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## 14-DAY SPLENDOURS OF THE BLUE DANUBE AND ELBE RIVER CRUISE

**Trip Code:** TWTBUCPGB21

**Duration:** 15

**Destination:** Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Germany & Czech Republic

**Travel Dates:** 2022 / 2023

### DAY 1 BUDAPEST - MS Symphonie (D)

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

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

In the evening, we set off for 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 2 BUDAPEST – BRATISLAVA - MS Symphonie (B,L,D)

This morning after breakfast we depart in the company of our guides, 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 will be spent cruising to Bratislava.

### DAY 3 BRATISLAVA – VIENNA - MS Symphonie (B,L,D)

We arrive in Bratislava in the early morning. On arrival we depart for a guided tour of Bratislava. The charm of the Slovakian capital lies in its old city: 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 Bathýány.

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.

Our ship will cruise to Vienna.

In the evening you will discover Vienna by night with a panoramic coach tour. This two-thousand-year-old city is a true open-air museum. Vienna embodies Romanticism through its powerful architecture and numerous monuments. We will take the famous Ring which encircles historic Vienna, on the right bank of the Danube. Our coach will go past a multitude of buildings that were erected under the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy: The Opera, the City Hall, the Hofburg and many official buildings. We will stop at Schwarzenbergplatz with a monument in honor of Johann Strauss. Then, a walk around Albertina quarter will allow us to admire Hofburg Palace, the winter residence of the Habsburgs which today houses the Sisi Museum, as well as the Augustinian Church where Franz Joseph and Sisi's wedding was conducted. Return to the boat by coach.

#### **DAY 4                      VIENNA - MS Symphonie (B,L,D)**

This morning after breakfast we depart to visit Schönbrunn Palace, former summer residence of the imperial family, and tour of part of Vienna.

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 center 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.

This afternoon we tour Hofburg Palace, an imperial march through history, art, and luxury. We depart by coach

with your local guide to discover the Hofburg, which is also known for having been for 600 years the "Winter Residency" of the Habsburgs. Over the course of their reign, they turned this small 13th century fortress into a colossal and beautiful palace. The different buildings today mostly house museums and the gardens, dotted with monuments, have become the Volksgarten and the Burggarten.

We will climb up the Emperor's Staircase to reach the Sisi Museum which extends over six rooms that have been equipped to solely center on Elisabeth's private life. Here numerous personal items that once belonged to Elisabeth are used to help illustrate the true personality of the frequently misunderstood Empress. The sensitively designed exhibits are inspired by the monarch's poetry and illustrate how the once light-hearted young girl, Sisi, became a restless, unapproachable, and melancholic woman. The more than 300 items on display in the museum include parasols, boxes and gloves which once belonged to Elisabeth, along with a reconstruction of the evening dress worn by 16 year old Sisi in 1854 before she left her home in Munich, and a replica of a section of her imperial railway carriage.

We will then move on to Imperial Apartments and access the 19 official and private rooms that once belonged to Franz Joseph and Elisabeth. The Imperial Apartments reflect the monarchic splendour. You will get to see the Emperor's Audience Chamber, his Conference Room, and his bedroom before peering through Elizabeth's apartments with her salons, lavatory and bathroom and her dressing and exercise room where Elizabeth spent most of her time. Return to the boat

Tonight, enjoy a concert of Viennese music. 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. We will begin to cruise during the night.

## **DAY 5                      MELK – PASSAU- MS Symphonie (B,L,D)**

Today we cruise along the most beautiful section of the Wachau Valley before arriving in Melk. On arrival we visit Dürnstein, the fortified village where Richard the Lionheart was once held prisoner.

Depart by coach in the company of your hostess for the village of Dürnstein. You will drive through the Austrian Wachau dotted with charming villages and ruins of medieval castles all the way to Dürnstein. This town is well-known for its castle where legend has it that Richard the Lionheart was held prisoner by Duke Leopold IV after their falling out during the third crusade and later rescued by his faithful confidant, Blondel.

You will have some free time in the village to taste the Austrian wine or the local specialty, apricot liqueur. You will be able to stroll through the streets of this medieval town and visit the Baroque abbey.

