



# Eastern Europe to the Black Sea 2019

## EXTEND YOUR TRIP

---

**Prague, Czech Republic**

**Vienna, Austria**

**Transylvania, Romania**

**Your Travel Handbook**

# CONTENTS

---

<b>Passport, Visas &amp; Travel Documents</b> .....	3
Your Passport .....	3
No Visas Required .....	3
Trusted Traveler Programs .....	4
Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents .....	4
Overseas Taxes & Fees .....	4
Requirements for the Czech Republic .....	4
<b>Health</b> .....	6
Keep Your Abilities in Mind .....	6
Health Check .....	7
No Vaccines Required .....	7
Staying Healthy on Your Trip .....	7
<b>Money Matters</b> .....	9
Top Three Tips .....	9
Local Currency .....	9
How to Exchange Money .....	11
ATMs .....	11
Credit & Debit Cards .....	12
Chip Cards .....	12
Onboard Ship .....	13
Tipping Guidelines .....	13
<b>Preparing for Your Trip</b> .....	15
Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air .....	15
Air Inclusive Travelers .....	15
Bucharest Air Routing .....	16
Lost or Delayed Luggage .....	16
Optional Tours .....	16
Communications .....	17
<b>Packing</b> .....	19
Your Luggage .....	20
Clothing Suggestions .....	20
What to Bring .....	21
Electricity .....	23
<b>Climate</b> .....	26
Climate Averages & Online Forecast .....	27
<b>Aboard Your Ship</b> .....	30
M/S River <i>Harmony</i> , M/S River <i>Rhapsody</i> , M/S River <i>Concerto</i> , M/S River <i>Aria</i> & M/S River <i>Adagio</i> .....	30
Ship Specifications .....	34
<b>About Your Destinations</b> .....	35
Your Program Director .....	35
Culture & Points to Know .....	36
Budapest in Brief .....	40
Bucharest in Brief .....	40
Prague in Brief .....	42
Vienna in Brief .....	43
Shopping .....	44
U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges .....	46
<b>Demographics &amp; History</b> .....	47
<b>Resources</b> .....	57
Suggested Readings .....	57
Suggested Movies .....	59
Useful Websites .....	62

# PASSPORT, VISAS & TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

---

## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 6 blank “Visa” pages in your passport.
- **Extensions to Romania, Prague, or Vienna:** No additional pages needed.

## No Visas Required

Travelers with a U.S. passport do not need any visas for this vacation, including the optional trip extensions.

## Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

## Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

## Trusted Traveler Programs

Some travelers have found that Trusted Traveler programs can expedite long waits at customs when re entering the U.S. There are currently three programs available: Global Entry, NEXUS, and SENTRI. These three programs also include TSA Pre-Check, which allows you to use a dedicated security line at participating airports, or you can apply solely for TSA Pre-Check.

*TIP: Keep in mind that not all airports and airlines participate in these programs. You may want to consider checking with your airport prior to applying to find out if these programs would benefit you.*

To apply for a Trusted Traveler program or TSA Pre-Check, typically you will be asked to pay an application fee (varies by program) and schedule a background check and/or an interview. If you are approved, you will be issued a Known Traveler Number (KTN). Your KTN is valid for a set number of years, based on the conditions of the program. Please see the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website for more details on each of these programs: [www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs](http://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs). You can also find more information about TSA Pre-Check at [www.tsa.gov/precheck](http://www.tsa.gov/precheck).

If you are enrolled in TSA Pre-Check (or a Trusted Traveler program that includes it), **you must provide your KTN to the airlines.**

## Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

## Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

## Requirements for the Czech Republic

**You will need to bring additional documentation for the Czech Republic, so please read carefully.**

According to the U.S. State Department and Czech Embassy, all foreign tourists must be able to provide proof of medical coverage, if asked. Not all travelers will be asked—in fact, most travelers won't—and even some local officials are unaware of this rule. But occasionally, travelers are asked at passport control in Prague or by medical personnel. And if that happens to you, we want you to be prepared.

Specifically, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

- Be for a minimum of 30,000 Euros (about \$37,000 US dollars at the time of writing).
- Cover possible medical expenses and hospitalization charges while traveling.
- Be valid in Schengen countries like the Czech Republic. Schengen countries are the European Union countries that have signed the Schengen Agreement—for example, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, etc.
- Include evacuation or repatriation coverage—it must cover the cost of getting you back home if you need to return for medical reasons.

The good news is that our Travel Protection Plan DOES meet these requirements. So what type of documentation you should bring depends on if you purchased Travel Protection with us or not.

**If you purchased our Travel Protection Plan:** All you'll need to bring is a copy of the coverage from Trip Mate (the plan provider). You can download and print a copy of your coverage for this purpose. Go online to [www.gct.com/tpp](http://www.gct.com/tpp) or [oattravel.com/tpp](http://oattravel.com/tpp), and follow the links marked "Visit the Trip Mate, Inc. Website". This will direct you to the correct section of their website, where you can print a copy of your coverage. *TIP: In our experience, the page from Part B with the schedule of benefits is usually enough to satisfy local officials.*

**If you did not purchase Travel Protection with us:** You will need to bring some other form of proof of coverage. If your own health insurance meets the requirements above, contact your insurer for a letter stating that you are covered. A certificate of coverage or proof of purchase from a private insurer or another Travel Protection Plan will also suffice, as long as the requirements listed above are met. *However, **Medicare cards are not acceptable**, since Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad.*

## HEALTH

---

### Keep Your Abilities in Mind

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this vacation.** *We reserve the right for our Program Directors and Trip Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience.*

#### GROUP SIZE

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers with our local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

#### PACING

- 13 days, with 10 nights aboard a private river ship, and a two-night hotel stay
- Return flights often require departing in early morning
- Air travel time will be 11-20 hours and will have at least one connection

#### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

#### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slippery in wet or colder conditions
- Travel by 140- to 162-passenger river ship, and 49-seat coach
- Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary

#### CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 58-82°F during cruising season
- June-August are the warmest months
- March and November weather can be unpredictable and change quickly

## Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential to fully enjoy your trip abroad. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

## No Vaccines Required

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

## Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>. (Pick the country and then follow the links to “Local Laws & Special Circumstances”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.

- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

## **Allergies**

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Traveler Support team at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## **Water**

- Unless you know that your stomach is particularly sensitive to changes in diet/water, tap water in Hungary and the Czech Republic is perfectly fine to drink.
- For all other stops, it is best to drink bottled water.



# MONEY MATTERS

---

## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip**; you will need euros instead (and Czech crowns if you are taking the Prague extension).

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

### Euro Countries

The euro is the official currency in many member countries of the European Union. Unless otherwise listed, the countries you will be visiting will use the euro. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 euros
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euros

### Bulgaria

The Lev is the official currency of Bulgaria. Lev banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 Leva
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 stotinki; 1 Lev

### Croatia

The basic unit of currency in Croatia is the *kuna* (Kn). Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, and 1,000 Kuna
- Coins: 5, 10, 20, and 50 Lipa; 1, 2, 5, and 25 Kuna

U.S. dollars are **not** accepted for payment in Croatia; local currency is the only accepted currency.

## Czech Republic

Czech legal tender is the Czech crown or *koruna* (CZK.), divided into 100 *hellers* or *haler*. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000, and 5000 CZK
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 CZK

Note that coinage below the crown (i.e. hellers) as well as the 50 CZK note are no longer in circulation. The Czech Republic is preparing to merge into the Eurozone (in 2020) and you'll find many places in the larger cities accept Euros with no problem. Prices given in CZK and hellers – i.e. Kr. 36.70 – will be rounded to the nearest crown.

## Hungary

The official currency of Hungary is the *forint* (ft), made up of 100 *fillers*. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10,000, and 20,000 forints
- Coins: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 200 forints

**Note:** Banknotes of all denominations are printed in the same size and they are sometimes similar in color. It's very easy, therefore, to mistake one bill for another. Please pay attention to the numerical value of each bill in your hand every time you make a cash transaction.

Also note that the 200 Forint bill is not accepted except at banks for exchange.

## Romania

Romania's official currency is the leu (plural lei), and 1 leu = 100 bani. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 1, 5, 10, 50, 100, and 500 lei
- Coins: 1, 5, 10, 20, and 50 bani

ATMs are by far the best way to get cash locally, and at the best exchange rates, but there are also many exchange offices that offer a good rate and don't charge a commission. You will need to show an ID – your passport – to change money. Changing cash at hotels is very expensive, and banks often refuse to change money at all these days.

