
17-DAY TREASURES OF THE ROMANTIC RHINE AND BLUE DANUBE RIVERS

Trip Code: TWASXLIT21

Duration: 18

Destination: Netherlands, Germany, France, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Romania & Bulgaria

Travel Dates: 2022 / 2023

DAY 1 AMSTERDAM- MS Gérard Schmitter (D)

You will be welcomed at the Amsterdam airport and transferred to the cruise ship.

Passengers are welcome to board the ship in Amsterdam at 6:00 p.m. After comfortably settling into your cabins, we will introduce our crew at a welcome cocktail.

DAY 2 AMSTERDAM - NIJMEGEN - KREFELD- MS Gérard Schmitter (B,L,D)

This morning we depart from Nijmegen by coach in the company of your hostess towards the Kröller Müller Museum. It is located in the Hoge Veluwe National park, one of the country's largest national parks extending over 5000 ha. At the beginning of the 20th century, two wealthy Dutchmen bought back and reforested what used to be agricultural land and turned it into this beautiful park.

Your hostess will deliver the entry tickets upon arrival for you to visit the museum freely. The museum was named after Helene Kröller-Müller who collected 11,500 art pieces with the help of an advisor, H.P. Bremmer. Her husband Anton Kröller was the director of the Müller & Co. company, his wealth largely contributing to the extension of Helen's collection. She longed for of a "Museum House", a dream which came true in 1938.

In this museum you will find an important collection of canvases by Van Gogh as well as his contemporaries, including Picasso, Seurat, Monet to name a few. In the museum grounds, you will discover an incredible collection of modern sculptures. This part of the museum was open in 1961 by Director A.H. Hammacher whose dream was to display these works outside, due to the exceptional location of the museum.

Return on board by coach.

DAY 3 KREFELD - COLOGNE – KOENIGSWINTER- MS Gérard Schmitter (B,L,D)

The morning will be spent cruising. The afternoon is free to do as you please or take a tour of the old sections of Cologne.

DAY 4 KOENIGSWINTER – RÜDESHEIM- MS Gérard Schmitter (B,L,D)

Our ship will cruise during the morning. On arrival in Rüdesheim, we depart on a tour and commentary of the Rüdesheim vineyards by mini train, during which you will discover the famous vineyards already cultivated in the Roman period. During this tour, the history of winemaking in the region will be explained and you can enjoy a breathtaking view of Rüdesheim and the Rhine. The train will then stop right before the historical Bassenheimer Hof cellar, a seigneurial residence from the 16th century, where we will indulge in a wine-tasting. A winemaker from the Störzel family cellar will guide you through a tasting of three different wines, from the driest to the sweetest, all the while telling you about the history of the cellar and winemaking in the Rüdesheim region, complete with local stories. Afterwards, our visit will continue to the Museum of Mechanical Musical Instruments located 100m away from the cellar in an old building from the 15th century. The "Siegfrieds Mechanisches Musikkabinett" is the first German museum dedicated to self-playing musical instruments, which holds an impressive collection of no less than 350 mechanical musical instruments dating back to the 18th century to the 20th, all spread out on more than 4000 ft². This is a vast collection, dating back three centuries, of fascinating musical instruments that function like computers, ranging from tiny, delicate music boxes to an enormous orchestrion. Tools and machines to produce organ pipes, cardboard sheet music, rolls of sheet music and perforated disks are also on display in the collection. Whatever their age, museum visitors always take great pleasure in discovering this special music, the techniques from the past and how these instruments work.

After visiting the Museum, you will have some free time to stroll through the streets of Rüdesheim ambling down the famous Drosselgasse, before making your own way back to the boat.

DAY 5 RÜDESHEIM – MANNHEIM- MS Gérard Schmitter (B,L,D)

Our ship will cruise during the morning. On arrival we leave from Mannheim by coach and head towards Heidelberg. This cosmopolitan, friendly, and vibrant city is made up of 15 distinct neighbourhoods and is particularly attractive to families, students, business people, and researchers. Its high quality of life comes through to visitors, who feel genuinely at home here. We will begin with a visit to the outside of Heidelberg Castle, where you will be able to see the Renaissance ruins and parts of its restoration. The castle has a history that is almost as old as the city itself. From either the Great Terrace or the gardens, enjoy an amazing view over Heidelberg, the Neckar River, and the valley. Do not miss seeing the Heidelberg Tun. Built in 1751 by Prince Elector Karl Theodor, it housed the wine paid as taxes by the wine growers in the region. Legend has it that the permanently intoxicated court jester who guarded the cask, Perkeo, died after mistakenly drinking a simple glass of water. You can also enjoy a stroll through the castle gardens, once considered a masterpiece of their time. Built upon several terraces, they were made up of many flower beds, mazes, sculptures, heated greenhouse with orange trees, large ponds, waterfalls, and a man-made grotto. We will then head for the Neckarmünzplatz, on the banks of the Neckar River, and continue with a guided tour of the old city. We will pass by the Church of the Holy Spirit, the most famous church in Heidelberg, whose steeple dominates the town. And then you can take advantage of some free time to wander through the streets and shops before returning to the coach. Return on board.

Tonight, is our gala dinner and evening.

DAY 6 STRASBOURG- LINZ -MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

Enjoy breakfast on board before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. We then transfer by coach to Linz (travel time of 6

hours), stopping for lunch along the way at a local restaurant.

Passengers are welcome to board our ship at 4:00 p.m. After comfortably settling into your cabins, we will introduce our crew at a welcome cocktail before dinner. Our ship will cruise towards Melk through the night.

DAY 7 MELK - VIENNA (AUSTRIA)- MS Vivaldi (B,L D)

This morning we depart by coach towards Melk Abbey. We will meet up with our guides in the inner courtyard to start our visit. The Abbey overlooking the Danube was first built as the Babenberg's fortified castle. It was founded in the 11th century and the current buildings of the Benedictine abbey date from the Baroque era and were designed by architect Jakob Prandtauer.

Melk Abbey now houses a museum in which you will discover several rooms that have been enhanced thanks to architecture, sound, and light as well as the use of various types of media. Computer animations will tell you a story about the construction of the edifices. You will also visit the marble hall, the world-famous library, and the bedchambers where several illustrious visitors have slept. Return on board by coach.

Our ship will cruise to Vienna.

This evening depart by coach in the company of our host/hostess towards Vienna's Kursalon where the concert will take place. Famous waltz melodies will take you back to the era of Franz Joseph and Sisi. The first half of the concert will be devoted to Mozart compositions, and the second half to Strauss. The orchestra consists of eight to thirteen musicians, two singers and two dancers who will all make sure you have a good time. During intermission, a free drink will be served (orange juice or sparkling Austrian wine). Return on board by coach.

DAY 8 VIENNA - BRATISLAVA (SLOVAKIA)- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

This morning we depart for a guided visit of Schönbrunn Palace and with its magnificent park, the former summer residence of the Emperor of Austria and his family.

You will begin the tour by taking the famous Ring to reach Schoenbrunn Palace. The "Ring" was one of the personal projects of Emperor Franz Joseph. In 1857, he decided to take down the ramparts that enclosed the city centre and had this boulevard built lined with fine buildings. Along the Ring you will admire this architectural showcase of the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy, including: The State Opera; the Hofburg Palace; the Natural History Museum; the City Hall; the Burgtheater and more.

When you arrive at Schoenbrunn Palace, you will be guided through the numerous rooms of the Hapsburgs' summer residence, which bear witness to the splendour of the Court at the time of Maria Theresa. You will also have some time to wander through the Palace gardens.

You will then return to the coach, which will take you to the city centre to enjoy some free time in the area around St Stephen's Cathedral. You will then return to the coach, which will take you back to the boat, via the Ring.

After our visits, we will begin to cruise to Bratislava. On arrival we leave for a guided tour of Bratislava, dominated to the north by the slopes of the southern tip of the Little Carpathians and bathed by the Danube. Its charm is found in its old town, with its splendid Baroque palaces, churches, and pleasant squares.

Bratislava, before becoming the capital of independent Slovakia in 1993 was first the capital of Hungary from 1536 to 1784 under the name of Presburg. It then belonged to Czechoslovakia before becoming the capital of the "Slovak Socialist Republic" as part of Czechoslovakia between 1969 and 1992.

Along with your guides, you will begin the visit with a panoramic tour of the city which will take you to Bratislava Castle (outsides), which dates from 1811, after the previous castle burned down, and from where you will enjoy a breathtaking view over the Danube and the city. The main historical monuments are in the Old Town and the coach will drop you off at its entrance to continue the visit on foot. You will enter through Michael's Gate, which is the only gate still surviving from the Middle-Ages. Then you will head for the central square surrounded by elegant buildings, some in Art Nouveau style, and dominated by the old Bratislava Town Hall. The tour continues with the Primate's Palace (outsides) completed in 1781 for Archbishop Jozef Bathányi.

As you stroll through the streets, you may come across some of the amusing statues that are dotted around the capital. After the guided tour, you will have some free time and will return to the boat on foot or by coach depending on sailing times

We will return on board and cruise to Budapest.

DAY 9 BUDAPEST (HUNGARY)- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

On arrival to Budapest we set off in the company of our guides, we will depart for a panoramic tour of Budapest, the Pearl of the Danube. First, we will head for the hills of Buda by crossing the Elizabeth Bridge and we will go up to the Castle quarter, from where we will enjoy a fantastic panoramic view of the city. We will walk round the castle quarter and on to the Fisherman's Bastion, built in neo-Roman style in 1902 for the simple pleasure of offering a panoramic view over the city and the Danube. Behind the Bastion, we will find Matthias Church which notably was the venue for the coronation of Emperor Franz Joseph and his wife "Sissi". Our coach will then take us down to the plains of Pest. There, we will visit Heroes' Square whose central monument depicting Prince Arpad and the chieftains of seven Magyar tribes was built for the millennium of Hungary. We will pass by the famous Szechenyi thermal baths, the zoo - a true piece of architecture - Vajdahunyad Castle and more. We will walk through the famous Andrássy Avenue and pass by St. Stephen's Basilica whose construction began in 1851 and was only completed in 1905. We will walk along the river and see the famous Parliament building overlooking the Danube with its white silhouette in the Byzantine and neo-Gothic styles. Return on board.

The afternoon is free to do as you please.

In the evening, join us on an evening of traditional entertainment in Budapest. Transfer by coach in the company of your guides to a theatre downtown for a traditional Hungarian show. This one-and-a-half-hour show will take you across all the regions of Hungary through its folklore and Gypsy dance and music. After this show, the traditions and folklore of this beautiful country will no longer hold any secrets! Return on board by coach.

DAY 10 BUDAPEST - KALOCSA (HUNGARY) - MOHACS (HUNGARY) - BEZDAN (SERBIA) (B,L,D)

On arrival in Kalocsa we depart to visit the Puszta, the Pannonian steppe grasslands. We depart by coach in the

company of your host/hostess in the direction of Kiskunsag Park, at the heart of the Puszta.

The Puszta, also known as the Great Plain of Hungary, is a large, flat grassland that was regarded as the Wild West of Hungary in the 19th century with cowboys watching over colossal cattle herds grazing on pasture. The Puszta has been listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO since 1999.

Riding aboard a charabanc - a traditional horse-drawn carriage with wooden benches - you will be amazed by the wonderful landscapes and unusual fauna of the Puszta. In a small part of the Hungarian Steppe, you will get to observe Racka sheep with their spiral-shaped horns, Mangalica pigs with their curly coats and Hungarian Grey cattle with their long, curved horns, as well as rare species of birds. In the course of your visit, you'll get the chance to attend a traditional equestrian show while tasting* "palinka" (plum eau-de-vie) and some "pogacs" (small savory buns) as well as mineral water, sheltered from the sun under a thatched roof. The csikós, the mounted horse-herdsmen of Hungary dressed in traditional blue attire, will invite you to take part in their "games of skill and ability". Return on board by coach

After we return on board, we continue towards Mohacs and Novi Sad. Our ship will cruise through the night.

DAY 11 NOVI SAD (SERBIA) - BELGRAD (SERBIA)- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

This morning after breakfast we set off by coach to visit the town of Novi Sad. Capital of the autonomous region of Vojvodina, Novi Sad is also the second largest town in Serbia, going by the size of its population. The town has a long and troubled history since it was under the rule of Celts, Romans, Franks, Barbarians and Turks until it became part of the Habsburg empire. It was known as "Petrovaradin" in the past, and the name Novi Sad (meaning 'new plant') only came into use in 1748. The history of the town was further troubled during the 20th century when after the First World War, the Balkan territories were in turn united and separated under different names, until in 2006 when the town finally became part of an independent Serbia.

We will visit the city centre on foot. The Austro-Hungarian old town, with its baroque buildings, grew up around the ancient fortifications. We will get the chance to visit the Episcopal Church as well as an orthodox church before we continue up the main street to Freedom Square where we will find the Town Hall, dating from 1895. The coach will be waiting for you near Freedom square to finish the visit with a panoramic tour up the main boulevards leading to the boat.

Our coach will continue to the little village of Sremski Karlovci where we'll visit the Cathedral of St Nicholas, built in typical baroque style in 1758, and the first ever secondary school of Serbia dating from the end of the 18th century which has a library housing around 18,000 books. We will take time to admire one of the most well-known of the town's monuments, the Four Lions Fountain, built in 1799 to celebrate the town's first ever waterworks. Return on board in Novi Sad.

Our ship will begin to cruise to Belgrade. The afternoon will be spent cruising, before arriving in the Serbian capital in the evening.

In the evening, join us on an evening of traditional entertainment in Belgrade. Transfer by coach in the company of your guides for the traditional evening in Belgrade which will take place in a Hotel. Enjoy one hour of enchanting traditional dances and songs that will take you through the various regions of Serbia. After the show, our coach will take us to the Skadarlija district, a bohemian quarter nicknamed the "Serbian Montmartre", for a snack of some local specialties in a traditional café surrounded by musicians.

Return on board by coach.

DAY 12 BELGRAD - DONJI MILANOVAC (SERBIA)- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

This morning we depart by coach to visit Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, which is also one of the oldest cities in Europe with a history stretching back some 7000 years. It is located at the confluence of the Sava and Danube Rivers, close to the Morava Corridor which links the countries of the Danube to the Aegean Sea. The town has a fortress sitting atop one of the highest hills in Belgrade as well as a commercial centre and port. We'll start off our visit with a guided panoramic tour of the city, during which you will have the opportunity to admire Belgrade's National Theatre and National Museum, the Royal Palace which currently houses the City Assembly of Belgrade, the Ancient Royal Palace and more. We will stop to visit the Orthodox Temple of St Sava. The construction of this church began in 1939 but is still a work in progress, given that the Second World War followed by Tito's dictatorship put a halt to it. Construction only started again in 2001 and is funded exclusively by charitable donations. We'll head back to the city centre by coach for some free time before our guides take us to Kalemegdan Park, the largest and most beautiful park in the city where the Belgrade Fortress is located, overlooking the confluence of the Danube and Sava. Return to the ship by coach.

The afternoon will be spent cruising to Donji Milanovac.

DAY 13 DONJI MILANOVAC - THE IRON GATES- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

The entire day will be spent cruising on the Danube. Our ship will pass through the Iron Gates, the gorge on the Danube that forms part of the boundary between Serbia and Romania. It was called "The Cauldrons" by ancient sailors, since the water, held tightly between two steep cliffs, seems to be boiling. On the Serbian bank of the river, we will catch a glimpse of the Tabula Traiana - a marble plaque honouring the Roman Road that once linked Rome to the province of Dacia.

Tonight, is our gala evening and dinner.

DAY 14 RUSE (BULGARIA)- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

Today we depart by coach to visit the town of Ruse, one of the largest ports in Bulgaria. It was founded by the Romans under the orders of Emperor Augustus. During the Ottoman Empire, it was the most important town of the empire located on the Danube.

In the company of our guide, we will discover the fascinating architectural heritage of the town, a rich mixture of Bulgarian and Romanian cultures. We'll get the chance to admire the Dohodno Zdanie (the Old Theatre), built in 1902 by architects Raul Brank, Georg Lang and Frank Scholz; the Monument of Liberty, a masterpiece by Florentine architect and sculptor Arnaldo Zocchi; the Catholic Church with its multi-colored stained-glass windows and so on. We will end our visit with a tasting of a local pastry and wine. We will have some free time to go shopping before our coaches take us back to the ship.

Enjoy dinner and an evening of traditional entertainment on board.

DAY 15 RUSE - GIURGIU (ROMANIA) - OLTENITA (ROMANIA)- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

Our ship will cruise to Giurgiu. This morning we depart for a full day excursion in the company of our guides to discover the Romanian capital of Bucharest. According to legend, the city was founded by a shepherd called Bucur, which means 'joy' in Romanian. Bucharest has suffered greatly from its communist past but after the year 2000, due to the advent of significant economic growth, the city has modernized.

We will start off our visit with a panoramic tour of the city giving you an overview of the various monuments of the capital. We will head to the restaurant for a typical Romanian lunch with traditional music and folklore dancing to entertain us. After lunch, we will head again by coach to Bucharest's Eco-museum, a genuine village in the city where we will learn about the habitats of the different regions of Romania and their handcrafts. We will conclude our visit with a photo stop at the Palace of Parliament, a gigantic neo-classical style marble construction designed by Ceausescu before visiting the Orthodox Church.

We will leave Bucharest by coach and head back to the ship. We will return on board in Olenita.

DAY 16 TULCEA (ROMANIA)- MS Vivaldi (B,L,D)

On arrival in Tulcea we depart for a tour the Danube Delta to enjoy the flora and fauna, see the multiple natural and artificial canals, and walk away with impressions that will last a lifetime.

We will begin with a 500m walk (approx.) and then board a tourist pleasure boat to begin our visit of the Danube Delta and board small local boats (with a capacity of 50 passengers) to discover the flora and fauna of this biosphere in the company of our guides.

The site today is one of 300 international biosphere reserves designated by UNESCO to try to measure the impact of Man on the environment. The human presence on the North and South banks of the Delta has been in evidence since Neolithic times, when the Delta was still only a gulf in the Black Sea. The Danube Delta is home to more than 1200 different varieties of plants, 300 species of birds and 45 different freshwater fish varieties in its many lakes and marshes. During our visit, we may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of some white pelicans, dwarf cormorants or glossy ibis or other species.

We will return on board in Tulcea. Tonight, enjoy a traditional folklore evening.

DAY 17 TULCEA (B)

Enjoy one last buffet breakfast on board before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. You will be transferred to the airport. End of our services.

DAY

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