

Balkan Extended

from Budapest to Split 12N/13D
Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia

Day 1: Welcome to Budapest

Budapest

Upon arrival in **Budapest**, *check into* your hotel and enjoy the sights of this vibrant city, known for its **bridges and thermal baths**. Explore Budapest's beautiful architecture and youthful atmosphere. Use your free time to rest and prepare for the upcoming European adventure.

Overnight: *Budapest*

Day 2: Danube's Grand Landmarks

Budapest

To make the most of your Hungarian part of the tour, you will set off on a walking and driving tour around Budapest. With a unique, youthful atmosphere, a world-class classical music scene as well as a pulsating nightlife and, last but not least, an exceptionally rich offering of natural thermal baths, Budapest is **one of Europe's most delightful and enjoyable cities**. Due to its scenic setting and its architecture, it is nicknamed the "Paris of the East".

Experience the rich tapestry of Budapest as you journey through its **UNESCO World Heritage sites**, where each landmark tells a story of cultural and architectural grandeur.

Feel the pulse of the city as you traverse the majestic Chain Bridge, connecting you to **the heart of Budapest**. Wander through the Castle District, from where you can admire the elegance of Elisabeth Bridge and the grandeur of the Hungarian Parliament Building. At Heroes' Square, witness the regal statues that honour Hungary's heroes. Continue toward the city centre and marvel at the impressive architecture of the grand Hungarian Synagogue, **the largest one in Europe**. Each site invites you to feel **the city's vibrant spirit** and explore its storied past in a way that truly resonates.

Indulge in some free time for personal exploration or a leisurely lunch, then prepare for an enjoyable experience that awaits.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Evening Danube Cruise: *Immerse yourself in the magic of Budapest with a one-hour evening cruise along the Danube. Enjoy a welcome glass of wine as you glide past the illuminated Royal Palace, Parliament, and stunning bridges. Experience the city's architectural beauty and vibrant atmosphere from a captivating new perspective.*

Optional: You can optionally upgrade to a delightful **two-and-a-half-hour cruise featuring a traditional Hungarian dinner**, live music, and exceptional service. Enjoy a longer evening on the water as you savour local cuisine while taking in the breathtaking night views of Budapest.

Overnight: *Budapest*

Day 3: Scenic Routes of Vojvodina

Budapest - Novi Sad - Belgrade

Check-out and bid farewell to Hungary as you cross the border to Serbia. Today, you will explore the most interesting sights of Vojvodina, a province in the north of Serbia.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Wines of Pannonian Plain: After a leisurely drive through the Pannonian Plain, you will arrive at **the Zvonko Bogdan Winery**, an architectural gem crafted in the elegant secessionist style. Relish the stunning artworks adorning the winery, and let your senses come alive as you **sample three distinctive wines** from the Palić vineyard. This enchanting escape into the heart of Vojvodina promises more than mere wine tasting - it's a journey into tranquillity and artistry.

Your next stop will be **Novi Sad**, the vibrant capital of Vojvodina and the 2021 European Capital of Culture. This **multicultural gem** is renowned for hosting **EXIT**, Southeast Europe's largest music festival. Wander through its lively pedestrian zone, where historic landmarks like the City Hall and the old city centre blend with cultural sites, including the former home of Albert Einstein's wife Mileva and the city's historic synagogue. Explore the impressive **Petrovaradin Fortress**, often called "Danube's Gibraltar", where you can enjoy stunning views of the Danube River and the cityscape, perfect for capturing unforgettable moments.

After a short drive, you will reach **Belgrade**, the capital of Serbia and *check-in* to your hotel. In the evening, we recommend a leisurely stroll through one of Belgrade's oldest quarters to **Skadarlija**, the city's bohemian heart. This charming 19th century cobbled street is lined with "**kafanas**" where you can enjoy delicious local specialties and traditional music.

Overnight: Belgrade

Day 4: Vibrant Capital of Serbia

Belgrade

Your journey through Belgrade begins with a panoramic tour highlighting its architectural diversity and history, from **bold Brutalism** to the emerging **Belgrade Waterfront**, a symbol of modern transformation. As we cross **Branko's Bridge**, you'll get a glimpse of New Belgrade's distinctive skyline, featuring landmarks like the Palace of Serbia (SIV), Belgrade Arena, and the modern **Ada Bridge**. Continuing, we pass through **the Dedinje district**, home to the Residence of Miloš the Great, embassies, grand villas, and **the Museum of Yugoslavia**, reflecting the country's complex history.

Our route then takes us past the **monument of Stefan Nemanja**, a key figure in Serbian history, and through **Slavija Square** before arriving at one of Belgrade's most iconic landmarks - the **Temple of Saint Sava**. We'll stop for a visit and devote time to this impressive sanctuary, the symbol of the city and the fourth-largest Orthodox temple in the world, adorned with stunning mosaics.

From there, we continue along King Alexander Boulevard, passing notable sites such as the National Assembly, before reaching the city's bustling pedestrian zone, where the walking part of our tour starts.

Strolling through Belgrade's vibrant streets, we arrive at **Republic Square** and continue down **Knez Mihailova Street**, the city's lively cultural and shopping centre.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Serbian Daily Routine: Your guide will take you to a hidden gem close to the main district, **the city's oldest tavern** intriguingly known as "?" (Question Mark), where you'll try Serbia's most cherished traditional drinks: **coffee and rakija**. Engage in lively conversation with your guide, who will share fascinating stories about local customs and the UNESCO-protected art of making "**šljivovica**", Serbia's renowned plum brandy.

Refreshed and immersed in the city's spirit, we will walk through **the historic Belgrade Fortress and Kalemegdan Park**, where you'll be amazed by the stunning views of the mighty **Sava** and **Danube rivers**. This vantage point offers an impressive contrast in Belgrade, where the old meets the modern and the land merges with the flowing water.

In the evening, take a moment to unwind before diving into Belgrade's vibrant energy. We recommend exploring some of the many local and international restaurants the city has to offer, where you can savour a variety of flavours and **experience the rich culinary scene**.

Overnight: *Belgrade*

Day 5: Three Balkan Capitals

Belgrade - Zagreb - Otočec Castle - Ljubljana

After *check-out* in Belgrade, the tour continues to the Croatian capital of **Zagreb**, Croatia's vibrant capital nestled in the heart of the continent.

During your Zagreb sightseeing tour, you will explore the city's main attractions. Visit **Kaptol**, the medieval part of Zagreb, and the Franciscan monastery with its 13th century Church of Saint Francis. Walk around **Dolac**, Zagreb's best-known farmers' market, and admire the baroque architecture of the 18th century Church of Saint Mary. The tour will conclude in the heart of Zagreb, at **Ban Josip Jelačić's monument**, placed in the square named after him.

After the lunch break, you will be driven to **Slovenia**, the world's first green destination. On your way, you will make a stop at **Otočec Castle**. A jewel rising above the misty Krka River, this landmark is the only water castle in Slovenia and the surrounding area, and the short break here will refresh you.

Afterwards, you will continue on to **Ljubljana**, the magical capital of Slovenia. You will be greeted by the charming blend of historic architecture and modern sustainability initiatives, reflecting Slovenia's status as an eco-conscious country. After hotel *check-in*, take some time to relax and begin exploring Ljubljana's lively atmosphere. Enjoy a taste of the city with its delightful and diverse restaurant options around you.

Overnight: *Ljubljana*

Day 6: Slovenian Highlights Tour

Ljubljana - Lake Bled - Ljubljana

Start your guided tour around **Ljubljana**, a picturesque city celebrated for its lush greenery, stunning architecture, and laid-back atmosphere. Nestled between the majestic Julian Alps and the Adriatic Sea, it's **one of the greenest capitals in Europe** and home to many tourist attractions, including its dining experiences and numerous museums.

As you stroll along the riverfront, you'll be introduced to the city's stunning landmarks, including the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, the baroque Town Hall, the medieval **Mestni Trg (Town Square)**, Robba's Fountain, the picturesque central open-air market, and the iconic **Triple Bridge**. The true essence of Ljubljana unfolds along the banks of the **Ljubljanica River**, where numerous bridges span its waters, embodying the city's charm and allure.