In the afternoon, we visit the Melk Abbey. Depart by coach in company of your host/hostess 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.

In the evening, we will begin to cruise to Passau. Tonight, is our gala evening.

## **DAY 6                      PASSAU- PRAGUE MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

Enjoy one last buffet breakfast on board before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. You will be transferred by bus as we drive 220kms to Prague. We take our time and stop at small towns and villages and have lunch along the way at a local restaurant.

On arrive in Prague, passengers are welcome to board our ship at 6:00 p.m. We will introduce our new crew at a welcome cocktail.

## **DAY 7                      PRAGUE - MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

This morning after breakfast we spend the morning touring Prague's Old Town. Located at the very heart of Central Europe, Prague was once the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Holy Roman Empire and Czechoslovakia. The “City of a Hundred Spires” was miraculously spared during World War II and its architecture, mixing Pre-Romanesque, Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque, Rococo, Art Nouveau and Cubist styles, gives Prague its unique flavour. The city was deeply marked by the 1968 Prague Spring—the short-lived season of the “socialism with a human face” aiming at the renovation of institutions in a democratic way—which strongly inspired Czechoslovak culture from the 60s to the 80s. Prague’s historic city centre was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1992.

We will have a guided walk in the old city starting with the Old Town Square—the busiest area in Prague—and its beautiful archways. We’ll see Jan Hus Memorial, built in honour of this church reformer who was burned at the stake for heresy in 1415, as well as the Old Town Hall and its fascinating astronomical clock featuring the hourly show of figures of the Apostles striking the time, the Gothic Church of Our Lady before Týn (exteriors only), the Ungelt and the merchants’ yard. We’ll also get to admire the Municipal House, the city's foremost Art Nouveau building, and one of the finest in Europe, as well as the Powder Gate, one of the original 13 entrances to Prague's Old Town.

This afternoon we will leave on a guided tour of the Hradcany, or Castle District, in Prague. The city centre is divided into five areas, spanning both banks of the Vltava River, and Prague Castle is the most prominent tourist attraction. Set on a hill, it affords visitors fine views over the whole city.

Founded in 880 AD, it is the largest medieval castle in Europe and was once the seat of the Kings of Bohemia. Today, the President of the Czech Republic rules from here. The Prague Castle complex covers over 7 hectares (18 acres) and has three large courtyards. Destructive wars and fires (and the subsequent renovations), along with differing political forces, have resulted in an intriguing mix of palaces, churches, great halls, state apartments, a monastery, viewing towers, fortifications, museums, and art galleries. You will get to discover, among other sights, St. Vitus Cathedral, the Old Royal Palace with its Vladislav Hall, St. George's Basilica and the famous Golden Lane. We will return on board after our visit.

a collection of a half dozen palaces, several churches and monasteries, and gardens overlooking the city. We will see Saint Vitus Cathedral, the most recognizable landmark in the city, the Prague Castle, and the Golden Lane.

Prague is the capital and largest city of the Czech Republic as well as the fourteenth largest city in the European Union. It is in the north-west of the country on the Vltava River, and is home to about 1.26 million people.

We will return on board after our visit.

## **DAY 8 PRAGUE – LITOMERICE - MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

Today we spend the morning cruising. Once we arrive, we will leave from our ship for a guided tour of Litomerice. This royal city on the confluence of the Elbe and Ohre is one of the most beautiful in the Czech Republic. The extensive historical centre has dozens of streets and squares. The colourful Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance buildings bordered to a great extent by well-preserved Gothic fortifications will delight you. Karel Hynek Mácha, the greatest Czech romantic poet, also succumbed to the charm of Litomerice. A delightful glass at the nearby Velké Zernoseky winery will certainly make your walk through the city more pleasant.

Allow yourself to be enchanted by the rare architecture of the houses on the squares: the Saxon Renaissance town hall, the "Kalich" House with a roof terrace where the rich townsfolk used to meet over a glass of wine, and the "Cerný orel" House, which has preserved its original appearance with wonderful sgraffito work. There are also countless important churches such as the Gothic Church of All Saints with its Renaissance broach roofs, the Church of the Annunciation of the Lady Mary representing the pinnacle of work by the Italian architect Antonio Octavio Broggio and the Baroque Cathedral of St. Stephen, which was built by Domenico Orsi. Our visit will be followed by a beer tasting. After our tour, we will return to the ship in Roudnice and continue our cruise towards Litomerice.

Evening of entertainment on board.

## **DAY 9 LITOMERICE - BAD SCHANDAU – DRESDEN - MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

Today, we spend the morning cruising to Bad Schandau. On arrival we will leave by coach for an excursion to the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, a range straddling the border between the state of Saxony in South-eastern Germany and the North Bohemian region of the Czech Republic. The most striking characteristic of this deeply dissected rocky mountain range is the extraordinary variety of terrain within the small area. The river Elbe runs through the mountain range in a steep and narrow valley, and the hills are dotted with châteaux such as the Königstein Fortress and Hohnstein Castle. We will visit the Königstein Fortress, dating back beyond the 13th century. Because the fortress was regarded as unconquerable, the Saxon monarchs retreated to it during times of crisis and deposited many works of art from the famous Zwinger here. In the 20th century, it was used as a prison, a prisoner of war camp, and after the wars, a re-education camp for delinquent youths who did not fit the image of a socialist society. The location offers magnificent views of the Elbe River and the surrounding mountain ranges.

We will return on board and continue our cruise, reaching Dresden in the evening.

## **DAY 10 DRESDEN – MEISSEN - MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

The morning, we depart for a guided tour of the city known as the "Florence of the Elbe". Dresden offers a wide variety of attractions, including magnificent promenades on the bank of the Elbe, fascinating museums, monuments, and charming details. Our visit will begin with a panoramic tour, where you will get an overview of the most important must-see sights: the Altmarkt Square, German Hygiene Museum (exteriors only), Baroque Quarter, Transparent Factory (VW) and soccer stadium.

We will then visit the historical old city on foot, passing in front of the Zwinger, Semper Opera House, cathedral, Royal Palace, Brühl Terrace, and Neumarkt Square.

After some free time on your own, we will return to the ship and cruise towards Meissen.

On arrival we leave from our ship for a guided tour of Meissen. The city is famous for its porcelain, based on extensive local deposits of both china and potter's clay. Meissen is sometimes known as the "cradle of Saxony". Its historical district is located mostly around the market at the foot of the castle hill and contains many Renaissance-style buildings, as well as two Late-Gothic buildings: the town hall and the Frauenkirche. The Frauenkirche tower hosts the world's first porcelain carillon, manufactured in 1929 on the town's 1000-year jubilee.

After touring the city, we will visit the porcelain factory. The intricacy of the figures and sculptures and the perfection of the hand-painted patterns are the things that underscore this magnificent form of art. In the museum, you will take an enticing journey through more than 300 years of porcelain history. After some free time on your own, we will return to the ship in Dresden.

Tonight's entertainment will be provided by the crew.

## **DAY 11                      MEISSEN – WITTENBERG - MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

The ship will leave early in the morning for Wittenberg, reaching it in the early afternoon. Upon arrival, we leave on a guided tour of the city. You will discover the city centre and its noble Renaissance-style houses. We will also visit Luther's house, a former Augustinian monastery which is now the Reformation Museum and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We will leave from our ship for a guided tour of Lutherstadt Wittenberg. Lutherstadt Wittenberg is the hometown of Dr. Martin Luther, the Great Reformer, and the city is affectionately known as the "Cradle of the Reformation". You will discover the city center and its noble Renaissance-style houses. Everywhere you turn, there is a spot associated with Martin Luther's life, and various sites throughout the city were added to the UNESCO world heritage list in 1996. A stream runs along the main street, partially underground. Halfway along, the street opens out into an attractive square, or Markt, with a statue of Luther and Philip Melancthon, his collaborator.



The Castle Church is the famous church where he nailed his 95 Theses to the door. Luther gave some of his sermons in this church and now is buried just under the pulpit. The church was severely damaged twice during wars in the centuries following the Reformation, but it was rebuilt each time. We will also visit Luther's house. Part of the Augustinian monastery in which Luther lived, first as a monk and later as owner with his wife and family, is preserved and considered to be the world's premier museum dedicated to Luther, including a permanent exhibition about the time of the Reformation. At the end of the afternoon, we will return to the ship by coach.

Enjoy an evening of onboard entertainment. Our ship will cruise through the night.

## **DAY 12                      BURG - GENTHIN – BERLIN - MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

Our ship will leave for Burg early in the morning. Once we arrive, we depart by coach for Magdeburg where we will meet up with local guides. Magdeburg was once the cradle of the German nation. The first Germanic Holy Roman Emperor, Otto the Great, had an imposing cathedral built here and made the town into an archbishopric. Magdeburg became a centre for Western Christianity and the High Court of judicial power in the Middle Ages.

We will begin our tour with the Magdeburg Cathedral, home to the tomb of Emperor Otto I the Great. Magdeburg is a Hanseatic city located midway on the Elbe River and the Roman Roads—in the heart of Germany rich with a multi-faceted history. Its other sacred monuments include the Magdalenskapelle, St. Petrikirche, Wallonerkirche, Monastery of Our Lady and St. John's Church. We will continue our panoramic tour by seeing the city's main monuments, including the citadel. Once located in East Germany, the city has retained its grey, square, Soviet-style buildings which are embellished today with molding and decorations. We will visit the marketplace to see the magnificent replica of the Magdeburger Reiter, as well as the town hall and its bronze door. You will finish up the tour with some free time on your own. Magdeburg, situated midway on the Elbe River and also on the historic Roman Roads.

Once we return on board in Genthin, we will continue towards Berlin. Enjoy an evening of entertainment on board.

## **DAY 13                      BERLIN - MS Elbe Princesse II (B,L,D)**

This morning we depart for a guided tour of Berlin once the iconic representation of a world divided in two. We will leave by coach from Berlin-Spandau with a local guide who will help us discover the history, monuments, and fascinating facets of this particularly historic city. We will travel up the 17th of June Street to see the famous Victory Column, the Bismarck Memorial, the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag building with its steel and glass cupola. We will then arrive at the renowned Unter den Linden and head to Museum Island—a complex of five internationally significant museums that occupy the island's northern part—including the Pergamon Museum, and the Alte Nationalgalerie. Beyond Museum Island are the modern Alexanderplatz and its famous Fernsehturm (Berlin TV Tower). You will be able to go through Checkpoint Charlie, the symbol of the Cold War and passage between the American and Soviet zones during this time. This might seem like just a glance, but you will be able to discover the monuments that make Berlin one of the most cultural cities in Europe.

The afternoon will be dedicated to an optional visit of the gardens at the Sanssouci Palace, the former residence of Frederick the Great. We will leave by coach with local guides who will help you discover the history of

Former Prussia and its illustrious monarchs. In Potsdam, the visit will begin with a walk through the gardens at the Sanssouci Palace. You will walk the flower-lined pathways and staircases leading through the terraced garden to the residence of Frederick the Great, built between 1745 and 1747. The personal tastes of the king had such an influence on the design and the decoration of the palace that its style is often referred to as "Frederician Rococo".

We will get back on the coach and drive around the Sanssouci Park to admire its fabulous structures before heading to Cecilienhof Palace. Cecilienhof Palace was built from 1914 to 1917 for Crown Prince William and his wife, Cecilie von Mecklenburg-Schwerin, as a gift from Emperor Wilhelm II. After the end of the war in Europe, the Potsdam Conference - attended by Stalin, Churchill, and Truman - was held in the palace from July 17 - August 2, 1945. Here, Churchill and Truman also defined the terms of surrender together for Japan.

After our visit, we will head back to downtown Potsdam for some free time in the Dutch district before returning to the ship by coach.

Tonight, will be our gala dinner and evening. We will remain in port overnight.

## **DAY 14                      BERLIN (B)**

Enjoy one last buffet breakfast on board before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. We transfer you to the Berlin airport for your onward flight. End of our services.

## **DAY**

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