

UPPER DANUBE & IMPERIAL CAPITALS (Cruise & Land)

Munich • Danube River Cruise • Budapest

14 days

Created on: 10 Oct, 2025

Day 1 Arrive Munich

Welcome 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.

Overnight in Munich

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

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.

A tasting-lunch in the Viktualienmarkt introduces regional cheeses and rustic breads, with a nod to Bavaria's brewing traditions (non-alcoholic options always provided). The afternoon is yours: explore the English Garden's winding paths, sample a confectioner's classics, or sit with a coffee and watch everyday Munich flow past. Your guide shares suggestions tailored to mood and mobility; dinner is independent to encourage discovery in a city that's easy to love.

Overnight in Munich.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

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 portage 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.

Ship Night

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 centre. We pass the Opera House, where premieres once sparked riots; the Hofburg Palace, nerve centre 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.

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Alternatively, discover Vienna by bike, pedalling 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 and Middle Eastern flavours, or simply a coffeehouse ritual—Vienna's living rooms, where newspapers hang on wooden rods and a single melange can last an afternoon.

Your guide curates optional evening performance options, from intimate chamber concerts to grand opera, always optional and tailored to tastes.

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 portage 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. We visit Dohány Street Synagogue—Europe's largest, seating 3,000, built in Moorish Revival style with striped brickwork and twin onion domes. Behind it, the Raoul Wallenberg Holocaust Memorial Park honours the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands during World War II. Security permitting, we explore courtyards where Jewish life once thrived, was devastated, and now cautiously rebuilds.

Architecture shifts dramatically as we step into a classic "ruin pub"—Budapest's innovative answer to urban decay. These spaces occupy abandoned buildings and courtyards, transforming them into design-forward bars where mismatched furniture, street art, and whimsy reign. What began as underground counterculture in the early 2000s now defines Budapest's identity for a generation of travellers. After a break for lunch, we continue to 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.

The afternoon invites independent exploration: a Danube promenade walk at golden hour when Parliament glows against deepening blue, or claiming a café terrace to watch the city's rhythm.

Overnight in Budapest

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 12 Danube Bend & Parliament

This morning 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 where Serbian Orthodox churches and art galleries occupy 18th-century merchant houses. The town earned its reputation as an artists' colony in the early 20th century, and galleries still showcase ceramics, textiles, and paintings inspired by the Danube light.

Returning to Budapest by early afternoon, we pause for an exterior tour of the colossal Hungarian Parliament Building—neo-Gothic splendour on a scale that rivals London's Westminster. The number 96 appears throughout: the dome's height in metres, commemorating Hungary's founding date of 896 AD. Nearby, Heroes' Square anchors the end of Andrassy Avenue with monuments to Magyar chieftains and Hungarian kings spanning a millennium. The evening is yours for final independent explorations—perhaps a stroll along the illuminated Danube promenade, a last coffeehouse session, or an early night before tomorrow's countryside excursion.

Overnight in Budapest.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 13 Eger: Castles, Cellars & Bull's Blood

We venture northeast into Hungary's heartland, where the Bükk Mountains meet vineyard slopes. Eger earned its place in Hungarian legend during the 1552 siege, when a small garrison held Eger Castle against Sultan Suleiman's massive Ottoman army for a month—a David-and-Goliath victory that delayed Ottoman expansion into Central Europe. We tour the castle's ramparts and underground casemates, where the museum brings this epic resistance to life. Views from the battlements sweep across red-tiled rooftops to the surrounding wine country.

Descending into the "Valley of Beautiful Women" (Szepasszony-volgy), we enter a world of wine cellars carved into volcanic tuff. Eger produces Hungary's most famous red: Egri Bikaver, or "Bull's Blood"—a blend of indigenous grapes that earned its name from the 1552 siege legend, when defenders supposedly drank it for strength. We taste our way through several family cellars, where vintners pour generous samples alongside stories of terroir and tradition. A simple lunch of hearty Hungarian fare—perhaps toltott kaposzta (stuffed cabbage) or paprikas csirke (chicken paprikash)—accompanies the wine. The baroque town center invites a brief stroll past pastel facades and the twin-towered cathedral before we return to Budapest by late afternoon, with evening free for final independent wanderings or a last thermal bath session.

Overnight in Budapest.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Depart Budapest

As your 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