

TRAIN : The Danube Express

JOURNEY : Grand Alpine Express

Eastbound Journey Duration : Upto 11 Days

Day 1 BUDAPEST

On arrival in Budapest, you will be met at the airport, train station or river ship landing stage and transferred to the Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace for a two-night stay.

Enjoy a welcome reception dinner in the elegant surrounds of this art nouveau landmark, with its panoramic views across the River Danube, where you can meet your fellow travelers on this highly-anticipated journey.

DAY 2 BUDAPEST

Budapest is an alliance of two cities separated by the River 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. Our city tour includes the Castle District, 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 center.

DAY 3 VIENNA

We enjoy a drinks reception at Budapest Nyugati station before boarding the Golden Eagle Danube Express for our morning departure. Settle in to your cabin and later enjoy lunch as the train heads to Vienna.

The stunning capital city of Austria enthalls visitors with its rich heritage. A seductive metropolis of elaborate palaces, renowned coffee houses, classical music and enchanting opera. Today's programme will include a horse-drawn carriage ride through the cobbled streets of the Old Town, the famous Schönbrunn Palace, or free time to

explore yourself.

This evening, we will enjoy a private concert at Palais Auersperg featuring the Vienna Supreme Orchestra.

DAY 4 SEMMERING PASS, LAKE ACHEN & INNSBRUCK

Today will be one of the real highlights of the journey as we depart from Vienna in the morning and travel across central Austria and into the Alps on an incredibly scenic morning.

Cameras at the ready as we climb over the Semmering Pass with its 16 viaducts and 15 tunnels, through the famous skiing village of Kitzbuhel to Jenbach, where after lunch we take a scenic drive to the picturesque Lake Achen (Achensee) for a cruise on the water.

From here we will travel by bus the short distance to Innsbruck, capital of Austria's western state of Tyrol, a city in the Alps that's long been a destination for winter sports. Innsbruck is also known for its Imperial and modern architecture. The Nordkette funicular, with its futuristic stations designed by architect Zaha Hadid, climbs up to 2,256m from the city centre for stunning bird eye views of the surrounding Alpine terrain.

DAY 5 ZÜRICH

Another fantastic morning on board the *Golden Eagle* Danube Express to simply sit back, relax and watch the scenery of the Vorarlberg unfold in front of your eyes as we pass through St. Anton before crossing through Liechtenstein and then into Switzerland where we run along the whole of the Lake of Zürich before arriving in the city itself.

The city of Zürich, a global centre for banking and finance, lies at the north end of Lake Zürich in northern Switzerland. The picturesque lanes of the central Altstadt (Old Town), on either side of the Limmat River, reflect its pre-medieval history. Waterfront promenades like the Limmatquai follow the river toward the 17th-century Rathaus (Town Hall). Whilst in the city we will enjoy a traditional Swiss fondue tasting.

DAY 6 ST GOTTHARD PASS & LAKE COMO

Today is one for the cameras! Upon leaving Zürich we pass along the shorelines of Lakes Zug and Lucerne before starting the very scenic climb to the St Gotthard Pass. Once through the old St Gotthard tunnel we descend through Lugano towards Lake Como in Italy, where we stop for lunch on the Lake.

Lake Como is surrounded by high mountains and dramatic cliffs, so it is quite different

from the other Italian lakes. A narrow road runs up its western coast towards Switzerland and sits up high above the water, with the towns dropping down beneath it. Renowned for its beautifully kept public gardens and historic villas, it is easy to see why so many celebrities love Lake Como. We enjoy boat cruise on Lake Como and visit the beautiful lakeside town of Bellagio.

DAY 7 VERONA & TRIESTE

This morning after running along the south shore of Lake Garda we arrive in Verona. Famous for being the setting of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', we enjoy an informative walking tour of Verona's famous sites, including the first century Roman Amphitheatre in Piazza Bra.

We lunch on board and later in the afternoon we arrive in Trieste, the Italian port for a short tour. We stop at the imposing Miramare Castle and also visit the vast Piazza Unita d'Italia, the main town square. Standing on a hill overlooking Trieste is the famous Church of San Giusto built around a medieval complex and dates back to the 13th century. We will go inside the church for a close-up view of the splendid Byzantine-style architecture enriched with precious mosaics.

DAY 8 LAKE BLEED & LJUBLJANA

This morning be awake early as our train climbs away from Trieste and heads over the border into Slovenia and continue climbing through the Julian Alps to Lake Bled which, with its island, church and castle is an incredibly picturesque alpine lake situated at the foothills of the Alps in north-western Slovenia.

From here we travel onto Ljubljana as we have lunch on board and discover a delightful combination of ancient architecture and a youthful culture. Our afternoon tour includes visits to Preseren Square, Three Bridges and Dragon Bridge.

DAY 9 POSTOJNA & VENICE

As the train stays overnight in Postojna, we include a private visit to Postojna Caves in the morning. We then head south towards Mestre where our train curves to the left onto the 3-mile causeway across the Venice Lagoon and into Venice Santa Lucia station located on the Grand Canal, arriving after lunch.

We say farewell to our train crew and transfer to a centrally located hotel in Venice for a two-night stay.

DAY 10 VENICE

Venice is a truly captivating and romantic city; its unrivaled beauty takes away the breath of first-time visitors and regulars alike. Today enjoy a walking tour around the highlights of this spectacular city. Walk through the winding lanes beside the Grand Canal to St. Mark's Square, which for 1,000 years was the heart of Venetian life. We also see St. Mark's Basilica and stroll through the Rialto Market. A trip to Venice would not be complete without a gondola ride along Venice's famous canals (we include a 30 minute gondola in the programme).

Alternatively enjoy the city at your own pace today. Perhaps stroll through the artists' district of Dorsoduro, stopping to take in the city's most breath-taking views from the Accademia Bridge.

In the evening we will enjoy a farewell reception dinner, giving you the opportunity to reflect on your journey through this beautifully scenic part of Europe.

DAY 11 VENICE

On the final morning following breakfast in the hotel you will be transferred to the airport for onward departures. There is also an option to extend your stay in Venice for additional nights to explore more of this fascinating city.

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