Tour Code
RCDN

ADVENTURESABROAD

UPPER DANUBE & IMPERIAL CAPITALS

River Cruise & Land Journey

14 days

Created on: 8 Nov, 2026

Day 1 Arrive Munich

Welcomes to Munich, a city where Baroque façades and cosmopolitan museums meet beer gardens and lively markets. Transfer to the Platzl Hotel, ideally situated steps from the Altstadt. After settling in, you can shake off the flight with a leisurely walk through the historic quarter. The Residenz and Marienplatz provide a dramatic introduction, while the Viktualienmarkt's produce stalls hint at Bavaria's culinary heart.

Due to the possibility of late arrivals, we'll have our welcome group dinner tomorrow evening.

Overnight in Munich

Day 2 Munich Museums & Market Life

This morning we focus on Munich's artistic heritage with timed entry to either the Alte Pinakothek or the Residenz Treasury, depending on exhibitions. Our local guide's storytelling makes masterpieces approachable and alive. Founded as a medieval market town, Munich became the seat of Bavarian dukes in the 12th century and later the capital of the Kingdom of Bavaria. Its wealth funded the grand collections we explore today.

The afternoon is yours to discover Munich at your own pace. Explore the English Garden's winding paths and watch surfers ride the Eisbach standing wave. Sample confectioner's classics at traditional patisseries—perhaps Dallmayr for marzipan or Cafe Frischhut for fresh schmalzgebäck. Wander the Viktualienmarkt's produce stalls and spice vendors, where vendors have traded since 1807. Visit the Residenz's Cuvilliés Theatre, a rococo jewel box of gilt and velvet. Or simply sit with a coffee at Marienplatz and watch the Glockenspiel's mechanical figures perform their 15-minute show. Your Tour Leader shares suggestions tailored to mood and mobility, always considering individual interests.

Tonight we gather for a welcome dinner at a traditional Wirtshaus, where wooden tables, vaulted ceilings, and Bavarian hospitality set the tone for the journey ahead. This allows flexibility for those arriving late on Day 1, ensuring everyone joins for our proper introduction. Regional specialties accompany stories of what lies ahead—river valleys, imperial capitals, and the slower rhythm the Danube teaches.

Overnight in Munich.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 To Vilshofen & Embark Ship

A relaxed morning transfer carries us northeast toward the confluence of three rivers. We board our AmaWaterways ship in Vilshofen, a charming 1,200-year-old Bavarian town that serves as our gateway to the Danube. With porterage arranged, we settle into our staterooms—spacious, elegantly appointed floating rooms with picture windows framing the river ahead.

After the safety briefing, we're treated to an exclusive Oktoberfest celebration—an AmaWaterways tradition—with Bavarian beer, folk music, and dancing. As evening falls and the ship prepares to sail, the tempo shifts. The Danube has a way of doing that.

IMPORTANT NOTE: AmaWaterways' "Romantic Danube" cruise operates on various ships. Specific ship assignment subject to availability and final contracting. Pricing based on stateroom categories E & D; fixed windows, 170 sq ft.

Ship Night

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Passau: City of Three Rivers

We wake to find ourselves docked in Passau, where the Danube, Inn, and Ilz rivers converge in a swirl of blue, green, and black waters. This 2,000-year-old city wears its history in layers: Roman fort, medieval trade hub, Renaissance sword-making centre, and baroque masterpiece rebuilt after devastating fires in the 17th century.

We join a walking tour through cobbled lanes to St. Stephen's Cathedral, home to the world's largest cathedral organ—17,974 pipes creating thunderous sacred music. Alternatively, the more active may hike high above the old town to Veste Oberhaus fortress for sweeping views across three nations, or cycle along the Inn River on a guided bike tour. By afternoon we're back aboard, sailing deeper into Austria as vineyard-clad hills begin their march along the riverbanks.