## Serbia

In Serbia, the official currency is the Dinar (RSD), made up of 100 paras. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, and 5000 dinars (also called “dinara”)
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, and 20 dinara

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you’ll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. One exception is in the Czech Republic, where it is more economical to try a bank first. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$5 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don’t forget to memorize the actual digits of your card’s PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

**Austria:** ATMs are widely available throughout Austria.

**Bulgaria:** International ATM networks are available throughout large cities and small towns.

**Croatia:** ATMs are available throughout large cities and small towns in Croatia.

**Czech Republic:** ATMs are widely available in large cities and small towns.

**Hungary:** ATMs are available throughout large cities and small towns in Hungary.

**Romania:** ATMs are common throughout large cities and small towns in Romania.

**Serbia:** ATMs can be readily found in large cities and small towns but can be scarce in rural villages.

## Credit & Debit Cards

Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although the Discover card is accepted in some countries outside the U.S., it is not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

**Austria:** Credit and debit cards are readily accepted in most places in Austria.

**Bulgaria:** Credit and debit card use is common in Bulgaria and major American credit cards are widely accepted.

**Croatia:** Credit cards are widely accepted throughout Croatia, though you may need cash for small purchases or at markets.

**Czech Republic:** Credit and debits cards are widely accepted in the Czech Republic.

**Hungary:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted.

**Romania:** Credit and debit card use is common in Romania.

**Serbia:** Credit cards are readily accepted in Serbia. However, some smaller businesses, such as street vendors, local restaurants, or “Mom and Pop” stores, may be “cash only.” Cash only establishments are more common in the countryside than in cities. If you don't see a credit card logo on the door or the cash register, then check with the cashier or server.

## Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted a new type of credit card that has an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

This new technology is only now gaining traction in the U.S., so occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards. Or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

## Notify Card Providers

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank

you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## Onboard Ship

### Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.) and is calculated in Euros. You can pay this bill by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept euros or U.S. dollars. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover. Other forms of payment, such as checks and American Express, are not accepted for this bill.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. You can pay for this bill by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.

**Please note:** Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

### Exchange Services: Policy Update

Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the “How to Exchange Money” section for helpful tips and information.

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. For those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. All tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (this is usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars. Do not use personal or traveler's check for tips.

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Grand Circle Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$5-\$8 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- *Suggestion: While a tip to your Program Director will be appreciated in any currency, we suggest using U.S. dollars or Euros since this itinerary covers a large number of countries with different local currencies.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$10–\$12 U.S. per traveler, per day. You'll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire cruise staff. ***Policy Update:*** *Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

### **Time at Leisure**

When you are exploring on your own, it's useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Eastern Europe:** Although service charges are generally included, tipping is still expected. A 10% tip at restaurants and bars is sufficient. Make sure your taxi driver does not overcharge by asking for an invoice print out (it's often better to take a taxi ordered by the concierge). If everything is fine, a 5–10% tip is welcome. In these countries, it is acceptable (and welcomed) to tip in U.S. dollars. You might want to bring a supply of U.S. \$1 bills for tipping purposes.
- **Public Restrooms:** It is very common to be charged a small use fee (not a tip) for restroom access. U.S. dollars are not accepted for this fee. Bring small change in the local currency with you or change some upon your arrival just in case as there isn't an attendant on duty (in some cases you will use a turnstile.)

## PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

---

### Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

If you plan on booking your own international flights or arranging with our air department to arrive/depart on an earlier/later date than standard for your program, airport transfers will NOT be included in your program price, unless otherwise noted. For eligible flights, transfers may be purchased separately, as an optional add-on, and are subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as Grand Circle travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Traveler Support team at **1-800-321-2835**.

**Reminder:** If you've personalized your flights to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city (not as part of a Stopover package), you are responsible for arranging a hotel for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Account at **[www.gct.com/myaccount](http://www.gct.com/myaccount)** under "My Reservations."

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a GCCL Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **Arrival in Europe:** Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. **Important note on porters:** *Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.*

- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCCL Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our GCCL Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

### **Bucharest Air Routing**

Because Romania remains a largely undiscovered tourist destination, air service between the U.S. and Bucharest is limited. As a result, your flight to Bucharest (or from Bucharest, depending on the direction of your cruise) may not be direct and may require a layover of between one and five hours, according to airline schedules.

**Return Flights:** Expect a very early morning on the day of your return flight to the U.S. This is because most international flights from Eastern Europe—including direct flights to the U.S. and ones that connect through other European cities—depart at or before 7 am.

### **Lost or Delayed Luggage**

Unfortunately, it is possible that the airlines may lose or delay your checked luggage, but luckily most luggage is recovered within 24 hours. Should this happen to you, please report the loss immediately to the airlines; they will not accept a claim after you have left the airport. It will be the airline's responsibility to track your luggage and see that it is delivered to you. Your Program Director can assist you with reporting the loss and with staying in touch with the airlines, but please understand that as the legal owner of the suitcase most airlines will want to work with you directly.

To minimize complications due to lost or delayed luggage, we recommend packing a spare change of clothing in your carry-on luggage. Also, when traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing", i.e. packing some of your outfits into your companion's checked luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.

### **Optional Tours**

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

### **What You Need to Know**

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.



- Optional tours that are reserved onsite can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.) We do not take Amex, cash, or checks for optional tours.
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- We will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Account at [www.gct.com/myaccount](http://www.gct.com/myaccount)).

## Communications

### Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone is "unlocked", meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is "unlocked" then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with "Pay as You Go" cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

### Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you'll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

### Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

## **Internet Access and Email**

Internet cafés are available in many of the cities you visit on your Cruise Tour; however it prices for use may vary. While sailing Internet access may be unavailable, depending on locks, bridges, and regional remoteness. Internet access will be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities.

## **Receiving Calls from Home**

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one is to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

## **How to Call Overseas**

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Austria:** +43

**Hungary:** +36

**Bulgaria:** +359

**Romania:** +40

**Croatia:** +385

**Serbia:** +381

**Czech Republic:** +420

# PACKING

## Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
<b>Pieces per person</b>	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
<b>Weight restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
<b>Size Restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
<b>Luggage Type</b>	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.

TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS
Same as the main trip.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>

### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.

- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

## Your Luggage

### Checked Luggage

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Portage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

### Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

### Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions

### Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

## Style Hints

- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to don “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it’s completely up to you.
- **Please keep in mind that in this part of Europe it is considered disrespectful to wear shorts, short skirts, or transparent tops when visiting a religious building.** Some churches may even refuse entry to travelers in shorts, but casual pants or longer skirts are acceptable.

## What to Bring

We have included suggestions from former travelers to help you pack. These lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. You may also want to consult the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

**What not to pack:** Do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Leave behind any credit cards that are not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose.

**Your cabin already has:** Shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer, soap, body lotion, shower cap, and towels (*Grand Circle Cruise Line owned and operated ships only*)

## Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Sleepwear
- Socks and undergarments
- A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

## Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Travel money bag or money belt
- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- Light folding umbrella
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards

## Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

## Optional Gear

- Travel alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Washcloth
- Travel-size tissues
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer and plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” section.
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad
- Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- Addresses for postcards
- Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- Insect repellent
- For hotel stays: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version. Hair dryers are provided on your ship.

## Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with 220-volt outlets. In your bathroom you will find a 110-volt outlet; this outlet is only for low-voltage appliances, like electric shavers. (Your bathroom also comes equipped with a hair dryer).

Electricity in the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, MP3 players, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

## **Plugs**

Aboard ship, the plugs are standard European plugs (Type C).

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Even though you’ll only need one type of plug adapter on this trip (Type C fits a Type F outlet), it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

**Austria:** C and/or F

**Bulgaria:** C

**Croatia:** C and/or F

**Czech Republic:** C

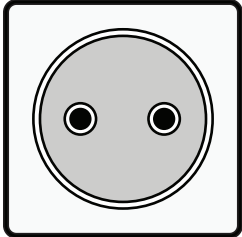
**Hungary:** C

**Romania:** C

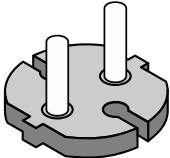
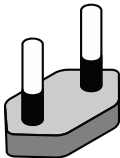
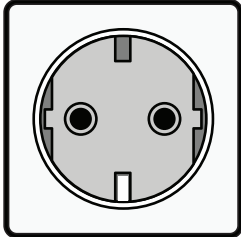


Serbia: F

Type C



Type F



## CLIMATE

---

**Hungary:** Hungary is completely landlocked, and its inland position cuts it off from the moderating influence of the Atlantic Ocean. Consequently, seasonal weather is more prone to extremes. Summers can be very hot and winters absolutely frigid. If you're traveling during the peak of summer, be prepared for some high temperatures, though it could also be comfortable and pleasant. As fall approaches, some days may be on the cool side, but stints of warm weather still occur. By late October, the air is usually brisk and evenings are chilly.

**Serbia:** Serbia has varied weather within three climatic areas. The Adriatic–Mediterranean climate near the coast is the warmest and mildest, with long, hot summers and short, rainy winters. A continental climate prevails on the Pannonian plain and central hills, with warm and dry summers and moderately cold and snowy winters. The third climate zone includes the higher altitudes, which have a mountainous climate, with short summers and very cold, snow-filled winters. Summers in Belgrade can be very hot, with temperatures in the 90s and high humidity.

