Tour Code
CW1

ADVENTURESABROAD

CITIES OF WONDER

Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna, Cesky Krumlov & Prague

13 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Budapest, Hungary

Hungary is a land of beautiful monuments and romantic music, but above all, Budapest is a city defined by its river. The Danube forms the physical and spiritual center of the Hungarian capital - more intimately connected than the Seine to Paris or the Arno to Florence. Over the next two weeks, we'll follow this river's course northwest to Bratislava and Vienna, then venture into Bohemia where the Vltava connects eský Krumlov and Prague.

Budapest is the youngest of these great capitals. Buda and Pest existed as separate cities until their 1873 unification, just as Budapest claimed co-capital status in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The grand boulevards, Parliament Building, and bridges we'll see tomorrow represent an explosion of construction designed to announce Budapest's arrival as a European metropolis equal to Vienna itself.

Overnight in Budapest.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Budapest City Touring

This morning we'll start our exploration of Budapest on the Pest side of the city, beginning with a visit to the iconic Parliament Building, one of the city's most impressive landmarks. From there, we'll stroll through the beautiful Kossuth Lajos Square, home to several important government buildings and monuments.

Next, we'll make our way to the stunning St. Stephen's Basilica, the largest church in Budapest and a prominent symbol of the city. We'll take a short walk to the nearby Andrassy Avenue, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most beautiful boulevards in the world. Along the way, we'll pass by several impressive buildings, including the State Opera House and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

After a break for lunch, we'll take a scenic drive across the Danube River to the Buda side of the city, where we'll explore the stunning Castle District. We'll visit the impressive Matthias Church, a beautiful example of Gothic architecture, and take in the breathtaking views of the Danube River and the Pest side of the city from the nearby Fisherman's Bastion.

Finally is the Hospital in the Rock Nuclear Bunker Museum. For a unique and slightly different experience, we descend into the underground and explore this fascinating former secret hospital and nuclear bunker. It offers a glimpse into Cold War history and a different perspective on the city.

Overnight in Budapest.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Budapest - Gyor, Hungary - Bratislava, Slovakia

Today we bid farewell to Budapest and head northwest to Gyor, Hungary, a charming town that's about a 1.5-hour drive (90 km/56 miles) away. As we stroll through Gyor's beautiful Baroque centre, you'll notice the stunning cathedral, which dominates the skyline. Take some time to soak up the atmosphere and admire the intricate architecture and, depending on timing, perhaps grab some lunch here before continuing our journey.

After exploring Gyor, we'll continue our journey to Bratislava, Slovakia. This afternoon, we'll embark on a walking tour of Bratislava's picturesque Old Town. As we wander through the cobblestone streets, we'll visit the Main Square, which is home to the impressive St. Martin's Cathedral and the stunning Primate's Palace. Be sure to take in the unique blend of Gothic, Baroque, and Art Nouveau architectural styles that give Bratislava its distinct character.

Tonight, we'll gather together to enjoy some traditional Slovakian cuisine, which is hearty and delicious -- the perfect way to cap off our first day in Slovakia.

Overnight in Bratislava.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Bratislava Touring

Bratislava is the youthful, dynamic, and bustling capital of Slovakia. It is also an historic town full of traditions, nostalgia and music, and proud of its rich past. This is where three different countries meet with their languages, traditions, and cultures producing something very pleasant and attractive, a certain microcosm of central Europe.

Today we start the day with a visit to Bratislava Castle, perched atop a hill in the heart of the city. As we explore the castle's historic walls and towers, we'll be treated to stunning views of the Danube River and the city below. Take a moment to appreciate the castle's complex history, which dates back to the 9th century.

After taking in the views, we'll make our way through the charming streets of the Old Town, admiring the picturesque buildings and quaint shops along the way. We'll also stop by the Museum of Transport, which showcases a fascinating collection of historic vehicles and offers a glimpse into Bratislava's transportation history.

This afternoon, you're free to explore Bratislava at your own pace. Wander through the city's lively shopping districts, indulge in a coffee or pastry at a charming café, or browse the stalls at one of the local markets. Whatever you choose, you're sure to discover the city's unique charm.

Tonight, we'll gather together for dinner in Bratislava, celebrating our time in this beautiful city.

Overnight in Bratislava.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Bratislava - Schloss Hof, Slovakia - Vienna, Austria

Today we follow the Danube westward from Bratislava into Austria, stopping first at Schloss Hof, one of the most revealing sites of our journey.

This magnificent Baroque palace, commissioned by Prince Eugene of Savoy and later expanded by Empress Maria Theresa, sits perfectly positioned between Bratislava and Vienna. Its location was no accident - the palace served as a country retreat for the Habsburg court, revealing how the entire Danube corridor functioned as a unified realm. The same architectural vocabulary we saw in Budapest's Castle District and Bratislava's Primate's Palace reappears here in the Austrian countryside. These weren't isolated cities building in parallel - they were interconnected nodes of a single empire.

After exploring the palace, we'll seek out a traditional Heuriger wine tavern, part of the café and wine culture connecting all our cities from Budapest's grand coffeehouses to Vienna's legendary establishments.

We continue to Vienna, the orchestrating center. If Budapest was the dynamic partner after 1867 and Bratislava the historical Hungarian capital, Vienna was the nerve center from which Habsburgs ruled for six centuries. Around 1900, Vienna stood at its peak - Otto Wagner revolutionizing architecture, Klimt redefining painting, Freud mapping the unconscious, coffeehouses filled with the empire's best minds.