During your Slovenia tour, a visit to the alpine gem, **Lake Bled**, is a must - its beautiful island is the most photographed sight in Slovenia. For centuries, this green pearl of **the Slovenian Alps** has captivated visitors with its natural beauty and mystical charm. We will take a boat ride on a traditional *pletna* boat towards the

Church of Saint Mary where you will have a chance to step onto the sacred island and explore its historic church. Use your free time to visit **Bled Castle**, perched high above the lake on a rocky cliff, overlooking the lake. Be sure not to miss out on the famous **Bled "kremplita"**, a delectable cream cake best enjoyed against the backdrop of the breathtaking scenery!

Return to Ljubljana and indulge in the city's rich and diverse gastronomic scene which blends traditional Slovenian flavours with modern culinary trends.

Overnight: Ljubljana

Day 7: The Diversity of Slovenia

Ljubljana - Postojna Cave - Goriška Hills - Portorož

Say goodbye to the capital of Slovenia after hotel *check-out*.

Just an hour from Ljubljana, Slovenia offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity - a visit to the spectacular **limestone Postojna Cave**. Board an electric train to explore this unique underground landscape, where you will encounter awe-inspiring stalactites, stalagmites, limestone pools, subterranean gorges, and mesmerising underground waterfalls. As one of Slovenia's most beloved tourist attractions, a visit to this cave is an absolute must on your journey through Slovenia.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Goriška Hills Wine Tasting: *For a full immersion into Slovenian charms, we head towards the **Goriška Hills**, a region shared between Slovenia and Italy, that seamlessly blends with the neighbouring Italian countryside. This area is famous for its wine production, particularly white wines such as Rebula and Sauvignon. The highlight of the region is the **medieval village Šmartno**, dating back to the 14th century, where you can travel back to the captivating and picturesque stories of the past and uncover the essence of Brda's warmth and hospitality. Here, amidst the rolling vineyards and charming views, we will visit an authentic winery where you will sample one of the **region's finest wines**.*

Finally, we arrive in **Portorož** (from the Italian "Portorose", meaning "rose port"), an attractive Istrian town in Slovenia and one of the largest tourist centres in the Slovenian coastal region, and *check-in* to our hotel.

Overnight: Portorož

Day 8: Istrian Hilltop Treasures

Portorož - Grožnjan - Motovun - Poreč

Today, we head to **Grožnjan**, a charming hilltop village, renowned for its vibrant arts scene and enchanting medieval charm. This idyllic town, with its cobblestone streets and well-preserved architecture, has become a haven for artists from around the world. Blend along with the locals as you explore the town's galleries and workshops, and enjoy the village charm with a drink in hand, savouring the moment before we journey on to our next destination.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Truffles of Istria: *Join us for an exciting **truffle-hunting demonstration** in the picturesque forest, celebrated for its prized **white and black truffles**. Guided by an expert hunter and his skilled dog, you'll learn the secrets of finding these culinary treasures. Finish your adventure with **a tasting** of local truffle-infused cheese and sausages, complemented by a glass of **Istrian wine**. As you savour these delights, you will hear the tales of truffle cultivation and offer fascinating insights into their unique way of life.*

Our journey leads us towards the hidden gem called **Motovun**. Perched atop a lush hill, this ancient town boasts sweeping views of the verdant Motovun Forest and the rolling plateaus of the Istrian countryside. As

you stroll through its narrow, cobblestone streets, you'll encounter well-preserved **medieval architecture**, including the iconic town walls and the Church of St. Stephen.

Finally, we *check into* a hotel in **Poreč**, where we rest and recharge for the adventures ahead.