**Bulgaria:** The climate of Bulgaria is temperate continental, with very warm summers, cold winters, and four distinct seasons. Spring and fall are quite comfortable but can bring rainy days. The regions in southern Bulgaria feel a Mediterranean influence, and winters here are milder. Winters are also somewhat warmer along the coast of the Black Sea, although winds blowing down from Russia can chill the area. But during the summer the coast of the Black Sea enjoys more moderate temperatures than inland Bulgaria and pleasant breezes from the coast. Cities along the Danube, like Ruse and Vidin, have hot summers and cold winters, plus humidity can be quite high.

**Romania:** Romania's climate is temperate, with few extreme weather conditions. Mid-summer is generally quite hot, especially in the lowlands, where summer is usually dry. Spring and fall bring delightful, sunny days and comfortable temperatures. The mountains receive more precipitation than the Danube delta, with brief showers and occasional thunderstorms in the Carpathians. Winters bring cold temperatures and abundant snowfall, along with a cold wind known as the *crivat* that blows from Russia. Summer temperatures in Bucharest can reach into the 90s. During your stay in Sinaia, a mountain pass town, temperatures can fluctuate by 40 degrees or more. It can be in the upper 70s in the afternoon in July and August ... but the **average** high is around 50 degrees.

**Austria:** Austria has a central European climate: variable weather reigns, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Spring weather is moderate, with intermittent sun and showers; afternoons in early spring average about 60° F and about 70° later in the season. Summers are typically sunny and warm, though you should be prepared for a few cloudy and wet days. Evenings, too, can get quite chilly. Autumn weather with some drizzle comes early to this region of the world, so by November it can be on the brisk side, with daytime temperatures in the mid to high 40s, and evenings that dip into the 30s.

**Czech Republic:** In spring, variable weather reigns: some years it's warm, in others it's cool. Summer days can still be brisk, though there are spells of very warm weather. Temperatures start to fall in early autumn, and winter weather begins settling in by early November. In general, you can expect spring temperatures to average in the low 60s, summer in the low 70s, and fall in the 50s. The climate is similar to that of Austria, but with temperatures a bit cooler in all seasons.

### **Weather Conditions and River Depths**

Throughout the river cruise season, weather conditions affect river depths, and water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary. When river depths rise or fall during your River Cruise, Grand Circle Cruise Line Cruise Line will be required to adjust your itinerary for your safety and to adhere to the current governmental and nautical requirements. Though we strive to adhere to our planned itinerary, we may not always be able to follow it exactly as planned. Therefore the sequence of ports visited and the days on which included features and optional tours occur may vary.

### **Climate Averages & Online Forecast**

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to go online to [www.gct.com/myaccount](http://www.gct.com/myaccount) for your 10-day forecast.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	BUDAPEST, HUNGARY			BELGRADE, SERBIA		
	Temp High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	36 to 25	86 to 77	7	40 to 30	89 to 82	1.8
FEB	40 to 27	85 to 68	6	45 to 32	87 to 73	1.6
MAR	51 to 35	81 to 57	6	54 to 39	83 to 59	1.9
APR	60 to 41	75 to 51	7	64 to 47	80 to 56	2.2
MAY	70 to 51	73 to 51	8	74 to 55	79 to 56	2.3
JUN	75 to 56	72 to 51	8	79 to 60	81 to 56	4.0
JUL	79 to 59	76 to 48	7	84 to 64	79 to 50	2.5
AUG	79 to 59	76 to 48	7	84 to 64	81 to 50	2.3
SEP	71 to 52	82 to 52	5	75 to 56	86 to 54	2.2
OCT	59 to 43	86 to 60	5	65 to 48	87 to 63	2.0
NOV	45 to 34	87 to 75	8	52 to 40	90 to 78	2.2
DEC	38 to 28	86 to 79	8	42 to 32	89 to 84	2.3

MONTH	RUSE, BULGARIA			BUCHAREST, ROMANIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	36 to 27	88 to 81	12	36 to 23	94 to 81	8
FEB	40 to 29	88 to 76	11	39 to 25	94 to 75	7
MAR	52 to 37	83 to 62	11	50 to 33	93 to 63	11
APR	64 to 46	80 to 52	10	62 to 42	94 to 56	14
MAY	74 to 55	81 to 52	11	72 to 51	94 to 54	14
JUN	80 to 61	83 to 53	10	79 to 58	96 to 55	14
JUL	84 to 64	81 to 49	7	82 to 60	97 to 51	11
AUG	83 to 63	81 to 49	6	82 to 59	96 to 49	10
SEP	77 to 58	82 to 50	6	75 to 52	96 to 49	10
OCT	64 to 47	85 to 62	7	63 to 43	95 to 60	11
NOV	48 to 37	88 to 78	10	47 to 33	96 to 78	11
DEC	40 to 31	89 to 84	11	38 to 27	95 to 85	10

MONTH	VIENNA, AUSTRIA			PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
<b>JAN</b>	39 to 31	84 to 75	1	34 to 24	91 to 84	15
<b>FEB</b>	43 to 33	82 to 68	2	36 to 25	92 to 76	12
<b>MAR</b>	50 to 38	81 to 62	4	46 to 32	89 to 63	16
<b>APR</b>	61 to 46	76 to 54	2	54 to 36	83 to 51	16
<b>MAY</b>	70 to 55	76 to 54	7	64 to 45	79 to 53	17
<b>JUN</b>	75 to 59	76 to 57	4	69 to 51	80 to 55	17
<b>JUL</b>	80 to 63	76 to 54	7	72 to 54	81 to 54	18
<b>AUG</b>	80 to 64	78 to 54	5	73 to 53	85 to 53	16
<b>SEP</b>	70 to 57	84 to 61	5	65 to 48	90 to 60	15
<b>OCT</b>	60 to 48	86 to 65	2	54 to 39	91 to 68	16
<b>NOV</b>	47 to 39	86 to 75	3	41 to 32	91 to 83	17
<b>DEC</b>	40 to 33	85 to 78	2	36 to 28	90 to 85	14

## ABOARD YOUR SHIP

---

### ***M/S River Harmony, M/S River Rhapsody, M/S River Concerto, M/S River Aria & M/S River Adagio***

Our private fleet of custom-built river ships—with designs incorporating suggestions from Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers—offers a host of amenities to make you feel right at home. Each ship is designed to carry a moderate number of travelers, ensuring an intimate shipboard atmosphere, plus the ease of maneuverability that's so important when entering small river ports. Amenities on each ship include a restaurant with panoramic windows and wraparound promenade, sun deck with lounge chairs, a whirlpool, library, sauna, bar, lounge, dance floor, and small souvenir shop.

By owning our ships, we can assure that you'll be sharing this unique travel experience with only like-minded Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers. You'll find your ship to be an intimate haven that's especially conducive to camaraderie. We'll all be together for the joint celebrations, such as the Welcome Cocktail Party, where you'll experience the gala ambiance of a larger group. At other times, such as when we venture ashore, we'll break into smaller groups with individual Program Directors to allow for more intimate and personal discoveries.

#### **Included features of all Grand Circle Cruise Line European river ship cabins:**

- A layout of at least 150 square feet
- All outside cabins
- Individual climate control (heat and air conditioning)
- Twin beds that ship staff convert into a daytime couch
- Storage space under beds of 57 inches x 22.8 inches x 11.8 inches (length + width + height)
- Sufficient closet and dresser space
- Color TV, including CNN programming and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Direct-dial international telephone
- Hair dryer
- Desk
- Private bath with shower

Cabins on the Serenade deck have small balconies with sliding doors; those on the Sonata deck have large picture windows; cabins on the Cantata deck have two picture windows, and Prelude Deck cabins have a square window, placed high in the cabin. For safety reasons, cabin windows do not open.

**An important word:** While our fleet features larger-than-usual riverboat cabins, please keep in mind that these ships are river vessels, not large ocean cruise ships. Riverboat cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

## **Cabin Assignments**

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Account at [www.gct.com/myaccount](http://www.gct.com/myaccount). However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

## **Dining**

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Complimentary house wine, draft beer, and a selection of soft drinks are included with both lunch and dinner. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20–35 per bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available at meals and from the machine in the reception area.

**Open-table, single seating for all meals:** Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

**Dining times:** Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

- Early bird breakfast: 6:00–7:00 am
- Breakfast: 7:00–9:00 am
- Lunch: 1:00–2:00 pm
- Dinner: 7:00–9:00 pm

**Celebrations:** Recognition of an anniversary or birthday can be accommodated. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure.

**Dress code:** The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

### **Electricity**

Cabin bathrooms are equipped with a 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with Type C "Europlug" outlets.

### **Embarkation/Disembarkation**

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available at around noon. The restaurant will open at 12:30 pm and serve a light lunch. On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after 8:00am. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the sun deck until disembarkation.

### **Dock and Landing Etiquette**

River waterways are simply not big enough to support large landing docks such as those built on ocean shorelines. It is common for river ships to tie up alongside each other at some piers—particularly in ports where docking area is restricted. While we try to arrange the most convenient mooring available in each port of call, outboard boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore.

