

## Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Germany: The Danube River

### Tour-Only Itinerary

Europe's grandest river sets an idyllic stage for rewarding walks, fine cuisine and enriching cultural exploration in four countries. Country Walkers has partnered with Emerald Waterways, among the finest river cruise providers, to bring you a Danube River cruise walking and hiking tour like no other. During this leisurely vacation, you'll embark a luxurious river ship and cruise from one spectacular walk to another, from the scenic hills overlooking Budapest to the lush vineyards of the Wachau Valley. Stick with your guides each day, or explore on your own as you wish. Stroll sylvan forests, stunning wine country and cultural capitals. Tour medieval hamlets and elegant Baroque treasures. Spend an afternoon blazing your own trails. No matter which you prefer, your river ship—and Country Walkers—are always nearby.



### Highlights

- Set out on scenic walks overlooking the beautiful Danube, exploring regional parks, medieval cities, and lush vineyards, often followed by lunch at local restaurants
- Indulge in the comforts of your deluxe floating accommodation for seven nights, savoring fine cuisine, a dip in the pool and panoramic views from the deck
- Follow footpaths and explore the cityscapes of three iconic European capitals and four fascinating countries
- Unpack once, then relax as your river ship delivers you to breathtaking footpaths and walking routes from the hills of Budapest to the forests of Bavaria

## On all Flex-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Opportunities to break away from the group and explore on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 20 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious multi-course meals—a majority are included.

## Activity Level

**On Shore:** This tour is one of our Flex-Guided tours, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4-5 miles per day. The walks start directly from the river or require a short shuttle by coach or public transportation. There are slight ascents and descents each day, including steps to castles and in towns. The terrain includes grassy paths, dirt roads, and cobbled streets, with walks passing through cities, villages, woods, and open farmland. The pace on this tour is leisurely, with an emphasis on historical towns and sites. As one of our Flex-Guided tours, some days offer options for self-exploration, cultural visits, or free time to relax on board the ship.

Onboard Ship: Our group of up to 20 Country Walkers guests will be part of a larger group on board our 182-passenger river cruise ship. Every day will include your choice of exclusive Country Walkers walks and opportunities to join others. While in port our ship may be docked adjacent to other ships. This means we may walk through other ships while boarding or disembarking, and some views may be obstructed while in port.

## DAY 1

### Join your *Hungary, Slovakia, Austria & Germany: The Danube River walking tour*

Guided walking tour of Budapest; 4-5 miles, easy. Traditional Hungarian Folk Show

Meet your group at 9:00 a.m. for a full-day walk. Please be dressed for walking.

Get acquainted with this jewel of Central Europe during a walking tour with a local guide. Amble through tree-lined parks and stately squares ringed by stunning villas and embassies, passing the famed Opera House and walking along the elegant Andrásy Avenue. After lunch, settle in to your deluxe river ship. Later, the captain lets loose the moorings so you can admire Budapest illuminated at night.

Often compared to Paris for its refinement and sophistication, Budapest is a walker's delight. Art Nouveau architectural treasures, an atmospheric Old Town, an array of markets brimming with fresh produce, and the towering splendor of Buda Hill converge into a rich and rewarding canvas. And it's all anchored by the lilting flow of the Danube and the graceful span of the famed Chain Bridge. It is impossible to avoid falling under its spell, which you will do this morning when you join Andrea, our local guide, for a full-day exploration.

You leave on foot from the hotel and stroll first to Kodály körönd Square, an open circus lined with magnificent painted buildings and revered statues of Hungarian heroes. As Andrea share stories of growing up in this vibrant city, you amble through tree-lined parks and stately squares ringed by stunning villas and embassies. You will also learn about the city's famed Szechenyi Baths, one of several in Budapest that is fed by underground thermal springs. Explore the lesser-known back streets of Opera Liberty Square and see the capital's famed Opera House where Gustave Mahler once conducted. Walk along the grandly elegant Andrásy Avenue, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and admire the Parliament

Building, a masterwork of Gothic Revival overlooking the river.

You pause for lunch at a local restaurant to enjoy traditional Hungarian dishes—perhaps a paprika-spiced goulash for which Hungary is known or chicken paprikash. A glass of Hungarian wine, made here since Roman times, or a tippale of locally produced pálinka fruit brandy might round out your culinary experience. By walk's end, your guides deliver you to your river ship, moored on the Danube. You settle in and gather for a festive Hungarian folklore show on board before dinner. As darkness settles over Budapest, our ship lets loose its moorings so that you may witness the panorama of this beautiful city illuminated at night.

Please note regarding WiFi on board the ship: Due to the nature of the ship movements, internet access is not always available. If stable internet access is critical to you, Country Walkers recommends that you purchase your own bundle before traveling overseas.

**Included Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** MS *Emerald Sky*/*Emerald Destiny*/*Emerald Dawn*

## DAY 2

### Castle and Gellért Hills

3 miles; moderate or Budapest City Tour, easy (by coach). Cruise Budapest to Bratislava

Early risers may join an energizing yoga class on deck, a great way to liven up your limbs for the day's activities. After breakfast, head out for an invigorating walk up Castle Hill (also fondly known as Buda Hill), crowned by the sprawling Buda Castle, the spires of Matthias Church, and the grand terrace of Fisherman's Bastion, named for the guild of fishermen who guarded the city from these heights during the Middle Ages. Descend Buda Hill on the south side, then make the climb part-way up to the Gellért Hill. This partly wooded hill held a strategic role in the city's past, as its citadel will attest. Today, much of it is protected parkland. Walk up to the Gellért statue, perched above a scenic waterfall. Then loop back to the ship along the Danube, passing the Várkert Bazár, the Castle Garden Bazaar, constructed to provide an elegant visual framework for the castle complex above it on the hill. Take in sweeping views of the Pest side of the city and the tranquil Danube from here and throughout this enriching morning walk.

Alternately, join a morning tour with other river ship travelers by coach. This panoramic overview features Buda Castle, the Chain Bridge, the Parliament Building, and much more. After lunch on board, set sail up

the Danube and grab a spot on the deck to relax as the scenic shores of the river unfold. Later, gather around the pool with your fellow Country Walkers travelers for a private reception. A Captain's Cocktail and welcome dinner follow. Enjoy live music this evening as you cruise to Bratislava.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** MS *Emerald Sky*/*Emerald Destiny*/*Emerald Dawn*

## DAY 3

### Bratislava and Devinska Kobyla

Walking tour of Bratislava; 1-2 miles, easy. Devinska Nova Ves to Devin Castle; 4 miles, easy to moderate

Arrive in Bratislava around breakfast-time this morning. A small jewel along the Danube's silvery thread, it is the only capital to border two other nations. The result is a fascinating convergence of Slovakian, Hungarian, and Austrian sensibilities. The city boasts a large pedestrian center, numerous inviting sidewalk cafés, and rich period architecture spanning medieval, Baroque, and Communist eras. The gleaming white Bratislava Castle watches over it all from its hillside perch. Shuttle into the city this morning to get acquainted with its charms during a walking tour. There'll be time afterward to follow your own interests before returning to the ship by foot.

After lunch, head out of the city to Devinska Nova Ves, home to a large Croatian community. Here, you set out on a hike through the nature reserve of Devinska Kobyla. Follow a well-maintained trail through wide meadows, sylvan forests, and lovely countryside, marveling at magnificent views of the Danube and Morava Rivers. On a clear day, you may even see the distant Alps. Along the way, you walk through a protected prehistoric seabed and abandoned sand pit. Sandberg, as this collection of marine and terrestrial fossils is known, serves as proof to scientists that this entire area was a sea 14-16 million years ago. You pause at the cozy Café Eden, where you may enjoy a refreshing glass of local currant wine or beer and a slice of traditional cake. Continue to Devin Castle, once a border fortress, military station, and trade center. Today, this cliff-top wonder hosts a museum whose artifacts date back to the 5th century BC.

Back on board, enjoy dinner and relax with a movie night under the stars.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** MS *Emerald Sky*/*Emerald Destiny*/*Emerald Dawn*



## DAY 4

### Vienna and Lainzer Tiergarten

Independent exploration of ViennaLainzer Tiergarten and Hermesvilla Villa; 4-5 miles, easy to moderate

This morning you moor in Vienna, the City of Strauss and world-class capital of classical music. You will have time later today to explore its elegant architecture and cultural treasures. But first, there's a lesser-known corner of the city worth discovering by foot. After a leisurely breakfast, you shuttle about 45 minutes out of Vienna for today's rewarding walk.

Your destination is the massive Lainzer Tiergarten, more than 6,000 acres of woodland, gardens and wildlife preserve dating to the time of Ferdinand I, who cordoned it off as a hunting ground for his family in 1561. Today, the Austrian government looks after it as a nature park, and it's still home to wild boar and deer. You begin your walk at the Nikolaitor gate and make your way through an enormous garden into the shade of forests and the lush green of meadows to Wiener Blick, an observation point looking down upon Vienna from 1,424 feet. Japanese Emperor Akihito and his wife Michiko visited here in 2002. More scenic pathways lead to the Rohrhaus restaurant, a charming eatery serving typical Viennese dishes. After lunch here, continue to the magnificent Hermesvilla, gifted to Empress Elizabeth (affectionately called "Sisi") by Emperor Franz Joseph I in an attempt to persuade her to decrease her traveling. Surrounded by dense woodland and swooping meadows, this stately palace was the castle of Sisi's dreams. During your visit, you learn how the Austrian royals lived.

Because we leave Vienna very late tonight, you have ample time to explore the glorious city on your own after your walk. Your explorations may lead you along the city's famed Ringstrasse, a showcase of the city's magnificent architecture, including the Vienna State Opera House, City Hall, and staggeringly beautiful museums that once served as official buildings and cultural repositories of the monarchy. You may also join an optional excursion (cost not included in the tour price) to a special Viennese Evening Concert, featuring music of Strauss and Mozart. The private event is available only to those on our ship, and transportation is included in the price. *Booking details and pricing for the Tastes of Vienna and Viennese Concert will be provided with your final documents.*

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** MS *Emerald Sky*/*Emerald Destiny*/*Emerald Dawn*

## DAY 5

### Dürnstein and Wachau Valley

Wachau Wine Valley; 4-6 miles, easy to moderate. Optional moderate to challenging hike to the ruins of the Dürnstein Castle or free time. Melk Abbey

The first thing you notice as you approach Dürnstein is the powder-blue bell tower rising above red roofs, all set against the green hills behind. This is one of the most enchanting villages on the Danube. Even its cliffside castle watching over the town, which once held Richard the Lionheart captive, seems torn from a storybook. After your morning arrival, choose between free time to stroll through town, or join your guides on a 30-minute moderate to challenging ascent to the ruins of the Dürnstein Castle. Afterwards, set out for one of the most scenic walks of the journey starting with a short ferry ride across the river.

You are in the heart of Austria's Wachau Valley, the celebrated wine-growing region considered by many to be the most beautiful stretch on the Danube. Lush vineyards and hillside orchards are set among ruined castles, churches and abbeys. Few places measure up to its beauty and thriving viniculture. Your walk today follows the Rosset Panoramic Trail. Stunning views greet you as you ascend high above the Danube and step into the most cohesive wine-growing area of the region. You'll delight in a long stroll through this string of hillside vineyards as you amble among stone terraces, orchards, and through meadows where shepherds once roamed with their flocks. Dreamy dry grasslands, shady oak and hornbeam woodlands, and stunning rock formations alternate with views of the free-flowing Danube and city of Dürnstein below. Along the way enjoy lunch at a charming restaurant, sitting under the shade of an apricot tree surrounded by the vineyards or, on a cooler day, by the crackling log fire. Sample traditional delicacies from regional farmers including locally aged cheese, farmer's bread, smoked meats, and dips; accompanied by a tasting of the region's full-bodied wines.

A private transfer delivers you to your ship in Melk, home to the famed stunning Baroque abbey overlooking the Danube. Here board your ship for some relaxation time or join a walk to the Benedictine Abbey of Melk, where you can admire one of Austria's finest works of architecture. This spectacular monastery perched on a hill overlooking the Danube is a vision in Italian Baroque finery, from lush frescoed ceilings to the gilded library, where thousands of medieval manuscripts are preserved.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** MS *Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn*

## DAY 6

### Passau and Bavarian Forest

Bavarian Forest Museum; 4-5 miles, easy to moderate

After an early and hearty breakfast, you arrive in Brandstatt where you transfer, approximately 1.5 hours, to the starting point of your walk in the Bavarian Forest; a low-mountain region of Germany near the borders of Austria and the Czech Republic. The day's walk follows pleasant trails shaded by the canopy overhead, leads into open clearings, and passes pristine lakes. You conclude your walk at the Bavarian Forest Museum Village, huddled on the lake known as Dreiburgensee. At this open-air museum, more than 100 buildings from the period between 1580 and 1850 have been reconstructed. There'll be time to stroll among the farmhouses, chapels, mills and the oldest schoolhouse in Germany (from 1666) and to watch as artisans practice their crafts. This fascinating repository, including an extensive collection of folkloric items, provides an intriguing glimpse of Bavaria's past.

During your visit, relax at a traditional Bavarian restaurant over lunch where the aromatic farmer's bread and fried pastries are sure to tempt you! After your museum visit, shuttle to Passau, the scenic "City of Three Rivers" at the confluence of the Danube, Inn, and Ilz for a guided walk among its splendid Gothic and Baroque charms. Along the way admire the Baroque St. Stephen's Cathedral, where Europe's largest church organ bellows out tunes with its 17,000 pipes. After, there is time to explore the cobbled streets and graceful arcades of Passau on your own. Perhaps hiking to the hilltop pilgrimage church of Pauliner Kloster Mariahilf via the "heavenly ladder" of 321 canopied steps. From the monastery grounds, enjoy sweeping views of Passau.

Or, you may wish to join the optional full-day (cost not included in the tour price) excursion to Salzburg where a walking tour and free time are offered. *Booking details and pricing will be provided with your final documents.*

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** MS *Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn*

## DAY 7



## Independent exploration of Regensburg

Walking tour of Regensburg; 1-2 miles, easy. Cruise from Regensburg to Nuremberg

Spend your final day on the Danube in Regensburg, home to the largest medieval Old Town north of the Alps. Almost 1,500 buildings are registered as historic sites and it boasts one of the prettiest cityscapes in Germany. Regensburg is best explored on foot and its narrow alleys are a treat to explore. A morning walking tour introduces you to its treasures, including the 12th-century stone bridge whose 16 arches span the Danube and the imposing St. Peter's Church, a Gothic masterwork. As you wander, your guide fills you in on the city's rich past.

There'll be time after your tour to browse the lovely squares and the inviting shops or embark on one or two of the following activities. After lunch on board, enjoy a scenic sail from the sun deck. This afternoon is yours to relax on deck, join an optional activity such as a cooking demonstration, or join your fellow travelers for afternoon tea.

Later, celebrate your final evening on board with live Bavarian music. Gather for a festive farewell dinner in the ship's dining room.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** MS *Emerald Sky*/*Emerald Destiny*/*Emerald Dawn*

## DAY 8

### ***Your Hungary, Slovakia, Austria & Germany: The Danube River tour concludes***

After breakfast, you disembark your ship in Nuremberg and your Danube River cruise walking and hiking tour concludes. Flight + Tour guests transfer to the Hotel K+K Central in Prague, the Czech Republic's remarkably preserved medieval capital.

Your tour concludes after breakfast aboard the Emerald Ship. Your guides or the ship's crew can assist with booking a taxi at your own expense to the airport. Important: Train or air departures from Nuremberg prior to 1:00 p.m. are not recommended.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included

### Tour Only

Deluxe river cruise ship (7 nights)	✓
21 on-tour meals: 7 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 7 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Emergency travel assistance hotline available 24/7	✓