500 years ago. In the 1930's, Bucharest was named "Little Paris" due to its long boulevards lined with trees. There is even an 'Arc de Triomphe' on the stunning Kisseleff Blvd. Bucharest offers a striking combination of architectural styles beginning with Curtea Veche, the ruins of the 15th century palace built by Vlad the Impaler (founder of the city), orthodox churches, empire-style manor houses, as well as more recent offerings. These include, Stalin inspired architecture from the Communist period and the controversial Romanian Parliament, a huge building with over six thousand rooms. The Parliament building is the second largest in the world. Only the Pentagon in Washington D.C. is larger. Return to the ship after the tour around 5:00 PM in **Oltenita** before sailing north towards the Danube Delta. Dinner is served on board with an evening of dancing planned while the ship is scheduled for an overnight sailing.

DAY 11: TULCEA (Romania)

Breakfast is served on board while the ship continues cruising before reaching **Tulcea in** late morning. Tulcea lies at the entrance to the Danube Delta region. It is an important nature preserve which was awarded world biosphere status by UNESCO. Lunch is served on board before an **optional small ship excursion is offered through the Danube Delta**. A trip along some of the numerous arms of the delta winds through almost tropical vegetation (the most northerly in Europe) amid particularly varied wildlife and birdlife. You will also discover the traditional houses of the fishermen who live along the tree-lined banks of the delta. We return to the ship late in the afternoon in **Tulcea**. Dinner is served on board followed by a folklore evening. Overnight is in Tulcea.

DAY 12: TULCEA (Romania)

Breakfast is served on board before disembarkation takes place around 9:00 AM . End of our services.