

Imperial Cities and Austrian Alps

from Budapest to Ljubljana 10N/11D
Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovenia

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"**.

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 towards 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: Echoes of the Viennese Past

Budapest - Vienna

After *checking out* from your Budapest hotel, you'll set off towards **Vienna**, an imperial city with a powerful and influential past. Given its historic role as a cultural and political centre, it comes to no surprise that Vienna was often called "**the capital of Europe**".

To truly appreciate the royal city of Vienna, one day simply won't suffice! Begin your first day by exploring the magnificent **Schönbrunn Palace**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Austria's most significant architectural and historical treasures. This former imperial summer residence holds over 300 years of rich history, showcasing the evolving tastes and aspirations of the Habsburg monarchy. Begin your exploration in the beautifully adorned rooms, showcasing **exquisite murals and opulent decor** that reflect the grandeur of this imperial residence. As you wander through its rooms and chambers, you'll feel the regal atmosphere and gain insight into **the elegance of 18th century court life**.

EXPERIENCE MORE / The Strudel Show: *Experience the delicious art of Viennese pastry-making at **The Strudel Show** inside the charming Café Residenz, nestled in the Schönbrunn Palace courtyard. Watch as skilled bakers prepare **the original apple strudel** right before your eyes in the cozy bakery salon, with its rustic ambiance and vaulted ceilings. The irresistible aroma fills the air as you learn the secrets behind this iconic dessert, and best of all, you get to **savour a fresh slice** while watching. This delightful experience is the perfect way to cap off your Schönbrunn visit with a sweet, imperial touch.*

After the Strudel Show, enjoy free time to relax at your hotel after *check-in* or explore Vienna's attractions at your own pace.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Evening of Viennese Elegance (Optional): *For an unforgettable 19th century evening, we offer **an optional experience** to delve deeper into Vienna's rich cultural heritage with an evening at the world-renowned **Vienna State Opera** or **the historic Burgtheater**, where timeless performances bring the city's grand artistic tradition to life. Both of these iconic venues offer **an authentic glimpse into Viennese elegance**, making it a perfect way to conclude your day in the imperial capital.*

** Kindly inform us in advance, and we'll be delighted to take care of all the details, from securing your tickets (subject to availability) to providing a guide who will escort you to the venue.*

Overnight: Vienna

Day 4: The Royal Legacy of the Habsburgs

Vienna - Prague

After *check-out*, the second day of your Vienna experience will be dedicated to the legacy of one of Europe's most powerful royal families, as you explore the city's imperial heart. Your journey begins with **a panoramic drive** that paints a picture of the city's grandeur, passing by the stately **Parliament**, the historic **Burgtheater**, and the soaring **Rathaus**. As the Votivkirche's towers come into view and you ride along the tranquil banks of the Danube, you'll feel the city's regal past and contemporary present blend seamlessly.

The experience deepens as you continue on foot, starting at the imposing Maria Theresia Memorial, where Austria's beloved empress watches over her city. As you wander through the expansive courtyards of **the Hofburg Palace**, imagine the royal intrigue and lavish events that once filled its halls. Continue towards the awe-inspiring **St. Stephen's Cathedral**, its towering spires a symbol of Vienna's enduring spirit. With every step, you'll feel **the influence of the Habsburgs**, who shaped not only this city but much of Europe's history. This day is not just about seeing the sights - it's about feeling **the presence of a dynasty** that left an indelible mark on Vienna's soul.

After soaking in the grandeur of Vienna's aristocratic heritage, it's time to bid farewell to Austria and journey onward to the alluring city of Prague. As you cross the border, the landscapes shift, and Vienna's refined cultural legacy gives way to **the medieval charm of the Czech capital**. Upon arrival in **Prague**, you'll *check into* your hotel, ready to unwind and prepare for the next chapter of your adventure.

Overnight: Prague

Day 5: The Golden City

Prague

This day will be entirely dedicated to exploring the city of Prague. Known as **the Golden City** and the City of a Hundred Towers, Prague is a captivating blend of history and culture. Its magical landscape of bridges, historic buildings, gilded towers, and church domes, nestled on both sides of **the Vltava River**, creates a truly remarkable atmosphere. Home to **the best-preserved medieval town center in Europe**, Prague beautifully balances its rich historical heritage with the sophistication of a modern European metropolis.

Begin your Prague journey with a visit to its famous **Hilltop Hradčany**, home to the awe-inspiring **Prague Castle** (Pražský hrad), **the largest ancient castle** in the world. As you step inside its storied walls, immerse yourself in the rich history and atmosphere of this majestic complex. Stroll by the grand Saint Vitus Cathedral and the Old Royal Palace, and discover hidden historical treasures as your guide shares captivating tales of the past.

Descend from the castle to cross **the Charles Bridge**, where you'll feel like you've stepped into a medieval fairytale. Meander through the quaint, charming streets of Prague, until you reach Old Town Square, home to the iconic Town Hall and **the Astronomical Clock**, one of the oldest and most fascinating timepieces in the world, and a true symbol of Prague's rich heritage. To conclude your Prague adventure, true culinary delights await just around the corner.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Eat like a Bohemian: *Head to a carefully chosen restaurant in the heart of Prague, dedicated to **tradition and authentic local dishes**. Enjoy a **true Czech eating experience** with specialties like **crispy pork knuckle**, **homemade goulash**, or other offerings available that day. Each dish will be complimented by a **handpicked starter and dessert**, which could feature options like **traditional pickled Czech camembert**, **pork cracking**, **sweet blueberry dumplings** or other specialties.*

Return to your hotel and savour the rich memories of the Bohemian past and present you've experienced today, reflecting on the delightful flavours and cultural treasures.

Overnight: Prague

Day 6: On the Roads of Charles IV

Prague - Karlovy Vary - Locket - Prague

This day will be mostly dedicated to the delightful town of **Karlovy Vary**, named after **Charles IV**, Holy Roman Emperor, who founded the city in the 14th century. Nestled in the Bohemian countryside, Karlovy Vary is renowned for its architecture and natural hot springs. As you arrive, you'll be greeted by the charm of this **historic spa town**, famous for its elegant colonnades and therapeutic mineral springs, making it a perfect destination for relaxation and rejuvenation.

From there, make your way to **Locket**, a captivating village set against the backdrop of the Ohře River. As you cross the bridge, you'll be greeted by the striking view of **the historic Locket Castle** perched on a dramatic promontory. Known as **the "Key to the Kingdom of Bohemia"**, this castle that profoundly influenced the young Charles IV. You will get a glimpse of the riverside where lively musical events often take place, and explore the untouched beauty of this authentic locale.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Czech Brew Experience: Enhance your visit with **a unique beer tasting experience at a historic brewery** dating back to the 14th century. Nestled in the original malthouse, this authentic venue offers a glimpse into the country's brewing legacy. Sample **three distinct craft beers** from their diverse selection, choosing from Dark, Lager, Ruby beer, and others. Experience firsthand **the Czech beer tradition** and savour the flavours that have been perfected over centuries.

Return to your Prague hotel with a treasure trove of new memories, rich flavours, and authentic experiences, each adding a distinct touch to your journey through the heart of Czech culture.

Overnight: Prague

Day 7: Czech Fairytale

Prague - Český Krumlov - Austrian Countryside

After *checking-out* from your Prague hotel, continue your journey to **Český Krumlov**. This gem of South Bohemia is bisected by the scenic Vltava River and dominated by its impressive **medieval castle**. The castle, a blend of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles, features a **17th century Baroque theater** - one of only two in Europe still in excellent condition. As you explore the narrow, cobbled streets of **the Old Town**, admire the blend of Renaissance and Baroque architecture, including the 12th century Gothic foundations beneath the charming façades. **The picturesque setting**, rich history, and unique attractions make Český Krumlov a truly authentic, fairytale-like destination.

Continue your journey towards Austria, where you'll check into your accommodation in the widely known **Salzkammergut region**, celebrated for its six beautiful lakes, verdant plateaus, and vivid natural scenery. As the day draws to a close, take a moment to reflect on the contrast between the elegant architecture of Czech Republic and the breathtaking landscapes of Austria.

Overnight: Austrian Countryside

Day 8: Alpine Mirrors

Austrian Countryside - Hallstatt - St Wolfgang im Salzkammergut - Austrian Countryside

The **Salzkammergut region** is a must-see region of Austria, renowned for its collection of lakes, rolling hills, and pristine natural beauty. This area offers a captivating blend of shimmering waters, lush mountains and alpine peaks, creating a perfect backdrop for both relaxation and exploration.

Your first destination in this area is **Hallstatt**, where the charm of its pastel-colored houses, mirrored in the serene lake, creates a scene straight out of a postcard. Nestled between towering mountains, Hallstatt's **quaint beauty** promises an unforgettable experience. Experience the village's heritage as you wander through **the Market Square**, and explore the narrow streets that reveal centuries of history, culture, and authentic views at every turn.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Alpine Heights: *Your journey continues as you ascend to a breathtaking viewpoint, where a spectacular panorama unfolds before you. Gaze upon the snow-dusted Alpine peaks, the glistening lake below, and the picturesque landscape stretching into the distance. Take a moment to soak in the fresh mountain air, capture the beauty around you, and simply enjoy the tranquillity of the surroundings.*

Next, you'll visit **the picturesque village of St. Wolfgang**, located by the tranquil Lake Wolfgang. The smallest of the nearby towns, it sits in the shadow of the **Schafberg peak**, which rises up to 1,200 meters above the town. Known for its charming architecture and atmosphere, this small town is perfect for leisurely exploration. Discover its unique local shops, offering handcrafted souvenirs that capture the essence of the Alpine region.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Alpine Lake Glide: *To wrap up the day, enjoy a **leisure afternoon electric boat adventure** on Lake Wolfgang. Take the wheel yourself and glide across the serene waters. This **hands-on experience** allows you to fully appreciate the region's mesmerizing beauty from a unique perspective, from the alpine clear waters mirroring the vistas of the Salzkammergut region.*

Return to your countryside accommodation to relish the memories of this delightful day in the Austrian Alps.

Overnight: *Austrian Countryside*

Day 9: Symphony of the Alps

Austrian Countryside - Salzburg - Lake Bled - Ljubljana

Check-out from your countryside accommodation and continue your journey towards **Salzburg**, Austria's cultural gem and the birthplace of Mozart. Delve into the city's baroque ambiance as you meander through its well-preserved old town, where every corner tells a story. Discover **hidden tales and local legends** with your guide, and savour the beauty of Salzburg's historic streets. Stroll along the Salzach River and complete your day with a taste of Salzburg's sweetest tradition - **Mozartkugeln**, the city's iconic chocolate-covered marzipan delights, celebrating its most famous resident.

En route to the capital of Slovenia, a short visit to the alpine gem, **Lake Bled**, is a must - its beautiful island in the center of the lake 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.

Upon arrival in 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 10: The Diversity of Slovenia

Ljubljana - Postojna Cave - Goriška Hills - 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.

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 Italia, 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 vinery where you will sample one of the **region's finest wines**.

You'll return to Ljubljana for your second and final night of the tour, where you'll rest and reflect on your journey.

Overnight: Ljubljana

Day 11: Farewell, Ljubljana

Ljubljana

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 organisation, **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 both for Standard and Superior package

Transportation:

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

Entrances & tickets:

Schönbrunn Palace, Pletna boat ride on Lake Bled, Church of Saint Mary, Postojna Cave

Experiences:

Danube River Cruise in Budapest (*Evening Danube Cruise*); Traditional Strudel tasting in Vienna (*The Strudel Show*); Traditional Czech food tasting in Prague (*Eat like a Bohemian*); Czech craft beer tasting in a historic brewery (*Czech Brew Experience*); Visit to the alpine panoramic viewpoint in Austria (*Alpine Heights*); Electric boat experience in Austria (*Alpine Lake Glide*); Wine tasting in a local winery in Western Slovenia (*Goriška Hills Wine Tasting*).

***Optional experience:** Visit to the Vienna State Opera or the Burgtheater (not included in the price)

Meals:

- 10 x breakfast
- Additional meals included in our experiences

Additional:

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

STANDARD package / ACCOMMODATION

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

1 BB in Vienna in Hotel Renaissance Wien 4* / Hotel Austria Trend Doppio 4* / Hotel Best Western Plus Amedia 4* or similar

3 BB in Prague in Boutique Hotel Seven Days 4* / BW Hotel Moran 4* / Prokop Square 4* or similar

2 BB in Austrian Countryside in Hotel Schernthaner 3* / Radetzky 3* / Stadthotel Goldenes Schiff 4* or similar

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

SUPERIOR package / ACCOMMODATION

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

1 BB in Vienna in Grand Ferdinand 5* / Kaiserhof 4* / Austria Trend Savoyen 4* or similar

3 BB in Prague in Grandior 5* / Boutique Hotel Seven Days 4* / Art Nouveau Palace Praha 5* or similar

2 BB in Austrian Countryside in Stadthotel Goldenes Schiff 4* / Seehotel Brandauer's Villen Superior 4* / Hotel Stroblerhof 4* **2 BB in Ljubljana** in Eurostars uHotel 4* / Occidental Ljubljana 4* / Grand Plaza & Congress Center 5* or similar

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