Overnight: Poreč

Day 9: The Soul of Istria

Poreč - Rovinj - Lim Bay - Pula - Poreč

Today, you'll explore the historic town of **Rovinj**, often called **the gem of Istria**. Wander through its picturesque old town, where 18th century Venetian architecture and cobblestone streets weave a tapestry of history and romance. As you explore the winding alleys and vibrant squares, you'll experience firsthand the timeless allure of **Rovinj's Old Town**. From the lively atmosphere of Grisya Street, renowned for its **local art and charming shops**, to the panoramic vistas that showcase the town's scenic Mediterranean beauty, Rovinj offers an unforgettable blend of cultural heritage and natural beauty.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Oyster & Seashell Tasting: *Following the Istrian coastline, we head to the breathtaking Lim Bay, also known as **Lim Channel**, a stunning 11-km-long estuary where freshwater meets seawater, creating a haven for marine life. Here, we have selected one of the best seaside restaurants, located near the oyster farm, where you can **savour the freshest and finest shellfish**, including oysters, mussels, clams, and scallops paired with two glasses of Istrian wine.*

The final stop is **Pula**, a beautiful town possessing a wealth of historical sites and examples of Roman architecture. The star of the show is the remarkably well-preserved **Roman amphitheatre**, the 6th biggest Roman coliseum in the world. The Temple of Augustus, the Triumphal Arch of Sergius, the Twin Gates and other sites of the old town will make you feel like you have stepped back in time.

As evening approaches, we return to **Poreč**, reflecting on the day's discoveries in Istria and the delicious flavours we've enjoyed.

Overnight: Poreč

Day 10: The Devil's Garden

Poreč - Opatija - Plitvice Lakes NP

Today, we bid farewell to the stunning Istrian peninsula, and after *check-out* we head towards **Opatija**, an aristocratic town renowned for its distinct history, architecture, and lively atmosphere. Enjoy a relaxing coffee break and soak up the charm of Opatija as you stroll along the famous **Lungomare promenade**, which offers stunning panoramic sea views.

As we proceed on our journey, let the picturesque countryside unfold before you. Pass through charming villages, admire rolling hills, and catch glimpses of the sparkling Adriatic Sea, before entering the mountainous landscape surrounding our next stop.

Start exploring **Plitvice Lakes National Park**, a beautiful park that contains **16 interconnected cascading lakes**. On old maps, it was called "Devil's Garden" and it is the first site in the Balkans to get **UNESCO World Heritage status**. You will enjoy a 3-hour guided tour that includes a visit to the upper and lower lakes. Although swimming is not allowed, you'll have time to relax at one of the nearby restaurants, surrounded by the untouched beauty of this lush paradise.

Soak in nature as you *check-in* to your hotel, rest and unwind.

Overnight: *Plitvice Lakes NP*

Day 11: Dalmatian Coastal Charm

Plitvice Lakes NP - Trogir - Split

As you leave Plitvice Lakes and *check-out*, the tour continues to the coastal part of Croatia. The first part of the day will be devoted to the beautiful town of **Trogir**. Located on a tiny island, this **UNESCO World Heritage Site** boasts beautiful architecture, stunning sea views, and palm trees that spread along its pleasant waterfront promenade. Watch out, or you will find yourself lost in medieval times. Walking its charming streets, you will find yourself immersed in the blend of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture. Look out for the Cathedral of Saint Lawrence, **the Clock Tower**, the Loggia, the Land Gate, Kamerlengo Castle and Saint Mark's Tower.

The day concludes in **Split**, the largest city in Dalmatia, with 1,700 years of remarkably preserved history. Enter through **the Golden Gate** and wander through narrow cobblestone streets, where bustling markets, charming cafés, and hidden courtyards reveal the rich history and timeless grandeur of **the Diocletian's Palace**. Visit **the former Temple of Jupiter** in the heart of the imperial complex, followed by the Cathedral of Saint Domnius, the oldest Catholic cathedral still in its original structure. Stroll along the lively **Riva promenade**, soaking up the Mediterranean sun and vibrant atmosphere. Whether exploring its rich history, savouring fresh seafood, or simply unwinding by the sea, Split captivates with its unique charm and dynamic energy. End the day with a hotel *check-in*.

Overnight: *Split*

Day 12: Hvar Island Adventures

Split - Hvar Island - Split

To start your day, you will take a short drive to the ferry port and board **a high-speed catamaran** that brings you to the queen of the Croatian islands - **Hvar**, so much more than just the glitz and glamour of its main town. Take in the azure blue seascape as you journey through the Splitska Vrata to Hvar Island.

A town built in wonderful **Venetian architecture style**, the island-city of **Hvar** is famous for its traffic-free cobbled streets, filled up with nice restaurants and bars. During the walking tour you'll see the harbour, Renaissance Cathedral, Benedictine Convent, Franciscan monastery, and Church of Our Lady of Mercy.

