TOUR CODE

CE2

ADVENTURESABROAD

CENTRAL EUROPEAN ROUNDUP

Poland • Slovakia • Hungary • Czech Republic & Vienna

21 days

Updated 05/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Warsaw*

Arrival in Warsaw.

After WWII, a reconstruction campaign by its citizens resulted in today's meticulous restoration of Warsaw's Old Town with its churches, palaces and market-place. It is an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13th to the 20th century.

If you arrive early enough, we recommend a visit to the Warsaw Uprising Museum (closed Tuesdays), dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. The museum sponsors research into the history of the Uprising, and the history and possessions of the Polish Underground State. It collects and maintains hundreds of artefacts, ranging from weapons used by the insurgents to love letters, in order to present a full picture of the people involved.

Overnight in Warsaw. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Warsaw: City Tour*

Warsaw has shrugged off its dour Eastern Bloc image, and is finally showing its true colours. The vibrant heart of the largest country in "New Europe", Warsaw is now poised to make is presence felt as a business and cultural hub.

We begin our sightseeing today with a drive along the Royal Route and a brief orientation drive around the city before beginning our walking tour of the Old Town, a UNESCO protected site. We visit Castle Square, the Uprising Monument, and then drive over to the Praga area for a view of the river. From there go to the Jewish Ghetto area and to Umschlag Platz (unfortunately, some of the monuments in the Ghetto are blocked by the construction of a new museum).

Overnight in Warsaw. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Warsaw - Czestochowa - Auschwitz - Brizinka - Krakow*

Today we leave for Krakow via Czestochowa, the "spiritual home" of Poland where pilgrims from every corner of the country come to Jasna Gora (Luminous Mountain) Monastery to worship the image of the Black Madonna, Poland's most important icon. Legend says that the icon was painted by St Luke the Evangelist on a piece of cypress wood from the table used by Mary in Nazareth. The icon was brought from Jerusalem and installed in the monastery around 1384.

The rest of our sightseeing in this area is important for understanding the complex nature of the region's history. We visit the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) and Brizinka (Birkenau) Nazi concentration camps preserved as memorials to the 1.5 million people of 28 nationalities who perished here, the overwhelming majority of whom were Jewish. We continue to Krakow.

Overnight in Krakow. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Krakow: Walking Tour*

Krakow is very compact, and the whole central region with its cobblestone streets is full of well-preserved architecture, Gothic churches and splendid museums. On our sightseeing tour (largely on foot at a leisurely pace) we visit Wawall Hill with the Royal Castle, Market Square, and the 16th century Renaissance Cloth Hall. We continue onward to Jagiellonian University and St Mary's Church with the Wit Stwosz altar. This was designed in 1489 by Wit Stwosz of Nuremburg and is the finest sculptural work in Poland.

We then stroll down the hill from the castle complex and enter the Old Town, one of the most famous old districts in Poland and the center of Poland's political life from 1038 until King Sigismund III Vasa relocated his court to Warsaw in 1596. The entire medieval old town is among the first sites chosen for the UNESCO's World Heritage List. The district features the centrally located Rynek Glowny, or Main Square, the largest medieval town square of any European city. There is a number of historic landmarks in its vicinity, such as St. Mary's Basilica (Kosciol Mariacki), Church of St. Wojciech (St. Adalbert's), Church of St. Barbara, as well as other national treasures.

Your afternoon is free to further explore this beautiful city. There are many cafes and pubs, which are located in medieval basements and cellars with vaulted ceilings. Obwarzanki (English: bagels) are undoubtedly a symbol of Krakow. On the Square there is a bagel seller every few steps.

Overnight in Krakow. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Krakow: Wieliczka Salt Mines*

Today we travel to the Wieliczka Salt Mines. On our 5km (3 mile) journey below the earth's surface we will see the saltformed caves and grottoes, a subterranean lake and a chapel with statues carved from salt. The mines' 11 levels of galleries stretch 300km (186 miles), and some 20,000,000 tonnes (22,000,000 tons) of rock salt were extracted over 700 years. According to local legend, the deposits were discovered in the 13th century by a Hungarian princess named Kinga, whose lost ring was found in a block of salt extracted here.

We also visit the museum associated with Oskar Schindler's factory made famous in Steven Spielberg's epic 'Schindler's List', before returning to Krakow with the balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Krakow. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Krakow - the High Tatras of Slovakia - Eger, Hungary*

A full day of travel today takes us from Krakow to Eger in Hungary. We first pass though the very south of Poland. Nearby is Zakopane, nestled at the base of the Tatra Mountains. Steep peaks towering 1800 m (6,000 feet), roaring waterfalls, beautiful lakes, and a wide array of wildlife are features of this resort destination.

From here we will travel through the scenic Tatras Mountains, located in both Slovakia and Poland, en route to Hungary. We will have lunch in Slovakia, and then continue through the picturesque landscapes as green hills and tranquil river valleys gradually give way to the sweeping plains of Hungary. Our destination for the day is Eger, situated in the Eger Valley between the Bukk and Matra Hills. Eger is famous for the strong red Bull's Blood (Egri Bikaver) wine that gave them courage, for its medieval library, and for the northernmost minaret in Europe. There are still many accessible sites and much charm to the narrow streets, arcaded buildings, wrought-iron gates, and Baroque towers and

domes of the Old Town. This is the perfect walking city with something interesting at every turn. Situated in the valley between the lavender peaks of Hungary's highest mountains, the Matras, and the wooded Buk Hills, the natural backdrop for this city's historic monuments is superb.

Overnight in Eger. Hotel Korona or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Eger: Town Tour*

Eger has been inhabited since the Stone Age. During the early Middle Ages the area was inhabited by German, Avar and Slavonic tribes. Taken over by the Hungarians in the 10th century, Eger reached an age of prosperity during the 14th-16th centuries. Winegrowing, for which the town is still famous, began to be important at that time. During the Turkish occupation of Central Hungary, Eger became an important border fortress, successfully defended by Hungarian forces in the 1552 Siege of Eger, in the face of overwhelming odds.

Our walking tour today will include a visit to the famous castle of Eger with its museum and underground casements. We will also see the Archbishop's Palace, Franciscan Church, and Turkish Minaret.

Overnight in Eger. Hotel Korona or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Eger - Budapest*

This morning we travel by road to Budapest. Along our way we will visit Holloko, one of Hungary's most beautiful towns. The small town of 650 people, with its two streets and nesting in a valley, is enchanting. What sets it apart is the Old Village where 50 houses have been listed and declared historic monuments. Holloko has been added to UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage list, with its preserved unique ethnographic and folk art values. The village is certainly picturesque with its cobbled streets and little white houses noted for the round tiles like giant coins that protect the interiors.

From here we will continue to Budapest via Szentendre on the 'Danube Bend'. This riverside town of colorful buildings and cobblestone streets has been populated for over a thousand years. Today we find an array of wine cellars, unique museums, art galleries and shops... all providing a wonderful atmosphere.

Overnight in Budapest. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Budapest: City Tour*

This morning we depart our hotel by private bus for Heroes Square where we will disembark and learn of the history of Hungary as it pertains to the monument. We then WALK over to Vajdahunyad Castle before continuing to St. Stephen's Basilica for a quick look inside. We will pass by the Parliament buildings continuing toward Margaret Bridge over which we cross to Buda. We drive along the water and continue up to the castle area. Our next stop is the Citadel -- good for panoramic views. Our bus leaves us for the day, allowing us to continue on foot to the Fisherman's Bastion.

After a lunch break we reconvene in front of the Plague Monument from where we proceed to St Matthias Church. After visiting the church we will walk down Tarnok Utca to the Royal Palace. At the Royal Palace we visit the National Gallery, devoted exclusively to Hungarian Art.

At this point you are free to continue independent exploration, or return to the hotel. One of the highlights of our Eastern European tours is using the local transport in each city -- most travellers truly enjoy the experience. Your Tour

Leader can help plan the rest of your day.

Overnight in Budapest. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Budapest: Walking Tour*

This morning we embark on a leisurely WALKING tour of city's urban heart. This is an area is full of stately old buildings, grand avenues, and innumerable tiny streets. We will take local transport to the huge neo-Gothic Parliament (Orszaghaz), the most visible building of Budapest's left bank. Built by 1,000 workers between 1885 and 1902, this building has now become the symbol of the capital with its slender towers, spacious arcades, high windows and vast central dome. Nearby one can see the magnificent building housing the Museum of Ethnography. Walking southeast we come to the stately and sprawling Liberty Square (Szabadsag ter). In the square's center remains a gold hammer and sickle atop a white stone obelisk, one of the few monuments to the Russian 'liberation' of Budapest in 1945. Passing by Roosevelt Square we soon come to the famous Chain Bridge, the oldest and most beautiful of the seven road bridges that span the Danube in Budapest. Before it was built, the river could be crossed only by ferry or by a pontoon bridge that had to be moved when ice blocks began floating downstream in the winter.

We continue along the pedestrian 'Promenade' with great views of Gellert Hill and Castle Hill on the opposite bank. We will stroll past the Concert Hall (Vigado), which is a curious mix of Byzantine, Moorish, Romanesque and Hungarian motifs. From here we walk to one of the liveliest places in Budapest, Vorosmarty Ter, a large square that the north end of Budapest's best known shopping street--Vaci Utca. This is a fantastic pedestrian-only area of the city that has undergone a full transformation over the last 10 years.

Eventually we will arrive at the famous 19th century Central Market Hall. This cavernous three-story market teems with people browsing stalls packed with everything from salamis and red-paprika chains to folk embroideries and souvenirs. The balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Budapest. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Budapest - Bratislava*

This morning we travel by road from Budapest to Bratislava.

In the afternoon we will arrive in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. Bratislava is situated on both banks of the Danube and a promontory of the Little Carpathians. During the second half of the 20th century, Bratislava finally became a Slovakian city where an ambitious rebuilding and restoration program has transformed the city.

Overnight in Bratislava. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Bratislava: City Tour*

The Romans were the first to have a watch post in Bratislava here above the Danube. In the eleventh century, a fortified castle was constructed on the site to protect the Hungarian kingdom. In the twelfth century Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa took control of the castle. In the fifteenth century, it achieved its real fame when King Sigismund ordered construction of a fortified Gothic castle here. When the Turks invaded Buda in 1541, this castle became the seat of the Hungarian government. In sixteenth-century Hapsburg days, it was rebuilt in Renaissance styles. In Napoleonic days, it is said that the Little Emperor watched the counterattack of the Russian and Polish armies after the Battle of Austerlitz from this site. But in Napoleonic times, a fire largely destroyed it. For 150 years it remained in a

state of disrepair, until 1953, when the renovation that still continues got under way.

Our half-day morning city BUS / WALKING tour takes us to the main sights of Bratislava, including the historic Old Town, the Gothic Cathedral of St. Martin and the 14th century Tower of St. Michael in the ancient city walls. The afternoon is free.

Overnight in Bratislava. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Bratislava, Slovak Republic - Vienna, Austria*

Today we travel to Vienna, the Austrian capital.

Vienna is a true cosmopolitan center, where different tribes and nationalities have, for centuries, fused their cultural identities to produce the intriguing and often cynical Viennese. Around 1900, Vienna was a city of vibrant, stimulating, intellectual life, a dynamic capital of elites that did pioneering work in many fields. Otto Wagner remarked in 1905 that "in spite of unfavourable conditions, Vienna is marching at the head of cultural nations". In a similar vein, international critics noted that Vienna was virtually unsurpassed in the sheer wealth of modern architecture that it had to offer at the time.

Overnight in Vienna. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Vienna: City Tour*

Walking about downtown Vienna is an absolute pleasure. The Innere Stadt, in particular, is best explored on foot. Our morning WALK takes us through some of the most well-trodden tourist routes in Vienna. We will take local transport to the Staatsoper, the premiere opera and classical music venue in Vienna, and possibly the world. From here we walk, heading north on Kartner Strasse, a pedestrian-only walkway of shops, trees, cafes and buildings of historical and cultural interest. Instantly recognizable along this walk is the Gothic, glorious Stephansdom (St Stephen's Cathedral). This is the geographical and emotional heart of the city. Our stroll down Graben St. takes us past Neo-Classical architectural masterpieces; then we turn onto Kohlmarket and head to Michaelerplatz and its array of architectural sites. We visit the Hofburg chambers, thus getting a view of this enormous Imperial Palace from both inside and outside.

Today our provided meal is lunch, to give everyone the opportunity to enjoy their evening at leisure, perhaps to attend one of the many beautiful concert venues, or even take in an opera.

Afternoon at leisure.

Overnight in Vienna. Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.

Day 15 *Vienna: Hofburg Palace*

The grandiose city was the showpiece of the all-conquering Habsburg dynasty, which controlled much of Europe for over 600 years. Despite the ravages of time, its cultural gems endure: monumental edifices line the city centre, world-class museums burst with historical and artistic treasures, and internationally established orchestras perform in lavish concert halls.

This morning we visit the Imperial Hofburg Palace (private coach). The Imperial Palace of the Hapsburgs was their home for six centuries, during which time changes and additions were made in every conceivable architectural style--

Gothic, Renaissance, baroque, rococo and classical.

The afternoon is free for you to explore this elegant Imperial capital. You may choose to stroll along the shopping district around Kaertner Street and the Graben and stop at the historic Demel Pastry Shop for a sweet break.

Overnight in Vienna. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Vienna, Austria - Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic*

Today we travel from Vienna to Cesky Krumlov.

Medieval arcades and etched Renaissance facades in apricot, beige, and pea-green shades; rust-red, pink, and golden Baroque buildings surround the town's cobblestone square with a Plague Monument (Morovy sloup) in its centre. Here you can explore the square, the side streets, and the winding River Vltava that separates the Old Town from the towering castle. This is undoubtedly one of the most exquisite towns in the Czech Republic.

Overnight in Cesky Krumlov. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Cesky Krumlov: Castle Tour*

Cesky Krumlov is undoubtedly one of the most exquisite towns in the Czech Republic, and always a favorite among travellers. Today we will visit the mighty Renaissance castle of Cesky Krumlov, once the seat of the powerful Lords of the Rozmberks and the Schwarzenbergs. The castle houses a rich collection of period furniture, tapestries and historical weapons. The present castle complex is one of the largest in Central Europe and was recorded on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1992

The great castle complex dominates the town of Cesky Krumlov. Under the Castle Complex lies the old town with its winding alleys and venerable Gothic and Renaissance houses. The historical centre of the town is on the UNESCO Heritage list, and after our castle tour the rest of your day will be free to stroll in this historical city centre. Explore the backstreets, visit the small shops and cafes, and wander the pathways along the river.

Overnight in Cesky Krumlov. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 18 *Cesky Krumlov - Prague*

Today we travel to Prague, the magnificent capital of the Czech Republic. Prague lies on the seven hills flanking the banks of the Vltava River with the most outstanding views being from Prague Castle. Sometimes it is called Prague the Golden, sometimes Prague the City of 100 Spires. It is compared with Florence and Rome in its beauty. Thomas Mann said it was one of the world's most magical cities; Goethe called it the prettiest gem in the stone crown of the world. Virtually untouched by war, its architecture is Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassical, Empire and Art Nouveau.

Overnight in Prague. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 19 *Prague: Prague Castle & Old Town*

Our morning sightseeing tour of Prague travels through the city centre to Prague Castle. We begin our WALKING tour near Pohorelec Square before the Cernin Palace. As we head towards the castle we will pass the following: Strahov Monastery, the Loreta, the Cappucin Monastery, and the Archbishop's Palace. Before entering the castle, we will pause by the wall for a city panorama and orientation before our 2-hour visit of the castle.

We enter into first courtyard with its famous fountain and walk over to the Chapel of the Holy Cross. We continue to the St. Vitus Cathedral and visit the choir and crypt before heading to the third courtyard. Here we enter the Old Palace from St. George Square and then continue toward the Golden Lane (Kafka's House) where we pause for a break and refreshment, and then carry on the Old Castle Steps with photo stops along the way.

We will stop at Nikolas Church before crossing the ancient Charles Bridge (Karluv Most), an artistic masterpiece famous for its vendors and artists. For over four hundred years, this work of art, built by King Charles IV in 1357, was the only link between the two halves of Prague. We admire the many sculptures as we walk across. We finish the formal part of our tour in the Old Town, an excellent spot for lunch. The afternoon is free to further explore this amazing city.

Overnight in Prague. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 20 *Prague: Old Jewish Quarter & Wenceslas Square*

Our WALKING tour today takes us to the Old Jewish Quarter and the old Town Square with its famous town bell and astronomical clock.

The Old Jewish Cemetery is an incredible sight. The second oldest in Europe, it was established in the 15th century. Burials took place from 1439 to 1787. Today there are 12,000 tombstones jammed together, leaning one on another, every one at a different angle and size, the whole creating a graphic and surreal image. We also visit the museum/memorial and the Klaus Synagogue with a permanent exhibition called "Jewish Customs and Traditions" highlighting the significance of the synagogue and Jewish festivals.

We continue to the Old Town Square. The 15th century designer of the astronomical clock located here was master clockmaker Hanus of Ruze. According to legend, he was blinded by Prague's town councilors for fear that he would make another like it for another town; so magnificent and applauded was his creation. One day toward the end of his life, he asked a friend to lead him to his great creation. As the figure of Death tolled the hour, Hanus thrust his hand into the clock's apparatus; the clock stopped, and it was centuries before a craftsman could be found who was skilled enough to make it work. In World War II, the clock is said to have stopped again after the Nazi murder of hundreds of citizens of Prague.

We finish our walking tour at Wenceslas Square in time for lunch (your own account). The balance of the day is at leisure. Prague is famous for its concert halls: The Municipal House, Rudolfinium, Mozart Theatre, National Theatre, The State Theatre -- all of them close to the center of the city with performances almost every night. Your Tour Leader can help organize optional evening activities.

Overnight in Prague. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 21 *Departure*

Departure from Prague.

STASTNU CESTU! Meal plan: Breakfast.