

TRAIN : The Danube Express

JOURNEY : The Transylvanian East

Journey Duration : Upto 10 days

Day to Day Itinerary

Day 1: Budapest

Arrivals day in Budapest, where you will be met and transferred to the five-star Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace. Enjoy a welcome reception dinner in the elegant surrounds of this art nouveau landmark where you can meet your fellow travellers on this highly anticipated journey.

Day 2: Budapest

Budapest is actually two cities separated by the Danube. The old city of Buda and the imposing Royal Palace, dominates the city with stunning views across the Danube to the commercial heart of Pest. The city tour includes the Royal Palace, St. Mathias Church and a panoramic view of the city from Gellert Hill. We will also see the Citadel, the Opera House, St Stephen's Cathedral, Heroes Square and the City Park.

The rest of the day is at leisure where you can stroll along the banks of the Danube, visit the historic Great Market Hall with its endless variety of delicious foods and wines or head to one of the city's famous thermal baths for a rejuvenating dip. Alternatively you can relax at the hotel and indulge in the hotel's luxurious spa with infinity-edge pool or make use of the state-of-the-art fitness centre. This evening we will enjoy a beautiful dinner cruise along the Danube.

Day 3: Budapest & Kecskemét

We enjoy a morning drinks reception in the impressive Royal Waiting Room at Budapest Nyugati station before boarding the Golden Eagle Danube Express. Settle in to your cabin and later enjoy lunch as the train heads, steam-hauled for the first 100km, to Lajosmizse for a spectacular 'Puszta' horse show. Afterwards there is free time to explore Kecskemét, a fascinating city at the geographical centre of Hungary. Back onboard, enjoy a pre-dinner drink in the Lounge Car as the train continues across the Great Hungarian Plain and dine as we head towards Transylvania.



LUXURY TRAINS
BY ODYSSEY

Day 4: Sighisoara & Brasov

Today we arrive in Sighisoara for a walking tour of the town's main highlights. A World Heritage site rumoured to be the birthplace of Dracula; it is one of the best-preserved fortified medieval towns in Europe. Burgher houses and ornate churches line its cobbled streets. We return onboard for lunch as we continue onto Brasov for a tour of Bran Castle. Popularly known as Dracula's Castle, this beautiful 14th century building is situated amongst stunning mountain scenery. Back onboard later this evening, the train twists and turns as it climbs over the Carpathian Mountains and threads its way through the dramatic landscape with crystal clear mountain streams. Dinner is served as our train continues onto Bulgaria.

Day 5: Veliko Turnovo & Kazanlak

We arrive after breakfast in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria's ancient capital. Nestled in a magnificent mountain setting, the stone houses seem perched, one above the other, on the steep banks of the Yantra River. A tour includes the superbly preserved medieval Tsarevets Hill and Castle and there is free time to wander through the ancient city. We take lunch onboard during the climb over the scenic Shipka Pass, site of a famous battle in 1878 when the combined forces of Russia and Bulgaria crushed the army of the Ottoman Empire. Kazanlak, in the Valley of the Roses, produces rose oil prized by perfumers worldwide. Here we visit the Shipka Memorial Church and a Thracian tomb with vaulted brickwork dating back to the 4th century BC. Relax in the Lounge Car before dinner is served as our train continues through the scenic landscape, reaching the Turkish border late in the evening.

Day 6: Istanbul

This morning we arrive into Istanbul where we stay two nights at the iconic five-star Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah. The hotel was built in 1892 to cater for guests taking the Orient Express and it was here that Agatha Christie wrote her famous book 'Murder on the Orient Express'. A fitting Grand Hotel to end our tour.

This fabled city that spans Asia and Europe deserves an extended stay so over the next two days we will see how old meets new; east meets west when you visit Istanbul's must-see historic sites. One of the most famous monuments in both the Turkish and Islamic worlds, the Sultan Ahmet Mosque (the Blue Mosque) is a superb creation in the classical Ottoman style and features six towering minarets and 260 windows illuminating its vast main chamber, which is decorated with more than 20,000 Iznik tiles.

Now a museum, Hagia Sophia was built in the 6th century by the Emperor Justinian, and was one of the largest basilicas in the Christian world. After the Ottoman conquest, it was converted to a mosque and is

today one of the most magnificent museums in the world. Take a moment to linger here to admire the fine Byzantine mosaics.

This afternoon is at leisure for all guests to explore this wonderful city, or relax at this luxurious hotel and spa.

Note: Continuing engineering works associated with the new Bosphorus tunnel could mean that the train terminates on the outskirts of Istanbul, where our buses will transport us to the city centre.

Day 7: Istanbul

Today we visit the crown jewel of the Ottoman Empire, Topkapi. This stunning palace is the largest and oldest in the world and was the primary residence of the Ottoman Sultans from 1465 to 1853. With its treasury and exotic buildings overlooking the Golden Horn, your visit to Topkapi promises to be a truly fascinating experience.

We also visit the Grand Bazaar which is one of the world's largest covered markets, with 58 streets and over 4,000 shops. In operation since the 14th century the bazaar is especially known for its jewelry, leather, pottery, spices and carpets. The Egyptian Market or Spice Bazaar will also be visited on the Golden Horn.

Day 8: Istanbul

Following breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for onward departures. There is also an option to extend your stay in Istanbul for additional nights to explore more of this fascinating city or continue onboard the Golden Eagle Danube Express through the Balkans and onto Venice.