Ship Night

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 Linz: Cesky Krumlov & Salzburg Options

The ship arrives in Linz, Austria's third-largest city and a UNESCO City of Media Arts—a title earned for its forward-thinking digital culture set against medieval foundations. We face delightful choices today. Those longing for alpine drama opt for the full-day excursion to Salzburg, Mozart's birthplace. We tour the historic centre, Mirabell Gardens (where the von Trapp children sang "Do-Re-Mi"), Residenz Square, and the Old Market. En route, we pause at Mondsee to see the Basilica St. Michael, site of the famous wedding scene in The Sound of Music.

Alternatively, venture across the Czech border to Cesky Krumlov, a mountain town seemingly untouched since the Renaissance. Cobblestone streets wind past pastel houses to one of Europe's largest castle complexes, where layers of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architecture tell 700 years of Bohemian history. Those remaining in Linz can choose a walking tour past the Mozart House—where he composed the Linz Symphony in just three days—or a bike tour along the "Cultural Mile." Late afternoon brings a fascinating journey into whiskey distillation at a local distillery, revealing Austria's lesser-known spirits tradition.

NOTE: Full-day excursions to Salzburg or Cesky Krumlov are not combinable with other tours on this day.

Ship Night

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Wachau Valley & Melk Abbey

Dawn reveals why this stretch earned UNESCO World Heritage designation. We glide through the Strudengau and Wachau valleys, where terraced vineyards climb impossibly steep slopes above medieval villages. Apricot orchards glow golden in morning light; stone towers mark river bends where toll collectors once extracted fees from passing traders. The river here is living history—a trade route since Celtic times, shaped by Romans, fortified by crusaders, romanticised by poets.

We dock at Weissenkirchen and face delicious choices. Some walk the cobbled lanes of Dürnstein before ascending to Melk Abbey—a baroque masterpiece gleaming ochre and gold above the river. Founded in 1089, this Benedictine monastery houses frescoes by Rottmayr and Troger, a library of medieval manuscripts, and terraces offering sweeping Danube views. The more active may hike to Dürnstein Fortress ruins, where Richard the Lionheart was held captive in 1192, or cycle through vineyard paths on a guided bike tour.

For those seeking culinary immersion, a walking tour includes wine tasting with a local vintner and sampling of Wachau's famous apricot delicacies—from jam to brandy—at a family boutique. By evening, vineyard slopes give way to the approaches of Vienna.

Ship Night

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Vienna's Imperial Grandeur

The "City of Waltzes" unfolds its treasures as we tour by motorcoach through the Ringstrasse—the grand boulevard encircling the historic center. We pass the Opera House, where premieres once sparked riots; the Hofburg Palace, nerve center of the Habsburg Empire that ruled Central Europe for 600 years; and the Parliament building with its Athena fountain. Our tour culminates at St. Stephen's Cathedral, its Gothic spire a survivor of Ottoman sieges, Napoleon's occupation, and World War II bombings.

Alternatively, discover Vienna by bike, pedaling along the Danube Canal and through parks to the Ringstrasse. The afternoon is yours to explore: perhaps Klimt's golden masterpieces at the Belvedere, the bustling Naschmarkt with its spice stalls, or simply a coffeehouse ritual—Vienna's living rooms, where newspapers hang on wooden rods and a single melange can last an afternoon. Your Tour Leader curates optional evening performance options, from intimate chamber concerts to grand opera.

A Note About Vienna: One day in Vienna? We know what you're thinking. How can one day possibly be enough? It can't. Consider today your Vienna teaser—the Ringstrasse orientation, St. Stephen's soaring nave, perhaps a fleeting cafe stop. Get your bearings. Feel the city's rhythm. Because here's the good news: we're coming back. Days 12-13 give you two full nights in Vienna to explore at your own pace. So today: relax, get oriented, take the overview. The real Vienna experience awaits at the end of your journey.

Ship Night

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Bratislava, Coronation City

Compact Bratislava rewards unhurried feet. We disembark into Slovakia's capital, a city that crowned 11 Hungarian kings and queens between 1536 and 1830—hence its title "Coronation City of Kings." Cobbled alleys link Baroque palaces to whimsical statues (watch for the umil peeking from a manhole). Cafés spill onto squares that feel made for lingering. We ascend to Bratislava Castle for sweeping views across three countries—Slovakia, Austria, and Hungary—a geographical reminder of Central Europe's layered identities.

For those preferring immersion through taste, a "Tastes of Slovakia" tour introduces regional specialities and local beer in family-run establishments. The more adventurous may hike to the castle rather than coach, earning those views through effort. We drift back downhill for an hour of independent exploring before returning to the ship, where an onboard tasting introduces Slovak wine varietals—Grüner Veltliner, Blaufränkisch—that rarely travel beyond these valleys.

Ship Night

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Budapest Arrival & Illuminations

Few arrivals in Europe rival this. As we sail into Budapest, the river becomes theatre: Parliament's neo-Gothic façade stretches 268 metres (880 feet) along the Pest bank, its golden dome echoing London's Westminster. Chain Bridge's stone lions guard the crossing where Buda's hills meet Pest's plains. Castle Hill glows honey-coloured above the water, a reminder that this city was once divided—Buda the royal seat, Pest the commercial heart—until unification in 1873 created the capital we see today.

We dock within walking distance of the riverfront promenade. This evening, a short orientation with your Tour Leader/local guide lends confidence for tomorrow's deeper exploration. Late-night flaneurs may wander to hear cafe chatter soften into jazz, or watch ruin bars—Budapest's quirky contribution to nightlife—come alive in the Jewish Quarter.

Ship Night

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Buda Castle & Thermal Traditions; Disembark

This morning we cross to Buda's hilly side for Fisherman's Bastion—seven fairy-tale turrets representing the seven Magyar tribes who founded Hungary in 896. Views sweep across to Pest's grand boulevards fanning outward from the river. Nearby, Matthias Church displays its signature Zsolnay ceramic roof tiles in diamond patterns of gold, green, and red. Our well-paced walking route ensures frequent pauses for photos and perspectives.

Later, optional entry to Széchenyi thermal baths offers a quintessentially Hungarian interlude. Built in 1913 in Neo-Baroque style, these outdoor pools maintain a constant 38°C (100°F) year-round. Locals play chess on floating boards; steam rises into cooler air; visitors discover why thermal bathing has been Budapest's social ritual since Roman times. After a relaxed disembarkation with porterage arranged, we follow the Danube Bend north to riverside towns touched by artists and history. Szentendre's ateliers and pastel façades feel like an open-air gallery; we thread through small squares and cobbled lanes before returning to Budapest proper.

Tonight's dinner is independent—Budapest's restaurant scene ranges from Michelin-starred modern Hungarian to plant-forward bistros and historic beer halls. Your guide provides tailored suggestions to match appetites and budgets.

Overnight in Budapest

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 11 Jewish Heritage & Market Hall

Budapest's Jewish Quarter tells layered stories of resilience, tragedy, and renewal. We visit Dohany Street Synagogue—Europe's largest, seating 3,000, built in Moorish Revival style with striped brickwork and twin onion domes. The interior dazzles with gilded arches, rose windows, and a massive organ. Behind the sanctuary, the Raoul Wallenberg Holocaust Memorial Park honors the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands during World War II. The weeping willow sculpture stands as quiet testament, each leaf engraved with a victim's name.

Architecture shifts dramatically as we step into a classic "ruin pub"—Budapest's innovative answer to urban decay. In the early 2000s, locals began transforming abandoned buildings into design-forward bars where mismatched furniture, street art, and whimsy reign. What began as underground counterculture now defines Budapest's identity. We pause for a drink to absorb the aesthetic: peeling plaster as intentional decor, Socialist-era relics repurposed as commentary.

