



The Magnificent Danube - Budapest to Nuremberg

Expanded Itinerary

May 11 Fly Detroit/Budapest, Hungary

Our overnight flight departs Detroit in early evening and, after a stop in Europe, we'll land in Budapest in early afternoon.

May 12 Budapest

After hotel check-in you'll probably want to explore the neighborhood around our hotel, which is on the Vaci Utca pedestrian shopping street. Within an easy walk are the Railway and Chain Bridges from Pest to Buda, the City market, the thermal baths and the riverfront.

May 13 Budapest (included breakfast)

Budapest is situated on both sides of the Danube River, with Buda (the right bank) to the west and Pest (the left bank) to the east. On our included full-day tour we'll see Heroes' Square, with its Millennial Column set off by equestrian statues of historic 9th century Magyar leaders who conquered this region. Then it's a stroll down Andrassy Avenue to Deak Ferencter, the heart of the city center. We'll stop for lunch (on your own) before we cross one of the Danube bridges into Buda and view the imposing Parliament Building which dominates Pest. In Buda we'll visit Castle Hill, where a massive castle complex with its protective ramparts has been designated a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site. Mostly destroyed during World War II, the Royal Palace has been lovingly restored, approximating its former splendor, and it now includes the Hungarian National Gallery. From the Fishermen's Bastion we'll enjoy spectacular views of the city; we'll also visit the 11th century Matthias Church, the coronation spot of several Hungarian monarchs. While we're up that high, notice the city's eight bridges which connect ancient Buda on one bank with Pest on the other bank.

If you haven't already, this evening you may want to walk across Chain Bridge (not far from our hotel) built in 1849 and a symbol of Budapest. Whether you're seeing the sights, shopping for handcrafted embroidery or Herend porcelain, or enjoying coffee and a rich cream cake in the renowned Gerbeaud Cafe, Budapest's cosmopolitan energy is exciting to experience.

May 14 Budapest (included breakfast, dinner)

Finish your sightseeing or shopping this morning before we transfer to our riverboat for embarkation. The ship sails this evening for Vienna.

May 15 Sailing to Vienna, Austria (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Enjoy the rolling landscape of the Danube River Valley today as we cruise along the 58-mile border between Hungary and Slovakia. Hungary is on our left as we cruise upriver and Slovakia is on our right. Relax on the Sky Deck as the red rooftops of the Slovakian capital of Bratislava come into view. Late this afternoon we arrive in Vienna, Austria's capital. Known as the "City of Music", it inspired the creative genius of Mozart, Beethoven, and Strauss.

Optional Vienna Excursion: Attend a Royal Waltz Concert for an unforgettable evening of music in an elegant hall.

May 16 Vienna (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Once the center of the mighty Habsburg Empire, Austria's magical capital is a showcase of gilded architecture. Here we find the lavish Hofburg Imperial Palace complex with its Vienna Boys Choir and dazzling Lipizzaner stallions, the neo-renaissance Vienna Opera House, and awe-inspiring St. Stephen's Cathedral.

Today's included excursion is a morning city tour of the Habsburg Empire's landmarks. We'll see the Imperial Palace complex (the winter residence of the Imperial Family), the Vienna Opera House and St. Stephen's Cathedral.

This afternoon you may explore the city on your own. Some suggestions: take a tram to visit Austria's Prater amusement park or one of the many museums nearby; borrow a bike from the ship to explore the streets and squares of Vienna or ride along the banks of the Danube. You might take a stroll along the Ringstrasse, linger over coffee and Sachertorte or Apfelstrudel at a Viennese cafe, spend some time at St. Stephen's Cathedral, or view the artwork and exquisite gardens of the Belvedere Gallery. This evening there will be live entertainment on board.

Optional Excursion: Schonbrunn Palace guided tour. The Palace was the main summer residence of the Habsburg rulers; the 1,441-room Rococo palace is one of the most important architectural, cultural, and historic monuments in the country.

May 17 Durnstein and Melk, Austria (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Durnstein, known for its magnificent blue baroque church built in the 1700s, is situated in the heart of the Wachau wine region. The main street of this small town—population 1,000—is lined with 16th century residences and charming cobblestone streets.

There is a choice of shore excursions this morning. You may take a walking tour of Durnstein and hear the tale of King Richard the Lionheart who was imprisoned in the castle above the village during the Crusades. Or, choose to stretch your legs and take a hike up to the castle ruins with the ship's Adventure Host for a spectacular view of the village, Danube, and the Wachau Valley below.

During lunchtime we sail the picturesque Wachau Valley and arrive in Melk in the early afternoon. As we approach Melk we'll see its magnificent 11th century Benedictine Abbey, one of Europe's largest monasteries. Strategically situated on a steep cliff-side perch, Melk Abbey's earliest incarnation was as a Roman border post. Later, it served as a 10th century Babenberg fortress. It became a Benedictine monastery in 1089 and earned a distinguished reputation for medieval scholarship. Its library includes more than 70,000 books and 2,000 manuscripts, chiefly from the 9th through the 15th centuries. The abbey houses a remarkable cherub-filled library of thousands of books and manuscripts, and 365 windows—one for every day of the year. The interior of the abbey's church is a kaleidoscope of red, orange, and gold, with a magnificent carved pulpit and shimmering ceiling frescoes. The view from the terrace of the Abbey over the Danube and surrounding countryside is breathtaking!

Later today we'll enjoy the flavors of the Wachau Valley during a wine tasting on board.

May 18 Passau, Germany (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Passau, located where the Inn, Ilz, and Danube Rivers converge, is a maze of narrow cobblestone streets lined with beautiful patrician houses. On an included walking tour we'll see the impressive Bishop's Residenz and the 14th century Town Hall as well as the Dom, the twin-towered St.

Stephen's Cathedral. This magnificent 17th century cathedral contains one of the world's largest pipe organs. The cathedral's original Gothic plan is still evident through the 17th century reconstruction it received in the Grand Baroque style. One of its most striking features is the octagonal dome that hovers over the intersection of the nave, where the congregation sits, and the transept, which runs perpendicular to it.

Optional Excursions: Salzburg, the city of Mozart, or the picturesque Bohemian town of Cesky Krumlov. Each excursion is a full-day tour and you will meet the ship back in Passau afterward, with no time to tour Passau.

May 19 Regensburg, Germany (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Dating back to the time of the Celts around 500 BC, Regensburg is one of Germany's best preserved medieval cities. Established during the Holy Roman Empire, Regensburg has at least 1,300 listed buildings of "historic interest".

Architectural highlights of our included walking tour are the Altes Rathaus (Old Town Hall) built in the 13th century, and Porta Pretoria, the gates to an ancient Roman fort built in 179 AD. Wander through the city's lanes and alleys to discover the many mansions with high towers. Wealthy families built these towers to emphasize their status during the Middle Ages, and many remain today. Walk across the 12th century Stone Bridge, the oldest of its kind in Germany.

Afternoon Optional Excursion: Benedictine Monastery in Weltenburg. The Monastery is a baroque confection of stucco, polished marble, gilt, and painted ceilings. Germany's oldest monastery was founded at the beginning of the 7th century. Surprisingly, the compound also houses the oldest monastery brewery in the world.

Alternatively, spend a free afternoon exploring Regensburg on foot, or bike through its charming streets. This evening, enjoy live entertainment after dinner as we cruise toward Roth.

May 20 Roth and Nuremberg, Germany (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

This morning as we cruise, you might choose to attend an onboard lecture about the Main-Danube Canal, which links the two rivers to enable navigation between the North and Black Seas. After docking, you may choose one of three included excursions: a walking tour of Roth will show us its half-timbered houses, market square and the 1535 AD hunting lodge Schloss Ratibor. Or, take a coach into Nuremberg where you'll see the city's medieval architecture, gilded fountain, and Kaiserburg Castle. Nuremberg was devastated by bombs during World War II; later much of the city was rebuilt and its Old World charm was painstakingly restored. Today the city thrives as a bustling industrial and commercial center. A third option is a guided tour of the historic Nuremberg Rally Grounds used by the Third Reich. A beer tasting will be held this evening on board.

May 21 Fly Frankfurt/Detroit (included breakfast)

After breakfast we will disembark the ship and board a coach for the transfer to the Frankfurt airport. Our flight home leaves around noon, and we'll be back in Detroit in early evening.