The Vienna we'll explore represents the apex of everything we've been discovering - and the tensions that would ultimately shatter this unity in 1918.

Overnight in Vienna (dinner on your own this evening).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 6 Vienna Touring

We'll start our exploration of Vienna at the iconic St. Stephen's Cathedral, a stunning example of Gothic architecture that dominates the city's skyline. From there, we'll wander along the nearby Graben, a historic pedestrian shopping street lined with cafes, shops, and street performers. This is a great place to soak up the city's vibrant atmosphere and perhaps stop for a coffee or snack.

In the afternoon, we'll visit the Hofburg Palace, the former principal imperial palace of the Habsburg dynasty rulers. We'll explore the Imperial Apartments, the Sisi Museum, and the Silver Cabinet, getting a glimpse into the opulent lives of Vienna's former rulers. Afterwards, we'll stroll through the adjacent Burggarten, a beautiful park with gardens, fountains, and statues.

In the evening, we'll enjoy a traditional Viennese dinner at a local restaurant. After dinner, we suggest a leisurely stroll along the Ringstrasse, a grand boulevard that encircles the city center, and admire the illuminated buildings and monuments.

Overnight in Vienna.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Vienna Touring & Leisure Time

On our second day in Vienna, we'll visit the Schönbrunn Palace, a former imperial summer residence and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We'll explore the opulent State Rooms, the Hall of Mirrors, and the beautiful gardens, getting a sense of the palace's former grandeur. Afterwards, we'll stop by the nearby Schönbrunn Zoo, one of the oldest and most famous zoos in Europe.

The rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore Vienna on your own. You might consider visiting the Belvedere Palace, a stunning Baroque complex with beautiful gardens and an impressive art collection. Alternatively, you could explore the Museums Quartier, a vibrant cultural complex with museums, galleries, and performance venues. Or, simply take a scenic boat tour along the Danube Canal or a stroll through the trendy Neubau district.

Overnight in Vienna,

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Vienna, Austria - Telc, Czechia - Cesky Krumlov

This morning, we'll depart Vienna and head north to the Czechia (aka Czech Republic). Along the way, we'll make a delightful stop in Telc, a charming town with a stunning medieval town center and castle. We'll take some time to explore the town's picturesque streets, admire its well-preserved architecture and enjoy a break for lunch and some free time in this charming place.

We continue our journey to Cesky Krumlov, a beautiful town situated in the rolling hills of southern Bohemia. We'll check-in to our hotel and then set out to explore Cesky Krumlov Castle, a stunning medieval castle complex and UNESCO World Heritage Site. As we wander through the castle's courtyards, towers, and gardens, we'll discover its rich history and admire its well-preserved architecture. With its unique blend of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles, Cesky Krumlov Castle is a truly unforgettable experience.

Overnight in Cesky Krumlov.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Cesky Krumlov: Cooking Class & Leisure Time

This morning we'll participate in a hands-on cooking class during which we'll learn the secrets of traditional Czech cuisine using local ingredients. Under the guidance of an experienced chef, we'll prepare a delicious meal that showcases the best of Czech cooking. This is a fun and interactive way to experience the local culture and cuisine, and you'll even get to enjoy the fruits of your labour over lunch!

This afternoon you'll have the opportunity to explore Cesky Krumlov's charming town center at your own pace. Wander through the narrow streets and admire the colorful buildings, many of which date back to the 14th century. Be sure to visit the Church of St. Vitus, a beautiful Gothic church that dominates the town's skyline. You might also want to stop by the Regional Museum, which offers a glimpse into the town's rich history and culture. Take a stroll along the picturesque riverside, where you can admire the town's medieval architecture and enjoy the tranquil atmosphere.

Overnight in Cesky Krumlov (dinner on your own this evening).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 10 Cesky Krumlov - Hluboka nad Vltavou - Prague

This morning we make a revealing detour before Prague. Hluboká nad Vltavou Castle, perched above the Vltava River, looks like England's Windsor rather than southern Bohemia - and that's precisely the point.

In the 19th century, the Schwarzenberg family transformed this medieval fortress into a neo-Gothic fantasy, deliberately modeling it on British royal residences. The same family built palaces in Vienna, maintained estates across Bohemia, and helped govern from the Hofburg - exemplifying how Habsburg elite moved fluidly across the empire's territories.

The castle's position above the Vltava is also significant. This river, flowing through eský Krumlov's center, continues north to Prague and beyond. While not part of the Danube system, it served the same function - connecting cities, enabling commerce, shaping settlement.

We continue to Prague, where all our threads converge. The architectural evolution from Gothic to Art Nouveau that we traced through Budapest, Bratislava, and Vienna reaches concentrated expression here. The Jewish heritage finds one of its most important centers in Prague's Jewish Quarter. The Habsburg administrative apparatus maintained a crucial seat in Prague Castle.

But Prague also represents something different - it was the intellectual and artistic conscience of the empire, producing Kafka's modernist nightmares, Dvoák's nationalist symphonies, Mucha's Art Nouveau visions. While Vienna administered and Budapest celebrated, Prague questioned and created.

This afternoon we'll explore the Old Town with its Astronomical Clock, Charles Bridge crossing the Vltava, and Wenceslas Square - where the 1848 revolutions, 1918 independence, 1968 Soviet invasion, and 1989 Velvet Revolution all played out.

Overnight in Prague.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Prague Touring

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.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Prague Touring & Leisure Time

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.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Departure

Departure from Prague.

Stastnou Cestu (Bon Voyage)!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast