

# 12-day cruise

# From the Black Sea to the Blue

# Danube passing through the IRON GATE

*Travelling through 7 countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria*

## *Highlights*

*Idyllic landscapes from the Danube Bend to the Delta*

*7 countries and their cultural diversity*

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**TULCEA – the Danube Delta – GIURGIU – ROUSSE – Passing through the Iron Gate - BELGRADE – NOVI SAD– BUDAPEST – BRATISLAVA- VIENNA – MELK – LINZ**

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## **DAY 1: TULCEA** (Romania)

Embarkation takes place in **Tulcea** at around 6:00 PM. Tulcea is the largest city in this area and the gateway to the Danube River Delta. This city is almost as old as Rome and it is also built on 7 hills. There is time allowed to settle into your cabin prior to the introduction of the crew over a welcome cocktail in the lounge. Dinner is served on board followed by a traditional folklore evening. Overnight is in Tulcea.

## **DAY 2: TULCEA** (Romania) – **Danube Delta** (Romania)

Breakfast is served on board. In the morning, an **optional small ship excursion** is offered **through the Danube Delta. The delta** is an immense nature reserve which is classified as a world heritage biosphere site. 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 back to our ship in time for lunch on board. This is followed by departure of the Danube River cruise for **Oltenita**. We will be sailing through Romania for the remainder of the day, passing the towns of Galati, Braila, Harsova and Cernavoda. Dinner is served on board with an overnight sailing.

## **DAY 3: OLTENITA** (Romania) – **GIURGIU** (Romania) – **ROUSSE** (Bulgaria)

Breakfast is served on board during the cruise with arrival scheduled in **Oltenita** for around 10:00 AM. There is an **optional coach excursion to Bucharest offered upon the ship's arrival in Oltenita**. A full day is devoted to the **guided tour of the Romanian capital. Bucharest** is the cultural and economic center of the entire country and the city was founded five hundred years ago. In the 1930s, Bucharest was nicknamed "Little Paris" because of its long boulevards lined with trees. There is even a version of the Arch de Triomphe on the impressive Kisseleff Boulevard. You will probably be surprised to discover the mixture of architectural styles in Bucharest. Among them are; Curtea Veche and the ruins of the palace from the 15<sup>th</sup> century which was built by Vlad the Impaler, the founder of the city. Then you have many fascinating orthodox churches, the manor houses built in the style of the Second Empire, the clumsy Stalinist architecture of the communist period, and finally, the Romanian Parliament Building, an enormously controversial construction with over six thousand rooms. FYI, This monstrosity is second in size only to the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Lunch is served in a local restaurant in **Bucharest before** rejoining the ship in **Giurgiu** around 5:00 PM. The ship departs Giurgiu for a short cruise across the Danube River to Bulgaria and the city of **Rousse, which is** one of the largest ports in **Bulgaria**. Dinner is served on board the ship followed by an evening of dancing. Overnight is in Rousse.

## **DAY 4: ROUSSE** (Bulgaria)

Breakfast is served on board. You will discover that 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 to** 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 12<sup>th</sup> century. The wall paintings which date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century bear witness to the exceptional artistic talent of the Tarnova School of painting. We return back on board the ship at the end of the morning for lunch and subsequent departure of the cruise. This afternoon is spent sailing west on the Danube River. Along the way,

we will be passing through two countries, **Romania**, which is located on the right and **Bulgaria** on the left. Dinner is served on board followed by an evening's entertainment. The ship will be doing an overnight sailing.

#### **DAY 5: PASSING THROUGH THE FAMOUS IRON GATE**

Today is another full day of sailing on the Danube River, cruising past local fishermen, commercial shipping barges and the white willow trees that often line both banks of the river. While breakfast is served on board, we will continue sailing through **Romania** and **Bulgaria**. After lunch on board, and later during the afternoon, we will pass through the famous **Iron Gate**. **This is** the Danube River gorge located between the Carpathians and the Balkans. It is truly a fantastic place. The most spectacular section of this gorge has been referred to by sailors as "the Cauldron" because the water that is caught between the two towering walls seems to boil. A brighter landmark, found on the Serbian side of the river, is the "Tabula Traiana", an immense marble plaque commemorating the "imperial route" which once linked Rome with the ancient province of Dacia. Lunch is served on board as the cruise continues. Now, the rock faces come ever closer together, and then, suddenly, the gorge opens up, giving the impression of a lake surrounded by mountains. At this point, the **Mraconia River empties into the Danube River**. An elegant viaduct towers above the mouth of the river and we can see the "portrait" of Decebal carved into the rock face. Dinner is served on board with continuation of the cruise to **Belgrade**. The ship will be doing an overnight sailing.

#### **DAY 6: BELGRADE (Serbia) – NOVI SAD (Serbia)**

The ship passes through Serbian customs in V. Gradiste. Breakfast is served on board while the ship continues our cruise. Arrival in **Belgrade is scheduled for** around 8:00 AM. Upon arrival, an **optional coach and walking tour of the Serb capital is offered**. Beograd in Serbian means white castle or white city. It is located at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube Rivers, close to the Morava River corridor, which links the countries on the Danube to the Aegean Sea. The city is a combination of a fortress on a promontory, a city of trade and an important port. After the city tour, it is back to the ship for lunch on board. This is followed by departure of the cruise for Novi Sad, which is situated in the southern part of the Great Plain in the Serb region of Baga. Arrival there is scheduled for around 6:00 PM. An optional coach tour of **Novi Sad is offered with a visit to the Petrovaradin Fortress**. **Novi Sad** is the capital of the Vojvodina province of Serbia. It was once christened as "the Athens of Serbia" and known for its cultural influence during the Turkish occupation. We arrive back to the ship in time for dinner on board. Departure from Novi Sad is around 8.00 PM and the ship will be doing an overnight sailing.

#### **DAY 7: BEZDAN – MOHACS – KALOCSA**

Breakfast is served on board during the cruise as we pass through Serbian customs in **Bezdan**. The ship will reach the Hungarian town of **Mohacs** for EU customs at around 12:30 PM while lunch is served on board. That afternoon from Mohacs, an **optional coach excursion to the Puszta is offered**. During this time, the ship will continue to sail to **Kalocsa** where we will join it again at around 7.00 PM. The Puszta tour is quite unique, as it includes a visit to an authentic horse ranch. Real-life "Hungarian cowboys" put on a spectacular show for the tour participants, which includes incredible feats of horsemanship. After the tour, the group rejoins the ship in Kalocsa, where it continues sailing to Budapest. Dinner on board is followed by a Hungarian Theme evening. The ship will be doing an overnight sailing.

#### **DAY 8: BUDAPEST (Hungary)**

Breakfast is served on board the ship with arrival in Budapest early in the morning. An **optional coach tour of Budapest is offered to the city** that is nicknamed the "Pearl of the Danube". Budapest is the capital of Hungary and it is listed as part of the world's cultural heritage by UNESCO. The Danube River divides it into two geographic and stylistic entities. The Buda side of the river is laid back with winding cobblestone streets, colorful little shops, Turkish baths and Royal palaces. The panoramic view of Pest and the Danube River from high atop Buda is fabulous. The Pest side is a bustling city with the main pedestrian shopping areas, historical buildings, major hotels and sophisticated restaurants. The two cities officially became one in 1872. After the tour, it is back to the ship for lunch on board. The afternoon is free to explore Budapest on your own and the ship pier is conveniently located in Pest within a handful of blocks from the major tourist areas. Dinner is served on board followed by departure of the cruise for Bratislava. The ship will be doing an overnight sailing.

#### **DAY 9: BRATISLAVA**

Breakfast and lunch are served on board prior to arrival in **Bratislava** at around 1:00 PM. An **optional guided coach and walking tour of the city is offered, or you may do some individual sightseeing, as the ship is docked with a few blocks of the city center**. The city of Bratislava not only occupies a highly

privileged geographic 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 slopes of the southern point of the Little Carpathian Mountains. The charm of the Slovakian capital lies primarily in its “old town” of splendid Baroque palaces, churches and pleasant squares. After the tour, it is back on board for dinner with departure of the cruise towards **Vienna** on an overnight sailing.

**DAY 10: VIENNA** (Austria)

The ship arrives early into Vienna, and after breakfast on board, an **optional coach tour is offered to the Schönbrunn Palace, along with a panoramic city tour of Vienna**. The palace was the summer residence of the imperial family and it is beautifully set off by the perspectives of its adjacent park area. We return to the ship for lunch on board with a free afternoon in **Vienna for individual sightseeing**. However, do make sure you are back on board in time for dinner. Tonight, you may enjoy a free evening in the city, or an optional classical music concert in Vienna, depending on ticket availability. After the concert, the ship departs for an overnight sailing to Melk.

**DAY 11: MELK** (Austria)

Breakfast is served during the cruise with arrival in **Melk** scheduled for around 9:00 AM. An **optional tour is offered to the incredible Benedictine Abbey of Melk**. The abbey is perched 50 meters high atop a rocky outcropping overlooking the town of Melk and the Danube River. Melk Abbey is the symbol of the most complete expression of Baroque Art and architecture in **Austria**. Be sure to visit the Emperors' gallery, the Marble Hall, the Terrace, the Library with its 80,000 books and 2,000 manuscripts, as well as, the abbey's incredible church. We return back again to the ship in time for lunch on board. Departure of the cruise is set for around 3:00 PM towards **Linz as we sail through the beautiful Wachau Valley**. Dinner is served on board with an evening of entertainment planned. The ship will be doing an overnight sailing.

**DAY 12: LINZ** (Austria)

Breakfast is served on board with arrival in **Linz** at around 8:00 AM. Disembarkation takes place at 9:00 AM. *End of our journey.*