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## **13-DAY PEARL OF THE ADRIATIC AND SECRETS OF THE DANUBE RIVER CRUISE**

**Trip Code:** TWTDHDBUC21

**Duration:** 14

**Destination:** Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria & Germany

**Travel Dates:** 2022 / 2023

### **DAY 1 DUBROVNIK - MV La Belle de l'Adriatique (D)**

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. The evening is free to do as you please.

### **DAY 2 DUBROVNIK - MV La Belle de l'Adriatique (B,L,D)**

Today we depart for a guided tour of Dubrovnik. The former Republic of Ragusa is famous for its medieval walls and its wide variety of historical architecture.

We will visit the Dominican Friary, its lovely Gothic cloister, and its extraordinary museum of religious art - with several valuable paintings, including a triptych by Nikola Bozidarevic depicting Dubrovnik before the great earthquake of 1667. We will then see the Rector's Palace, once the seat of the government and now a museum housing furniture, portraits, coats of arms, paintings, coins, and the original keys to the city gates. We will also visit the cathedral which keeps in its core gold and silver reliquaries as well as paintings from Titian's workshop, before moving on to the Onofrio Fountains and Sponza Palace, a superb Gothic-Renaissance structure.

In the afternoon, feel free to sight see in the city on your own.

We suggest a stroll around the ramparts.

### **DAY 3 MLJET – KORCULA - MV La Belle de l'Adriatique (B,L,D)**

This morning we depart for a guided tour to Mljet, one of the most beautiful islands in the Adriatic. Mljet is the most charming island in all the Mediterranean Sea. It has kept a wild appearance with 72% of its surface being covered in forest, and wine and olive oil are still being traditionally made to this day. One island legend claim that Odysseus spent seven years here on his way home from the Trojan War. After a stroll down a hiking trail along with your guide, local boats will take you to the Benedictine monastery from the 12th century located in the middle of Veliko Jezero, a Salt Lake in the national park of Mljet. The monastery sits proudly among the Aleppo pines, surrounded by sandy beaches, afterward we return to the boat.

This afternoon we depart on a guided tour of Korcula. Korcula is Croatia's greenest island - with its Mediterranean vegetation, emerald and sapphire sea, sandy shoreline, and a wealth of underwater sea life. We will visit the island on foot starting with the Cathedral Sveti Marko, the most important building in the old town. The cathedral's facade is decorated with beautiful fluted reliefs and statues, while the main door is framed by statues of Adam and Eve and figures of lions. We will also enjoy the exhibits in the town museum, a treasure of cultural and commercial milestones from prehistoric times to the present.

Tonight's dinner will be followed by traditional sword dancing.

#### **DAY 4 KORCULA – SIBENIK- MV La Belle de l'Adriatique (B,L,D)**

Today our ship will cruise during the morning.

On arrival we depart for a guided tour of Sibenik, the oldest Slavic city on the coast, and the Krka Falls. Sibenik is in the central part of the Croatian Adriatic Coast, in the picturesque and indented bay where the Krka River enters the sea. Discover this gorgeous city while strolling down its 15th- and 16th-century streets. We will also visit the St. James' Cathedral, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, and built between 1433 and 1477 entirely out of stone. Afterwards, we will leave for Krka Falls by coach. Skradinski buk is one of the most attractive parts of Krka National Park. It is a large and clear natural pool with high waterfalls at one end and smaller cascades at the other. A trail will get you as close as you can to the falls. We will return to Sibenik by coach.

Enjoy an evening of onboard entertainment.

#### **DAY 5 SIBENIK - TROGIR – SPLIT - MV La Belle de l'Adriatique (B,L,D)**

This morning we depart for a guided tour of Trogir. Long considered one of the best spots to visit on the Dalmatian coast, Trogir is a treasure trove of delights. Trogir, as large as the island on which it was erected, is a real beauty with its intricate alleyways, stairways, and vaulted passages. Its treasures of Roman and Renaissance architecture have led the town to be listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. You will be able to discover the magnificent Cathedral of St. Lawrence with its surprising interior. Long considered one of the best spots to visit on the Dalmatian coast, Trogir will delight you. You will also visit the Town Hall and the old town, still brimming with fully preserved monuments from the 13th to the 15th centuries.

In the morning we set off for a guided tour of Split, a young city where life is bursting around Diocletian's Palace. The city of Split with its population of 140, 000 is the largest in Dalmatia as well as being an active university and artistic centre. You will visit Diocletian's Palace, built by a simple soldier who became the Emperor. Diocletian chose to end his days in this palace after he abdicated in 305 AD. Our guided tour of the city will take you along Trumbiceva Obala (Riva), a vast promenade along the southern façade of the Palace. You will get to see the well-preserved roman city wall, the Cathedral built on the site of the mausoleum towards the end of the 7th century, as well as Diocletian's Palace's peristyle, the Temple of Jupiter and the Cathedral of Saint Domnius.

#### **DAY 6 SPLIT - HVAR – VIS - MV La Belle de l'Adriatique (B,L,D)**

This morning we depart for a guided tour of Hvar, nicknamed the Croatian Saint-Tropez.

Hvar is known as the queen of the Croatian Dalmatian islands and is lined with vast fields of lavender, ancient olive trees and vineyards. You will tour the Franciscan monastery and its exceptional collection of old Venetian paintings, lacework, coins and rare books, and the Renaissance-style exterior of Saint Stephen Cathedral combined with its baroque-style interior.

Tonight's our special gala dinner and evening.

## **DAY 7 KOTOR – DUBROVNIK- MV La Belle de l'Adriatique (B,L,D)**

Our ship will cruise during the morning. On arrival in Kotor we explore the old town on foot.

It is estimated that Kotor owns 70 % of the historic and cultural monuments of Montenegro. That is why Kotor is classed as a world heritage site by UNESCO. Founded by the Romans on the Adriatic coast in Montenegro, Kotor developed into an important commercial and artistic centre in the Middle Ages. You will visit the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, which was seriously damaged and rebuilt after the earthquake of 1667 - the reason its two towers are so different from one another. Then you will visit the maritime museum in the Grgurina Palace and its collection showing the development of past maritime and cultural activities.

## **DAY 8 DUBROVNIK- BUDAPEST- MS Symphonie (B,D)**

Enjoy one last buffet breakfast on board before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. We transfer you to the airport for your flight to Budapest.

On arrival in Budapest you will be met at the airport and transferred to the cruise ship. 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 you will enjoy 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 9 BUDAPEST – BRATISLAVA - MS Symphonie (B,L,D)**

This morning we depart for a panoramic sightseeing tour of Budapest, once two distinct cities that united only in 1873. 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 10                      BRATISLAVA – VIENNA - MS Symphonie (B,L,D)**

On arrival in Bratislava we depart for a guided tour of the city. 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 Bathyány.

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. On arrival 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 11                      VIENNA - MS Symphonie (B,L,D)**

This morning we 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 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 splendor 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.

This afternoon, we tour the 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 centre 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 you will enjoy a concert of Viennese music. Departure 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 12                      MELK – PASSAU- MS Symphonie (B,L,D)**

Today we will 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. 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. Originally a Baroque-style palace built between 1702 and 1736, it is now a Benedictine monastery that hosts a prestigious coed school with more than 900 students. 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 13** **PASSAU (B)**

Enjoy one last buffet breakfast on board before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. End of our services.

## **DAY**

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