After lunch, we visit the Great Market Hall, a three-level cathedral of commerce built in 1897. The ground floor bursts with paprika varieties, salami, cheeses, and seasonal produce. Upper levels house embroidered linens and folk crafts. By mid-afternoon, we pause for an exterior tour of the Hungarian Parliament Building—neo-Gothic splendor rivaling Westminster. The number 96 appears throughout: the dome's height in meters, commemorating Hungary's founding date of 896 AD. Nearby, Heroes' Square displays monuments to Magyar chieftains spanning a millennium. Late afternoon invites final independent exploration before tomorrow's return to Vienna.

Overnight in Budapest

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 12 Budapest, Hungary - Train to Vienna, Austria

Remember that whirlwind Ringstrasse tour from the ship? Today we hop on a train (2.5 hours) and return to Austria's imperial capital with time to breathe. A scenic morning train journey from Budapest (2.5 hours) carries us through landscapes we cruised past, now viewed from a different angle. Comfortable reserved seating and onboard cafe service make the journey itself a pleasure.

Arriving in Vienna by midday, we transfer to our hotel and settle in—this time with luggage to unpack, not just daypack tourism. Early afternoon brings our first proper Vienna experience: Schonbrunn Palace and its baroque gardens. While cruise passengers rush through state rooms, we have time to appreciate the scale. This was the summer residence where Maria Theresa raised 16 children, where Mozart performed for the Empress, where Napoleon slept during his occupation. We tour the Imperial apartments, then explore the gardens. Geometric parterres give way to wooded paths climbing toward the Gloriette pavilion, where Vienna spreads below.

Late afternoon and evening are yours to explore at your own pace. Your Tour Leader provides neighborhood orientation—which U-Bahn lines connect major sites, where to find the best Sacher-Torte, which museums stay open late. Perhaps visit the Museums Quartier, or head to the Naschmarkt for dinner—this mile-long market transitions from daytime produce stalls to evening restaurant terraces. Those seeking classical music can inquire about standing-room tickets at the State Opera or check for chamber concerts in historic venues.

Overnight in Vienna

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 13 Vienna: Klimt, Coffee & Farewells

This morning belongs to Gustav Klimt and the Belvedere. This baroque palace complex now houses Austria's national gallery, with the world's largest collection of Klimt paintings. "The Kiss" draws crowds with its shimmering gold leaf, but take time with "Judith," "Death and Life," and the landscapes he painted at Lake Attersee. The gallery also houses Egon Schiele's tortured figures and works spanning medieval altarpieces to contemporary installations. The palace gardens offer sculpted perfection with symmetrical fountains and sightlines framing the city below.

By late morning, we've earned a proper Viennese coffeehouse experience—the lingering ritual that UNESCO recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage. Your Tour Leader suggests options: gilded Belle Epoque grandeur at Cafe Central, literary history at Cafe Hawelka, or neighborhood authenticity at a Bezirk cafe where regulars claim the same seat daily. Order a Melange, claim a newspaper from the wooden rack, and watch the city flow past. The waiters wear tuxedos. You can sit for hours—it's expected.

The afternoon offers choices shaped by your interests: the Kunsthistorisches Museum for Bruegel and Vermeer, Otto Wagner's Secession Building with Klimt's Beethoven Frieze, or the Prater park beneath the giant Ferris wheel. Tonight's farewell dinner celebrates the miles we've shared—from abbeys to thermal springs, from river valleys to urban quarters where history layers like sediment. For those with energy, Vienna's evening offerings tempt: opera, palace concerts, or illuminated streets where gas lamps still flicker.

Overnight in Vienna

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Depart from Vienna

As you journey ends, the Danube's melodies tend to linger—Vienna's symphonies, Budapest's café jazz, and the Wachau's soft hush between vineyard rows.

Bon Voyage!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast