

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

### Tour-Only Itinerary

Outside your stateroom, a new day breaks. Green slopes lead up to a hilltop castle, and Dürnstein's blue bell tower comes into view round a sweeping bend in the Danube. Fresh sights unfold daily, from Budapest's markets and museums to Vienna's parks and palaces. Today's agenda on this Danube River cruise walking tour? A morning stroll through cobble streets to the local Kaffee Konditorei for coffee and cream-laden pastries. Later, a panoramic walk with your guide through the Wachau Valley, lunch amidst terraced vineyards and apricot orchards, and an afternoon visit to Melk's Baroque monastery. Come sunset, you'll be back on board, sipping glasses of Grüner Veltliner and cruising towards Bavaria. But first, Austria calls. Slip into your walking shoes and step outside.



### Highlights

- 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.
- 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.
- Savor the flavors of Central Europe during regionally influenced meals on board complemented by

delicious Wachau Valley wines and beers brewed at local abbeys.

## On all 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.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



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



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4 to 5 miles per day. The walks start directly from the river or require a short shuttle by coach or ferry. 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.

**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 on organized ship activities. 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. Please note that river levels can result in changes to the itinerary including the use of land-based hotels.

## DAY 1

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

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

Meet your group at 9:00 a.m. at Hotel Prestige Budapest, for a full-day walk. Please be dressed for walking. Your luggage will be transported to the ship.

Should you arrive late, please plan to go directly to the ship, which is in port overnight and until midday on the following day. Please note that you cannot board before 12:30 p.m., as the ship is being prepared for you.

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. This delightful city is centered around the lilting flow of the Danube and the graceful span of the famed Andrassy. It is impossible to avoid falling under its spell, which you will do this morning when you join our local guide for a full day of exploration. The guide shares stories of growing up in this vibrant city as you amble through tree-lined parks and stately squares ringed by stunning villas and embassies. You will also learn about the city's famed Széchenyi Baths, one of several in Budapest fed by underground thermal springs. The lesser-known back streets of Liberty Square and the capital's famed Opera House, where Gustave Mahler once conducted beckon. Walk along the grandly elegant Andrassy 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 hearty Hungarian dishes—perhaps a traditional Hungarian paprika-spiced *goulash* or chicken *paprikash*. A glass of Hungarian wine, a popular drink here since Roman times, or a tippie of locally produced *pálinka* fruit brandy might round out your culinary experience. By walk's end, your guide delivers you to your river ship, moored on the Danube. You settle in and gather for a festive Hungarian folklore show on board before dinner.

Settle into your stateroom, unpack your gear, and relax as your deluxe river vessel delivers you to your next thrilling destination. Designed for efficiency and comfort, the “Star Ships” of Emerald Cruises elevate your active exploration of Europe to new heights. Easy access to enchanting riverside locations, relaxed cruising along scenic shores, fine cuisine, evening activities, and an onboard pool and wellness center converge to complement your active vacation. The ship features 72 suites and 20 staterooms, each equipped with a private bath including a shower, hairdryer, bathrobes, slippers, safe, complimentary WiFi, bottle of water, flat-screen TV and infotainment system, and a mini-bar (restocked daily).

**Included Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 2

### Castle and Gellért Hills

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

Ascend to the summit of Buda Hill this morning, taking in views of the sprawling castle, Matthias Church, and Fisherman's Bastion. Then, make your way up Gellért Hill, blanketed by woodland and crowned by a historical citadel. Return to the ship via a walk along the Castle Garden Bazaar. Or, you may choose to join a panoramic city tour by coach.

Early risers may take 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 during the Middle Ages. Descend Buda Hill on the south side, then make the climb part-way up 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, or the “Castle Garden Bazaar”, constructed to provide an elegant visual framework for the castle complex on the hill above. Take in sweeping views of the Pest side of the city and the tranquil Danube throughout your enriching morning walk.

Alternately, join a morning coach tour with other river ship travelers. This overview of the city features Buda Castle, the Andrassy, the Parliament Building, and much more. After lunch on board, set sail up the Danube. 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, Dinner, Lunch

## DAY 3

### Bratislava and Devínska Kobyla

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

A walking tour of Bratislava, Slovakia’s historic capital, reveals architecture spanning the ages. Then, shuttle to the nature reserve of Devínska Kobyla to follow hiking trails through a bucolic setting to the ancient fortification of Devín Castle.

Arrive in Bratislava around breakfast-time. 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. Bratislava’s large pedestrian center boasts numerous inviting sidewalk cafés and rich period architecture spanning medieval, Baroque, and Communist eras. The gleaming white Bratislava Castle watches over the city from its hillside perch. Shuttle into town, 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 Devínska Nova Ves, home to a large Croatian community. Here, you set out on a hike through the nature reserve of Devínska 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 sandpit. Sandberg, as this collection of marine and terrestrial fossils is known, serves as proof to scientists that this entire area was a seabed 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 Devín 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

## DAY 4

### Vienna and Lainzer Tiergarten. Independent exploration of Vienna

Lainzer Tiergarten and Hermesvilla Villa; 4-5 miles, easy to moderate

From your pier in Vienna, shuttle to Lainzer Tiergarten, 6,000 acres of protected woodlands, gardens, and wildlife. This park was established by Ferdinand I in 1561. Follow its pastoral pathways to the stately palace of Hermesvilla. After touring this palace, the former royal retreat of Empress Elizabeth, return to Vienna to explore on your own.

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 on 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 this nature park, which is 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 this scenic spot in 2002. Tranquil pathways lead to the Rohrhaus restaurant, a charming eatery serving Viennese dishes. After lunch here, continue to the magnificent Hermesvilla, a palace gifted to Empress Elizabeth (affectionately called "Sisi") by Emperor Franz Joseph I in an attempt to persuade her to cease her traveling ways.

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.

You may also choose to embark on an independent exploration of Vienna on your own today, or maybe join the ships' guests for a morning walking tour of Vienna or a relaxing 2.5 hour biking tour to Danube Island (both included in the tour price).

We leave Vienna very late tonight, which means you have ample time to explore the glorious city on your own after your walk. Your explorations may lead you along the famed Ringstrasse, a showcase of the city's magnificent architecture, including the Vienna State Opera House, City Hall, and staggeringly beautiful museums. These museums once served as official buildings and cultural repositories of the monarchy. To finish your day in Viennese style, you are invited to join an excursion for a special Viennese Evening Concert, featuring music of Strauss and Mozart. This private event is available only to those on our ship, and transportation is included.

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

## DAY 5

### Dürnstein and Wachau Valley

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

Arrive in the storybook village of Dürnstein, then walk among the lush terraced vineyards, meadows, and forests of the Wachau Valley, Austria's renowned wine-growing region. After lunch along the trail, admire the spectacular Baroque Melk Abbey, perched on a hill overlooking the Danube.

The first thing you notice as you approach Dürnstein is the powder-blue bell tower rising above red roofs, set against the green hills behind. Dürnstein is one of the most enchanting villages on the Danube. Even the cliffside castle that watches 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. Afterward, 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. Set among the region's castle ruins, churches, and abbeys are lush vineyards and hillside orchards. Few places measure up to the valley's beauty and thriving viniculture. Your walk today follows the *Rossatz Panoramic Trail*. Stunning views greet you as you ascend high above the Danube and step into the most dynamic wine-growing area of the region. You'll delight in a long stroll through 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.

Private transportation delivers you to Melk, home to a stunning Baroque abbey overlooking the Danube. Here, you 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, with thousands of preserved medieval manuscripts. Afterward, stroll down to the pier where your ship awaits for another delicious dinner and a relaxing evening on board.

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

## DAY 6

### Passau and Bavarian Forest

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

Dock in Engelhartszell today. Following a morning shuttle, your scenic walk along the sylvan, low-mountain trails of the Bavarian Forest concludes at the Bavarian Forest Museum Village, an astonishing collection of farmhouses, chapels, and mills spanning Germany's history. Alternately, sail towards Passau to explore on your own.

After a hearty breakfast, you arrive in Engelhartszell where you drive, approximately one hour, to the starting point of your walk in the Bavarian Forest. This low-mountain region of Germany sits near the



borders of Austria and the Czech Republic. The day's walk follows pleasant trails shaded by the canopy overhead and leads into open clearings past pristine lakes. You conclude your walk at the Bavarian Forest Museum Village, huddled on Dreiburgensee Lake. The open-air museum has more than 100 reconstructed buildings from the period between 1580 and 1850. There'll be time to stroll among the farmhouses, chapels, mills, and the oldest schoolhouse in Germany (from 1666) and to watch artisans as they practice their crafts. This fascinating repository, including an extensive collection of folkloric items, provides an intriguing glimpse of Bavaria's past.

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 buildings. Along the way, admire the Baroque St. Stephen's Cathedral, where Europe's largest church organ bellows tunes out through its 17,000 pipes. You'll have time to explore the cobbled streets and graceful arcades of Passau on your own. Perhaps you'll hike to the hilltop pilgrimage church of Pauliner Kloster Mariahilf via the "heavenly ladder" of 321 canopied steps. From the monastery grounds, take in sweeping views of Passau. After your tour, your group will rejoin the ship and set sail for Regensburg. Enjoy the Captain's Farewell Cocktail followed by the Captain's Gala Dinner later this evening.

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

## DAY 7

### Regensburg and Weltenburg Abbey

Walking tour of Regensburg; 1-2 miles, easy. Hike to Weltenburg Abbey; 3 miles, easy to moderate.

Begin your final day of your Danube River tour 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 discover. 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 in the afternoon to browse the town's lovely squares and inviting shops on your own, but there is still an exciting hike in the store. A quick shuttle takes you to Kelheim, where you continue your day on the panoramic walking trail along the Danube towards the world famous Weltenburg Abbey. Enjoy

lunch en route, followed by a private visit of the abbey, and then a beer-tasting in one of the oldest breweries in the world. Afterwards a smaller ship will sail you along the scenic bends of the Danube Gorge back to Kelheim. Your private shuttle awaits to whisk you back to Regensburg.

This afternoon is yours to further explore Regensburg, or just relax on deck, participate in an optional activity such as a cooking demonstration, or join your fellow travelers for afternoon tea.

Later, at a private Cocktail reception with your guides, you'll 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

## **DAY 8**

### **Regensburg, Germany. Disembark ship. Your Hungary, Slovakia, Austria & Germany: The Danube River tour concludes**

Your tour concludes after an included breakfast aboard the Emerald Ship. Your guides or the ship's crew can assist with booking a taxi at your own expense to the train station, where you can board a direct train to the Munich Airport or your next destination. (The ship is scheduled to arrive in port the day before.)

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included

### Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations (F+T) or deluxe river cruise ship (7 nights)	✓
21 on-tour meals: 7 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 7 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