We've set aside plenty of free time for you to fully enjoy all that the island has to offer. Based on your interests, we recommend you to: embark on a boat excursion to discover the enchanting **Pakleni Islands**, relax on the sun-kissed beaches, explore the picturesque trails to Milna Bay for a memorable adventure or enjoy a delightful Mediterranean lunch at a local restaurant.

In the late afternoon, you'll head back to **Split**. *Please note that the departure timing may vary depending on the season.

Overnight: *Split*

Day 13: Farewell, Split

Split

After hotel *check-out*, it is time to conclude your Balkan tour. As most of our clients decide to **extend their trip** within their own arrangements, **transfer to the airport** at the end of the tour is not included in the overall price. Any guests who would like Balkan&more to organise a departure transfer on their behalf are welcome to contact us. End of services.



GENERAL INCLUSIONS

Valid for both Standard and Superior packages

Transportation:

- Airport arrival transfer
- Transportation as per the itinerary with modern, comfortable vehicles tailored to your group size

Entrances & tickets:

Temple of Saint Sava, Pletna boat ride on Lake Bled, Church of Saint Mary, Postojna Cave, Pula Arena, NP Plitvice Lakes, Catamaran Split - Hvar - Split

Experiences:

Danube River Cruise in Budapest (*Evening Danube Cruise*); Wine tasting in a local winery in Northern Serbia (*Wines of Pannonian Plain*); Coffee & rakija in a Belgrade tavern (*Serbian Daily Routine*); Wine tasting in a local winery in Western Slovenia (*Goriška Hills Wine Tasting*); Truffle tasting in Croatian Istria (*Truffles of Istria*); Oyster & Seashell Tasting in Croatian Istria with two glasses of local wine (*Oyster & Seashell Tasting*).

Meals:

- 12 x breakfast
- 1 x dinner
- Additional meals included in our experiences

Additional:

- Professional English-speaking tour guidance throughout the tour
- VAT, accommodation taxes and city taxes
- Tour logistics and organization with dedicated service and care
- 1 bottle of water (0.5l) daily for each passenger

HOTELS / STANDARD package

2 BB in Budapest in Leonardo Boutique Hotel Budapest M-Square 4* standard / Continental Budapest 4* / Three Corners Lifestyle Hotel 4* or similar

2 BB in Belgrade in Royal Inn 4* / Mercure Excelsior 4* / Central Point 4* or similar

2 BB in Ljubljana in Best Western Premier Slon 4* / Exe Lev 4* / City Ljubljana 4* or similar

1 BB in Portorož in Neptun 4* / Wellness Apollo 4* / Remisens Metropol 5* or similar

2 BB in Poreč in Valamar Diamant 4* / Valamar Riviera & Residence 4* / BO Palazzo 4* or similar

1 HB in Plitvice Lakes National Park in Zrinka House 4* / Plitvice Inn 4* / Plitvička kuća M 4* or similar

2 BB in Split in Art 4* / Globo 4* / Marul 4* or similar

HOTELS / SUPERIOR package

2 BB in Budapest in Eurostars Danube Budapest 4* / Ramada by Wyndham Budapest City Center 4* / Leonardo Boutique Hotel Budapest M-Square 4* superior or similar

2 BB in Belgrade in Envoy 4* / Museum 4* / Moskva 4* or similar

2 BB in Ljubljana in Eurostars uHotel 4* / Occidental Ljubljana 4* / Grand Plaza & Congress Center 5* or similar

1 BB in Portorož in Grand Hotel Portorož 4* / Hotel Slovenia - Terme & Wellness 5* / Grand Hotel Bernardin 5* or similar

2 BB in Poreč in Valamar Parentino Hotel 4* / Martis Forum Heritage Hotel & Residence 4* / Hotel Parentium Plava Laguna 4* or similar

1 HB in Plitvice Lakes National Park in Degenija 4* / 16 Lakes 4* / Palcich 4* or similar

2 BB in Split in Luxe 4* / Marmont Heritage 4* / AC Hotel by Marriott Split 4* or similar

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