### **Headsets**

During your trip, complimentary headsets, or *Whispers* receivers, are provided on our guided tours through the cities we visit. These receivers and headsets allow you to hear your Program Director and our local guides better. If use a hearing aid or have strong preferences for headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headsets/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by iPods, computer jacks, etc.

### **Wireless Internet Access**

Limited Wireless Internet service is available for free in the cabins and common areas on board your Grand Circle Cruise Line ship. If you want to use the WiFi connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. To use the WiFi, please visit Reception after you board for access information. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong 3G cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration.

### **Laundry and Linen Service**

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Bed linens are changed once a week (i.e. twice during a 14-night cruise); towels are changed daily.



## **Medical Care**

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. In addition to an emergency call button in all cabins, ships also feature fully staffed reception desks, 24 hours a day.

## **Onboard Activities**

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, organized discussions, group activities that relate to the region (may include a language lesson), and talks on upcoming ports of call.

## **Recreational Facilities**

These include a fitness center, sun deck with lounge, library, and lounge with bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines). Prices are in Euros. The fitness center has an exercise bike and walking/running treadmill. A massage therapist is available as well (prices listed on board).

## **Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy**

Smoking is not allowed anywhere inside our Grand Circle Cruise Line European River Ships, including in individual cabins or balconies. The only area on the ship where smoking is permitted is outside on the sun deck.

## **Elevator/Chairlift**

Each ship has an elevator and chairlift service to the sun deck from the deck below (or you can use the staircase to the sun deck, which has one flight of ten to twelve steps). The elevator does not provide service to or from the Prelude Deck. The staircase to/from the Prelude Deck features about six stairs, with a banister to hold on to. The chairlift is a single-seat transport that slides up the staircase banister.

## **Passport Procedures**

For your convenience, your passport will be held by the hotel manager after embarkation and returned to you on disembarkation day. This is standard ship's procedure, and is designed to speed up border crossings and to ensure the crew has all the necessary documents on hand during potential controls in our ports of call.

## **Lost & Found**

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

# Ship Specifications

## *M/S River Adagio*

- **History:** Built in 2003
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 38 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes

## *M/S River Aria*

- **History:** Built in 2001
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 40 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes

## *M/S River Concerto*

- **History:** Built in 2000
- **Size:** 361x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 140 passengers, 32 crew members
- **Layout:** 70 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes

## *M/S River Harmony*

- **History:** Built in 1999
- **Size:** 361x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 140 passengers, 32 crew members
- **Layout:** 70 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes

## *M/S River Rhapsody*

- **History:** Built in 1999
- **Size:** 361x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 140 passengers, 32 crew members
- **Layout:** 70 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

---

### **Your Program Director**

Grand Circle Cruise Line is committed to showing you a destination through the perspective of those who live, work, and play there. How better to do that than to have a resident with you every step of the way? We are proud to be the only cruise line to provide you the dedicated services of an expert Program Director, a resident or native of the country who is delighted to share their in-depth knowledge of local history, culture, and hidden gems.

Fluent in English and skilled in fostering camaraderie among travelers, our Program Directors are constantly cited by our travelers as the main reason they continue to travel with us. During your cruise, you'll enjoy multiple Program Directors aboard your ship, who will each be with you and your group of 25-47 travelers throughout your journey—both on ship and on land. And with personal headsets on every included and optional tour, you'll be able to enjoy their perspective and enthusiasm as you explore at a level deeper than most Americans go.

### **The Danube River**

The Danube River is the second-longest river in Europe and the only major European river to flow from west to east. It rises in the Black Forest region of Germany and flows in a generally easterly direction for a distance of 1,766 miles before emptying, on the Romanian coast, into the Black Sea. This legendary river not only shaped the destinies of all the countries that line its banks, but influenced the whole continent as no other European river ever could.

The Danube river basin is more than 300,000 square miles and includes parts of Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldavia, and Ukraine. The river is ancient and full of history, passing through the cities of Ulm, Regensburg, and Passau in Germany; Linz and Vienna in Austria; Bratislava in Slovakia; Budapest in Hungary; Belgrade in Serbia and Galatzi and Brăila in Romania. Canals link the Danube to the Main and Rhine, providing a commercial route between the Black and North Seas.

The strategic location of this great river was recognized centuries ago by Roman emperors who sought to control it. Ruins from that period now perch on banks above the river, reminding you of the Danube's multifaceted past. Even today, the Danube continues to be one of Europe's greatest assets, in part because it provides a water link between the four national capitals on its banks: Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, and Belgrade. Back in the heyday of river transport, other great cities grew up along the Danube's banks too, serving as ports for the various cargo being carried on the river, namely salt, wood, and ores. These same products now are transferred on the railroad and highways, which run alongside the Danube's course.

There is no question that few river voyages can match the romantic appeal of a journey down the Danube. Here is the heart of the lilting Strauss waltzes, of myth-laden castles, Old World villages, and rolling vineyards. As you sail along this twisting river, stopping at fascinating ports, you'll gain an understanding of the art, music, and culture of a fabled region with a history that stretches back more than 3,000 years.

## **Culture & Points to Know**

### **Language**

Generally your Program Director will provide you with language reference materials or may even lead a quick language lesson. We encourage you to try a few words for fun; even just “please” and “thank you” will take you a long way towards better interactions with the locals.

### **History and Politics**

Traveling inside the Iron Curtain would have seemed an impossible dream just a couple of decades ago; today it is a reality. In the years since the collapse of the communist system the former Eastern Block countries have struggled to regain their independence. Almost 50 years of totalitarian rule left difficult political, economic, and cultural legacies, but enormous amounts of energy have been invested in rebuilding for the future. Today the Eastern European nations are proud of what they have achieved and are eager to engage visitors on the subjects of politics and history. We encourage you to ask questions, but don't be surprised if not everyone agrees!

In particular, the countries of the former Federative Republic of Yugoslavia have their own story to tell about the not-too-distant civil war. Again, please feel free to ask questions, but also understand that for some the war was very traumatic and they may not wish to discuss it in detail.

### **Religion**

The religion in Eastern Europe is predominantly Christian, either Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. Since religion was largely suppressed during the communist era, many are returning to their religious roots with a new enthusiasm. The most important religious holidays are Christmas and Easter. Fasting for 40 days before Easter Sunday is a popular tradition, especially in the countryside. The fast is broken with a big meal on Easter, usually lamb with a lot of vegetables and side dishes. An interesting difference between the two major branches of Christianity in this part of the world: whereas Catholic priests are forbidden to marry, Orthodox priests are expected to. It is common for an Orthodox priest to marry within his parish, thus cementing his relationship with the community.

### **Visiting a Home**

A handshake is an appropriate greeting for a first-time meeting. Longtime friends or family may kiss on the cheek. Men introduced to a woman for the first time should wait to see if she offers her hand. If not, a friendly “hello” and a smile will do.

It is considered polite to give a small gift to the host or the hostess, but it is not required. A small album with photos of your hometown would be a useful icebreaker and would be an appropriate gift. Exchanging e-mail addresses is a common practice, especially if you wish to send a photo taken with the host or hostess from your visit. You may be repeatedly offered food or drink, even if you decline.

A common welcome drink is the famous (and potent) plum brandy, widely known as “slivovitz”. Many people still make this at home themselves. After a meal, it is considered polite to offer to clear the dishes and/or complement the chef. Offers of tea or coffee are common, sometimes even in shops or businesses.

### **Language Barrier**

You can have some great “conversations” with local people who do not speak English, even if you don’t speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Keep in mind, however, that it is always good form to know at least a few words in the local language.

### **Taking Photographs**

The etiquette of photographing most people in Europe is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

### **Safety & Security**

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don’t be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash in your pocket. Carry most of your money, and your passport, in a travel pouch or money belt under your shirt. Replenish your pocket supply when you are in a safe and quiet place, or in our vehicle. Don’t leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize them.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful. Con artists sometimes target travelers.

## Cuisine in Croatia

In Croatia, you can sample fresh seafood, including oysters, accompanied by local wines. The Zinfandel grape originated here, so you may want to try a local wine made from it. Croatia also has a stronger alcoholic beverage, *rakija*, in several differently flavored or spiced varieties, such as *travarica*, which has added herbs is one regional specialty. In Dalmatia, local dishes include *pasticada* (stuffed beef cooked in wine), a black risotto, and *prsut*, a distinctively flavored smoked ham. For a sweet treat in Dubrovnik, order the caramel cream called *rozata*.

## Cuisine in the Czech Republic

The foods of the Czech Republic are hearty and rich, their flavors influenced by German cooking, and they tend toward meaty dishes accompanied by sauces and gravies. The three items that are nationwide favorites are pork, dumplings, and cabbage.

Thick soups offer some of the strongest flavors on a typical menu, with garlic, onion, and fish soup being among the tastiest. Pork as a main course is often a seasoned brisket that is breaded and fried. Another mainstay is *svickova*, slices of oven-braised beef served with a rich sauce of sour cream and cranberries. Restaurants also may offer baked chicken, smoked hams, and wild game, such as rabbit, duck, or venison. As the country is landlocked, fish usually comes from freshwater fish farms and includes perch, trout, and carp. Seafood such as shellfish or shark is sometimes offered at restaurants, but is usually fairly expensive.

Accompanying almost every meal is the ubiquitous dumpling, or *knedlik*. The lighter dumplings are made from wheat flour, while the hearty and denser version is created using potato flour. The rolled dough is boiled and served in slices with a gravy or sauce. The vegetable that graces most dinners is the *zeli*, or cabbage. The cabbage is often cooked in a lightly sweetened sauce. Condiments include fruit chutney, horseradish, mustard, and tartar sauce. Vegetarian main courses may be quite difficult to find, but dishes of root crops such as carrots, turnips, beets, and of course potatoes are plentiful. For cheese lovers, there's *smazeny syr*, a delectable breaded cheese, fried until its center is creamy.

You can top off your meal with sweet delights. Desserts offered are thin pancakes with fillings of chocolate, fruit, or marmalade. And in case you didn't have your fill of dumplings with the main course, you can savor one for dessert. The chefs fill them with apricots, cherries, or strawberries and sprinkle them festively with powdered sugar.

While in Prague, don't miss the opportunity to sample some of the delightful beers born of the region's fields of cultivated hops. Pubs are in integral part of the Czech neighborhood life, and the nation brews some of the best beer in the world. In the town of Plzen, the brewing of beer dates as far back as the founding of the town, in 1295. Plzen is internationally known for its award-winning Pilsener Urquell, and there are numerous other local beers that perfectly accompany the region's hearty dining. To conclude your culinary explorations, you might consider capping the night with a taste of *Becherovka*, a unique herbal liqueur from the Karlovy Vary area.

## Cuisine in Hungary

Hungary has a tasty national cuisine all its own. Many dishes are seasoned with paprika, which appears on restaurant tables beside the salt and pepper. Although paprika originated in Central America, the peasants of Szeged have been growing it since the early 18th century and it's now as important to Hungarian cuisine as the tomato is to Italian cuisine.

Hungarian goulash (*gulyas*) is a thick beef soup cooked with onions and potatoes. What we think of as goulash is here called *porkolt*, meat stewed with onions and paprika. If sour cream is added to *porkolt* it becomes *paprikas*. Pork is the most common meat dish. Cabbage is an important vegetable in Hungary, either stuffed in the Turkish fashion (*toltott kaposzta*) or made into a thick cabbage soup (*kaposzta leves*).

Other delicacies include goose-liver sandwiches and paprika chicken (*paprikas csirke*) served with tiny dumplings. Fisherman's soup (*halaszle*) is a rich mixture of several kinds of boiled fish, tomatoes, green peppers, and paprika. It's a full meal in itself. Balaton Lake pike (*sullo*) is generally served breaded and grilled. Noodles with cottage cheese and tiny cubes of crisp fried bacon (*turos csusza*) go well with fish dishes. Hungarian cream cheese (*korozott*) is a mixture of sheep cheese, paprika, and caraway seeds. Strudel (*retes*) is a typical layered pastry filled with apple, cherry, cabbage, curd, or cheese.

Some dishes for vegetarians to request are *rantott sajt* (fried cheese), *rantott gomba* (fried mushrooms), *gomba leves* (mushroom soup), *gyumolcs leves* (fruit soup), *sajtos kenyér* (sliced bread with melted cheese), and *turos csusza* (cottage cheese).

## Cuisine in Romania

Romanian cuisine was rather famous before the country fell behind the Iron Curtain, when the food became as drab as everyday life under communism. Today, however, Romanian cuisine is inching its way back to sumptuousness.

**Breakfast:** Romanian breakfasts are large and varied, with cold meats, cheeses, eggs, and skinless sausages. Pork or chicken in aspic is called *piftie* and often served.

**Soups:** A national favorite is the hearty soup called *ciorba*. This is a sour soup made from fermented bran, vegetables, parsley, dill, and beef or chicken. Try it with a bit of sour cream and green or pickled pepper, and the taste will grow on you. For the more adventurous, try *Ciorba de burta*, a tripe soup made with sour cream, vinegar, and garlic sauce. Or a rich bean soup with vegetables and smoked pork. This is usually eaten with onions and vinegar or lemons to balance the richness.

**Main courses:** Pork stuffed with ham and cheese under a sauce, and beef stuffed with mushrooms, bacon, peppers, and a tomato puree are both popular. *Sarmale* is a spicy dish of cabbage leaves stuffed with meat. *Mititei* is small, skinless, grilled sausages made of a mix of minced pork, lamb, beef, and spices. If ever a meal could be considered truly Romanian, it would be *mititei* with mustard and a cold beer!



The Danube carp cooked on a spit is a well-known treat. Other Danube fish, like zander, pike, perch, and catfish are delicious served grilled with a light garlic sauce and polenta. Rainbow trout from the Carpathians are also served grilled, usually with a potato salad as a side dish.

**Cheeses:** Sheep's milk cheese is very popular and typically served with polenta (in the summer and autumn) or with a vegetable salad.

**Desserts:** Pastries and doughnuts, usually with a cheese filling, are excellent and a matter of some local pride.

**Wines:** Romania is a wine producing country, specializing in reds and dry and demi-sec whites.

## **Budapest in Brief**

### **City Layout and Details**

Budapest is divided by the Duna (Danube River) into a right and left bank. Of the city's three main districts, two—Buda and Obuda—are found on the west bank; Pest is on the east bank. Most of the major shopping venues, the House Parliament, the National Museum, Museum of Applied Arts, and Museum of Fine Arts are located in Pest. Buda, on the west bank, is the site of Castle Hill, Fishermen's Bastion, Matthias Church, and the National Gallery. In essence, Pest is the hub for dining, shopping, banking, and nightlife; and Buda contains the historical and cultural part of the city. The main shopping street in Pest is Vaci Utca, now a pedestrian zone, which runs parallel to the Danube and is every bit as elegant as the Merceria in Venice or the Faubourg-St.-Honore in Paris.

### **Local Transportation**

The public transportation system in Budapest—a metro (subway), buses, streetcars, and trolleybuses—is economical, efficient, and simple to use, but closes down around 11:00 pm. Certain trams and buses run on a limited schedule all night. A day ticket (napijegy) allows unlimited travel on all services within the city limits. You can also buy tickets for single rides from metro stations or tobacco shops. You can travel on all trams, buses, and on the subway with this ticket, but you can't change lines. Bus, streetcar, and trolleybus tickets must be canceled on board. Don't get caught without a ticket: spot checks are frequent, and you can be fined if you don't possess one.

## **Bucharest in Brief**

### **City Layout and Details**

Once known as the Paris of the Balkans, before World War II and decades of communism wore the sheen off the city, Bucharest has refurbished itself in recent years and now welcomes visitors to its broad boulevards, small cafés, and historic monuments. Away from downtown, Bucharest is a sprawling metropolis with identical, somewhat drab neighborhoods that make it easy to get lost. The Intercontinental Hotel towers above everything else and is a good



marker for locating downtown. The twelve-story Palace of Parliament, built during the reign of Nicolae Ceausescu, houses the president's office, the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate, the central committee, and all the state ministries. Guided tours through this monumental, 3,100-room complex are available.

The Calea Victoriei is Bucharest's main street and most famous thoroughfare, but you may want to start at the Princely Court, the palace that was home to the 15th-century ruler who was the real-life evil inspiration for Bram Stoker's creepy classic *Dracula*. Here you can still see the thick fortress walls that were originally built from river stones. The huge cellars cover such a large area that surrounding shops and restaurants are often attached to the complex through a below-ground maze. South along Calea Victoriei is the Strada Lipscani, a four-block area of artisans, crafts, and shops that showcase the old Bucharest.

Bucharest has a mixed architectural heritage. Exposed to numerous invaders over the centuries it lacks much of the classic Renaissance feel that older European cities display. The older sections of Bucharest, such as Strada Lipscani, give a glimpse of Bucharest's eastern influences with their narrow streets and crowded bazaars. Late 19th-century influences tended toward the French with the result that Bucharest seems a near modern European capital city, at least in places. In particular, the Calea Victoriei between Revolution Square and Victory Square is worth a look.

The Curtea Veche Church, a 16th-century structure, is next to the Princely Court, and nearby is the Hanul Manuc, a 19th-century hotel that remains a fine place to stop. The Stavropoleos Church, built in 1742, is a good example of the Byzantine influence in the city. The History Museum has a wonderful collection of ornaments, gold, and precious stones. Revolution Square and the palace of the Republic are reminders of the days of the country's last communist dictator, the tyrannical Nicolae Ceausescu.

The streets in Bucharest beyond Victory Square lead out of town. Note the French influence exhibited by the Arc de Triomphe, which honors the Romanian dead from World War I. The Village Museum on Soseaua Kiseleff is full of good examples of pastoral Romanian architecture through the ages. A nearby lake and park are good spots for relaxing or even hiring a boat for a small excursion.

## **Local Transportation**

Most sights are concentrated in the city center. Bucharest's public transit network consists of a metro system, trams, and buses. There are four subway lines with tickets sold from kiosks inside the station. Buses and maxi taxis (minibuses that stop on request) are readily available up to 11 pm. There are five maxi taxi routes in the city and tickets can be bought on board. You can hail a taxi on the street, but it is easier to have your hotel call a dispatcher. If you choose to use a taxi at a taxi stand or one you hail on the street, definitely agree on a price beforehand! In general, transportation is quite cheap in Bucharest.

# Prague in Brief

## City Layout and Details

Prague, an ancient and historic city, is the capital of the Czech Republic (made up of Bohemia, Moravia, and part of Silesia). The city, located at the crossroads of Europe, is both ancient and modern and possesses a palpable energy. Getting around Prague can be a bit tricky—many of the streets are small, narrow cobblestone paths that seem to wind about endlessly. But the “city of 1,000 spires” is one of the most beautiful you will ever see.

Prague is really a series of five historic towns welded together to form one great city. The river Vltava slices through Prague, giving the city its distinctive bridges. Hradcany, the castle district, is on the river’s west bank with Prague Castle and St. Vitus cathedral nearby. Below this section lies Mala Strana (the Lesser Quarter) with buildings dating back to the 13th century. Petrin Hill to the south offers wonderful views out over the city. On the east bank of the river is Stare Mesto (Old Town) with its large central square. Nearby is Josefov, the former Jewish ghetto. Nove Mesto (New Town, though parts of it go back to the 14th century) stretches around parts of Stare Mesto and historic Wenceslas Square. The Charles Bridge, a city landmark, stretches over the Vltava and links much of the city.

Ruzyne airport is in the western suburbs of the city. The Prague Information Service offers good information about Prague and is located in Old Town Square. The Tourist Office (Cedok) at Na Prikope is also a good place for information and maps.

Prague is a lovely city for walking so be sure to stroll the Royal Way, which takes you by some of the city’s architectural treasures, including Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral. In Hradcany stop to see the Strahov Monastery and the Summer Palace. If you are a fan of classical music you’ll want to stop in at the Smetana Hall in Obecni Dum. The Museum of the City of Prague in northern Nove Mesto is an impressive and interesting stop. Wenceslas Square in Old Town and Josefov in Stare Mesto both offer excellent walking and sightseeing opportunities.

## Local Transportation

**Subway:** Prague’s modern subway system—the Metro—is easy to use and spotlessly clean. It provides the simplest and fastest means of transportation, and most new maps of Prague mark the routes. Subways run daily from 5 am to midnight with trains every two minutes during peak hours, slowing down to every ten to fifteen minutes by late in the evening. There are several lines, each a different color, which intersect at various points in the city center and the route plans are easy to follow. Once inside the Metro, acquaint yourself with these words: vystup means exit, and prestup means connection.

**Tram/Bus:** You’ll probably stick to the Metro, but a bus ride can be a good way to see some of the city, especially if you want to venture farther out. You need to buy a new ticket every time you change vehicles.

**Taxi:** These are not recommended, as some drivers try to take advantage of tourists and inflate the price, possibly by driving miles out of the way. If you must take a taxi, it is best to use the hotel's taxi service—it is a little more expensive than taxis found at taxi stands but it is more reliable. Another choice is to ask the hotel to contact AAA Taxi for you (or call them at 233 113 311)—AAA Taxi is also dependable and they speak English. If you choose instead to use a taxi at a taxi stand or one you hail on the street, definitely agree on a price beforehand!

**Punch your ticket on the Metro, trams, and buses:** For the Metro, punch the ticket in the station before getting on the escalators; for buses and trams, punch the ticket inside the vehicle.

## Vienna in Brief

### City Layout and Details

Vienna's "Ring," once the location of the city walls and today a broad boulevard in the inner zone (the oldest part of the city), encircles most main sights. In the center is Stephansplatz, site of the city's famous St. Stephen's Cathedral. Just a short walk away is the Hofburg (the Habsburgs' official residence), the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Art History Museum), and the Staatsoper. The pedestrian thoroughfare, Kaernter Strasse, is the city's major shopping venue; it runs from Stephansplatz past the Staatsoper to Karlsplatz. The "Ring" itself is two and one half miles long and 187 feet wide. Constructed in the mid 19th century to protect Vienna from outside threats, the Ring encircles the Old City. All sites inside the Ring are part of the First Bezirk (or 1st precinct, designated by the #1010 in addresses). The remainder of the city is also sectioned into precincts.

### Local Transportation

Vienna is divided into 23 numbered districts. Most sights are concentrated in the city center, the 1st District, which is largely a pedestrian zone and easily reached by public transportation. Many 1st District attractions are within walking distance of one another. You can walk from one end of the Old City to the other in about 30 minutes. Even the walk from the Ring to either train station is only a half hour or so. Beyond this central hub, districts proceed from the 2nd on up to the 23rd.

Vienna's transit network consists of five U-Bahn (subway) lines, trams, buses, and several rapid transit and commuter trains. Ask your Program Director or hotel concierge for more information about the best options available for obtaining tickets to your desired destination.

**Note on Ticket Validation:** You must validate all tickets yourself by inserting them into machines at the entryway of S-Bahn and U-Bahn platforms or on buses and trams. When entering streetcars, look for a blue box with a white "E," which is for validating tickets.

## Cuisine

Viennese cuisine is the culmination of various ethnic influences, including Bohemian, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovenian, German, and Italian. Wild game, fish, poultry, and beef dishes are popular. The following are some local specialties.

**Soups:** Griessnockerlsuppe (clear soup with semolina dumplings), rindsuppe (beef broth), and gulaschsuppe (Hungarian goulash soup).

**Main courses:** Familiar dishes are Bauernschmaus (a combination of many varied sausages and pork items with sauerkraut and dumplings), Tafelspitz (boiled beef with vegetables), Wiener schnitzel (breaded veal or pork cutlet), Schweinebraten (roast pork), Backhendl (fried and breaded chicken), and Gulasch (stew). Nockerl are little dumplings, usually served with sauce.

**Desserts:** Vienna's apfelstrudel (apple strudel) is probably the best in the world. palatschinken are light, sugared pancakes; klaiserschmarren is a diced omelet, served with jam and sprinkled with sugar. And of course, don't miss the famous Sachertorte!

**Coffee:** Austrian coffee, of which there are at least 20 varieties, is delicious and not to be missed. Introduced 300 years ago by the Turks during their unsuccessful attempt to conquer Vienna, coffee has become an art form, served in veritable institutions known as the Viennese coffeehouses. Among the many kinds of coffee are kleiner schwarzer, a small cup without milk; the melange, large cup with foamy milk; mokka, strong black Viennese coffee; kapuziner, same as melange but topped with whipped cream; and tuerkischer, Turkish coffee boiled in a small copper pot and served in tiny cups.

## Shopping

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

## Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

## Crafts & Souvenirs

### Austria

Popular buys include glassware, crystal, porcelain, petit point, musical instruments and scores, fur hats, ski wear, and, of course, lederhosen (leather pants), loden-cloth coats, and sachertorte (chocolate cake). But be forewarned: the quality of Austrian wares is exceptionally high, and so are the prices!

**Value Added Tax:** In Austria, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 10% to 30%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

### Bulgaria

Traditional items include rose oil (or rose water), ceramics, *kilims* (a colorful, flat woolen rug), copper, wood carvings, woolen items, jewelry, tablecloths and lace, and bells.

### Croatia

Typical Croatian souvenirs include gingerbread hearts (*Licitar*), lavender oil, olive oil, red coral jewelry (note that red coral is illegal import into the U.S. but allowed if in jewelry), neckties, vegetable spices, Zagrebacki melem ointment, and ballpoint pens.

### Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic many stores sell a wide range of crafts and tourist goods, such as Bohemian glass, porcelain, crystal, peasant pottery, wooden toys, jewelry, and folk carvings. Modern artwork and crafts are sold at private art galleries.

### Hungary

Look for exquisite Herend porcelain, cut glass, fine peasant embroidery and needlework, homespun cloth, carpets, charming carved wood objects and, of course, dolls in national dress. Other excellent buys are recordings of classical and folk music.

### Romania

Bucharest is renowned for its hand-woven carpets, which can be purchased from several authorized retailers in the city. For real bargains consider crystal, porcelain, ceramics, and china, of which good-quality items can be purchased at relatively low prices in local shops. Local arts and crafts can be purchased at Artizanat stores that specialize in dolls, masks, and embroidered objects made by local craftspeople.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

# DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

---

## Europe

### Austria

#### Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 32,382 square miles
- **Capital:** Vienna
- **Languages:** German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
- **Location:** Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
- **Population:** 8,665,550 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 73.8%, Protestant 4.9%, Muslim 4.2%, Orthodox 2.2%, other 0.8%, none 12%, unspecified 2%
- **Time Zone:** Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

#### National Holidays: Austria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Austria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/26 National Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

#### Historical Overview of Austria

Once a powerful empire and later an occupied land, Austria now sits at the heart of Central Europe as a neutral state that shares borders with the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Switzerland.

Originally settled by Celts and later conquered by Romans and Charlemagne, Austria arrived on the world stage when its Habsburg family rose to power, a dynasty that ruled much of Europe for six centuries. Evidence of its proud Imperial past can still be seen in its capital, Vienna, a city showcasing the Old World charm that has for centuries helped it stand out—even in the company of other great European cities. This is a city of museums and music, art and architecture, and notable names from a storied past. Here, you can walk the same streets Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Freud strolled while conducting their daily business. Once the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna came to symbolize the splendor of an age, and its Baroque palaces and avenues, lined with architectural standouts, still exude a sense of enduring Imperial elegance and dignity.

Following the events of World War I, however, the Austrian empire was reduced to a smaller republic. During World War II, it was annexed by Germany and later controlled by the Allies. The period of occupation ended in 1955, when the Austrian State Treaty recognized its independence and declared its permanent neutrality. Today, Austria is home to international organizations and continues to thrive as a meeting point between east and west.

## Bulgaria

### Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 42,811 square miles
- **Capital:** Sofia
- **Language:** Bulgarian is the official language. English is usually understood in major hotels and restaurants but it is infrequently used in other settings. It is important to note that in Bulgaria, nodding the head means “no” and shaking the head means “yes.”
- **Location:** Bulgaria lies on the Black Sea in southeastern Europe, on the eastern part of the Balkans, with beautiful beaches on its coastline, the mountainous Balkan Range inland, and the fertile plains of the Danube in the north. Its borders touch Romania, Greece, Turkey, the Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia. Within the two great valleys of this country are nestled small villages where carts, not cars, are the main form of transportation.
- **Population:** 7,186,893 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Eastern Orthodox 59.4%, Muslim 7.8%, Other 1.7 %, None 3.7%, and unspecified 27.4 %
- **Time Zone:** Bulgaria is on Eastern European Time, which is seven hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in Washington D.C., it is 7 pm in Sofia. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.



## National Holidays: Bulgaria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Bulgaria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

03/03 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/06 St. George's Day

05/24 Culture and Literacy Day

09/06 Unification Day

09/22 Independence Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

## Croatia

### Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 21,851 square miles
- **Capital:** Zagreb
- **Government:** Presidential/parliamentary democracy
- **Language:** Croatian (Hrvatski), with Italian, German, and English also spoken by some.
- **Location:** Croatia is situated between the Pannonian Plain and the Adriatic Sea in southeastern Europe. Irregularities of its Adriatic coastline have created over 1,000 islands. The region in the north of Croatia is a highland area with a mountainous climate.
- **Geography:** Croatia is located in Southeastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. The terrain of Croatia is geographically diverse; flat plains along Hungarian border, low mountains and highlands near Adriatic coast, coastline, and islands.
- **Population:** 4,464,844 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 86.3%, Orthodox 4.4%, Muslim 1.5%, other 1.5%, unspecified 2.5%, none 3.8%
- **Time Zone:** Croatia is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

## National Holidays: Croatia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Croatia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Corpus Christi. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

06/25 Statehood Day

08/05 Homeland Thanksgiving Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/08 Independence Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/25 Christmas

12/26 St Stephen's Day

## Historical Overview of Croatia

The Croats are believed to be a purely Slavic people who migrated from present day Poland and settled in present-day Croatia during the 6th century. After a period of self-rule, Croats agreed to the Pacta Conventa in 1091, submitting themselves to Hungarian authority. By the mid-1400s, concerns over Ottoman expansion led the Croatian Assembly to invite the Habsburgs, under Archduke Ferdinand, to assume control over Croatia. Habsburg rule proved successful in thwarting the Ottomans, and by the 18th century, much of Croatia was free of Turkish control.

In 1868, Croatia gained domestic autonomy while remaining under Hungarian authority. Following World War I and the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Croatia joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes became Yugoslavia in 1929). Yugoslavia changed its name once again after World War II. The new state became the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and united Croatia and several other states together under the communistic leadership of Marshal Tito.

After the death of Tito and the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav federation began to crumble. Croatia held its first multi-party elections since World War II in 1990. Long-time Croatian nationalist Franjo Tudjman was elected President, and one year later, Croats declared independence from Yugoslavia. Conflict between Serbs and Croats in Croatia escalated, and one month after Croatia declared independence, war erupted.

The United Nations mediated a cease-fire in January 1992, but hostilities resumed the next year when Croatia fought to regain one-third of the territory lost the previous year. A second cease-fire was enacted in May 1993, followed by a joint declaration the next January between Croatia and Yugoslavia. However, in September 1993, the Croatian Army led an offensive against the Serb-held Republic of Krajina. A third cease-fire was called in March 1994, but it, too, was broken in May and August 1995 after Croatian forces regained large portions of Krajina, prompting an exodus of Serbs from this area. In November 1995, Croatia agreed to peacefully reintegrate Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Dirmium under terms of the

Erdut Agreement. In December 1995, the Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian governments signed the Dayton peace agreement, making a commitment to a permanent cease-fire and the return of all refugees.

The death of President Tudjman in December 1999, followed by the election of a coalition government and president in early 2000, brought significant changes to Croatia. The government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Ivica Racan, progressed in implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, regional cooperation, refugee returns, national reconciliation, and democratization.

These changes, along with the November 23, 2003 national elections, which ushered in Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, lead the European Commission to report favorably on the country's development, and to encourage Croatia to apply for EU (European Union) membership. Negotiations began in 2004 but were slowed down by resistance from Slovenia, due to concerns about the designation of their border with Croatia. In September 2009, when Jadranka Kosor took over as Croatia's Prime Minister, she reached an agreement with the Slovenians that ended the blockade, allowing negotiations to continue. Croatia officially became a member of the EU in July 2013.

## Czech Republic

### Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 30,451 square miles
- **Capital:** Prague
- **Languages:** Czech is the official language.
- **Ethnicities:** Czech 64.3%, Moravian 5%, Slovak 1.4%, other 29.3%
- **Location:** The Czech Republic is bordered by Austria, Slovakia, and Poland.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic comprises the ancient provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, with a mountainous rim on the German border to the west.
- **Population:** 10,644,842 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 10.4%, Protestant 1.1%, other or unspecified 54%, none 34.5%
- **Time Zone:** The Czech Republic on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Prague.

## National Holidays: Czech Republic

In addition to the holidays listed below, the Czech Republic celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/08 Victory in Europe Day

07/05 Saints Cyril and Methodius

07/06 Jan Hus Day

09/28 St. Wenceslas Day

10/28 Independent Czechoslovak State Day

11/17 Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

## Historical Overview of the Czech Republic

Although it has undergone many changes en route to its present form as a future leader of Eastern Europe, the area known as the Czech Republic has actually been settled since the Neolithic era. Once the seat of Bohemia—a key stronghold of the Holy Roman Republic and later the storied Austro-Hungarian Empire—Czechoslovakia only emerged as an autonomous country after the collapse of the latter following World War I.

The 20th century saw Czechoslovakia come under Communist control until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, when it dissolved (notably without bloodshed) into two nations: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. After centuries of being ruled by monarchs, the country has now become a parliamentary democracy, and much of its economy is fueled by visitors who flock to Prague, its historic capital.

Prague today is a bustling city that retains much of its Old World charm. It lies along both sides of the winding Vltava River, connected by 16 picturesque bridges. Like Rome and San Francisco, the city is built over a series of hills, with varied architecture that spans many centuries. Entering the city, one is struck by the view of its many hilltop neighborhoods, where rows of steeples stand out against the city's skyline, earning Prague the nickname "City of 100 Spires."

Prague owes much of its modern majesty to the fact that while other European capitals were leveled during World War II, Prague survived virtually intact. Among the structures to remain remarkably undamaged was Prague's great landmark, Prague Castle—the largest ancient castle in the world and still the seat of political power. Built during the ninth century, Prague Castle has evolved over the centuries, blending Romanesque, Gothic, and even Spanish architectural styles. Today, it is a sprawling complex of breathtaking enormity and a symbol of Czech unity.

A visit to Stare Mesto, the Old Town, reveals Gothic and Baroque buildings. From there, you might cross over the famous Charles Bridge, built by Charles IV in 1357, which crosses the Vltava River from Stare Mesto to Mala Strana (Lesser Town). Lined with statues and ornate

lampposts, the bridge is reserved for pedestrians and offers views of Prague Castle and the skyline of the medieval city. For 400 years, this bridge was the only river link connecting the two parts of the city.

Prague's attractions do not simply include historical monuments. As it was during the zenith of the Bohemian kingdom, Prague still ranks as the thriving cultural center of the country, reminiscent of Paris in the 1920s. Here you'll find some of Europe's best jazz venues, excellent opera, and innovative theater groups.

## Hungary

### Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 35,911 square miles
- **Capital:** Budapest
- **Languages:** Hungarian (Magyar) is the official language.
- **Ethnicities:** Hungarian 85.6%, Roma 3.2%, German 1.9%, other 2.6%, unspecified 14.1%
- **Location:** Hungary is located in central Europe
- **Geography:** Hungary is a landlocked country that has borders with seven countries: Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia to the east; Serbia–Montenegro and Romania to the south; Ukraine to the northeast; and Slovakia directly to the north. Most of Hungary is a fertile, rolling plain lying east of the Danube River, and drained by the Danube and Tisza Rivers.
- **Population:** 9,897,541 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 37.2%, Calvinist 11.6%, Lutheran 2.2%, Greek Catholic 1.8%, other 1.9%, none 18.2%, unspecified 27.2%
- **Time Zone:** Hungary is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Budapest.

### National Holidays: Hungary

In addition to the holidays listed below, Hungary celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

03/15 1848 Revolution Memorial Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/20 Hungary National Day

10/23 1956 Revolution Memorial Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

## Historical Overview of Hungary

Today Hungary is a parliamentary republic, with a wealth of architecture and ruins left behind from its medieval, Ottoman, and Imperial periods—all of which hints at its multifaceted past.

Though the people of Hungary consider Attila the Hun their first great leader, the Kingdom of Hungary as it exists today began with King Stephen I, who accepted a crown sent by the Pope in 1000 and later went on to be canonized as a saint. The Ottoman and Habsburg empires clashed over the region during the 16th and 17th centuries; by the 18th century, Hungary had become part of the massive Austro-Hungarian protectorate that reigned supreme over much of Europe. The World War I Treaty of Trianon stripped Hungary of much of its territories—including eight of its ten major cities—and the country came under Communist control until 1989.

Modern Hungary is on full display in Budapest, a lively capital city that acts as the political and cultural heart of the nation. This is a city full of monuments to its past, but also a place of arts and culture, cafes and restaurants, and museums and galleries, all enhanced by the presence of the Danube River, which flows through Budapest and divides the city into Pest on the east bank and Buda on the west bank.

While Budapest flourished as a cultural and commercial center in the latter part of the 1800s, the city greatly expanded the number of its buildings to meet the needs of its ever-growing populace. As you walk through the city, you'll see that many of Budapest's structures reflect two architectural styles—Historicism and the more predominant Hungarian Art Nouveau. The variations of this Art Nouveau embellished the façades of buildings with decorative ceramic tiles characteristic of Hungarian folk motifs. The cityscape has retained its Art Nouveau elegance throughout the 20th century and is now protected by its inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Margaret Island is one of the more unusual destinations in Budapest. The island does not allow motorized traffic; buses, horse-drawn carriages, bicycles, and walking are the means of getting around the island. The giant Water Tower building dominates the landscape. There are also the ruins of a convent of Dominican nuns where the island's namesake, Margaret—daughter of the King of Hungary—lived as a nun in the 13th century.

Hungary's modern attractions, which include its lavish thermal spas and noted restaurants, are as popular with visitors as its ancient treasures. It is also known for its prized Tokaj wines, and dishes like goulash and foie gras have become culinary staples around the world.

## Romania

### Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 91,699 square miles
- **Capital:** Bucharest

- **Languages:** Romanian is the official language. Hungarian and German are also spoken.
- **Location:** Romania's location is sometimes described as being in central Europe or sometimes a southeastern Europe.
- **Geography:** The Carpathian Mountains cross the northern half of Romania and connect with the Transylvanian Alps near the central region of the country. Northwest of this mountainous arc is the Transylvanian plateau, and the great plains of Moldavia and Walachia lie to the southeast. The Danube River forms the southern boundary with Bulgaria, and then flows north and then east through Romania, entering the Black Sea through its large delta just south of Ukraine.
- **Population:** 21,666,350
- **Religions:** Eastern Orthodox 81.9%, Protestant 6.4%, Roman Catholic 4.3%, other (mostly Muslim) 0.9%, none or atheist 0.2%, unspecified 6.3%
- **Time Zone:** Romania is seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Bucharest.

### National Holidays: Romania

In addition to the holidays listed below, Romania celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Pentecost. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 Day after New Year's Day

01/24 Unification Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/15 St Mary's Day

11/30 St. Andrew's Day

12/01 National Holiday

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

## Serbia

### Facts & Figures

- **Area:** 29,913 square miles
- **Capital:** Belgrade
- **Language:** Serbian is the official language. Albanian is also spoken.
- **Location:** Serbia is a landlocked country in central and southeastern Europe, covering the central part of the Balkan Peninsula and the southern part of the Pannonian Plain. Serbia borders Hungary to the north; Romania and Bulgaria to the east; the Republic of Macedonia and Albania to the south; and Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the west.

- **Geography:** Serbia's is slightly smaller than South Carolina, and its northern region is rich with fertile plains, where as its eastern region has limestone ranges and basins. The southeast features a mountainous landscape.
- **Population:** 7,176,794 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Serbian Orthodox 84.6%, Catholic 5%, Muslim 3.1%, Protestant 1%, atheist 1.1%, unknown 4.5%.
- **Time Zone:** Serbia is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of North American Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time goes from the last Sunday of March to the last Sunday of October.

### National Holidays: Serbia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Serbia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/07 Orthodox Christmas Day

02/15 Statehood of the Republic of Serbia

02/16 Statehood of the Republic of Serbia (Day 2)

05/01 Labour Day

05/02 Labour Day (Day 2)

11/11 Armistice Day



## RESOURCES

---

### Suggested Readings

#### General

*The Improbable Voyage* by Tristan Jones (Travel Account) In 1985, former Royal Navy skipper Tristan Jones embarked on a 2,307-mile voyage across Europe, traveling from the North Sea to the Black Sea via the Rhine and Danube rivers. Battling ice and cold, life-threatening rapids and narrow gorges, German bureaucrats and Romanian frontier police, Jones made his way through eight countries and emerged triumphant, albeit penniless, at the Black Sea. His spirited account of his adventures gives readers a vivid glimpse of the quality of life along Europe's oldest water routes—and of life on the Danube toward the end of the Cold War era.

*Danube* by Claudio Magris (Travel Account) This widely regarded descriptive travel book follows the river as it flows from its source in Germany to its mouth in the Black Sea, with wonderful descriptions of the scenery en route.

*Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* by Lonnie R. Johnson (History) A panoramic history of Central Europe that provides a comparative analysis of the key events that have shaped Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia. The author abandons the Cold War convention of defining Central Europe in the bipolar terms of East and West, and emphasizes the underlying continuities in the region's history.

#### Austria

*The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey* by Gordon Brook-Shepard (History) The author, a noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Habsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

*A Nervous Splendor—Vienna 1888/9* by Frederic Morton (History) Morton's popular history brings to life Freud, Mahler, Archduke Rudolph, and other famous Viennese.

#### Bulgaria

*Balkan Ghosts, A Journey through History* by Robert D. Kaplan (History) Both old-fashioned literate traveler and journalist, Kaplan in this articulate report brings together the history, art and culture of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece with recent events to paint a portrait of the region in the 1980s. Updated with opinion pieces written in the 1990s.

#### Croatia

*A Taste of Croatia* by Karen Evenden (Food) This engaging memoir of a three-year sailing odyssey includes 100 easy-to-use recipes.

*April Fool's Day* by Josip Novakovich (Literature) The razor-sharp and darkly humorous story of Ivan, a Croatian born on April Fool's Day in 1948 who must survive Tito, a labor camp, and a civil war.

*Croatia, a History* by Ivo Goldstein (History) Focuses on the history of Croatia from the Middle Ages to the present day.

*Dubrovnik, A History* by Robin Harris (History) A scholarly but readable history of Dubrovnik from its origins in the 7th century until the collapse of the Republic in 1808. Recommended for the history buff.

## **Czech Republic**

*Me, Myself & Prague: An Unreliable Guide to Bohemia* by Rachael Weiss (Travel Narrative) When the author uproots herself and moves from Australia to Prague she hopes to reinvent herself in a specific way—as a worldly and chic novelist—but ends up discovering more about who she was all along.

*Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948* by Madeleine Albright (History) Although she was only two when the Nazis invaded her homeland (then known as Czechoslovakia), the story of her parents' struggles is movingly retold and the history of the war clearly explained in this book. And yes, she's that Madeleine Albright—the former Secretary of State.

*The Metamorphosis* and *The Trial* both by Franz Kafka (Literature) Two famous works by an influential author and a native of Prague. In *The Metamorphosis* (also called simply *Metamorphosis*) the main character wakes up one morning to find that he has turned into a giant bug overnight; in *The Trial*, the protagonist finds himself on trial without knowing exactly what the charge is.

*The Power of the Powerless* by Vaclav Havel (Political Science) In this 1978 essay, Vaclav Havel (elected the first president of the Czech Republic in 1993) analyzes totalitarian oppression and the mechanisms used by the powerful to subdue the spirit and morality of the powerless citizenry. He speaks in searing terms of the meaning of citizenship, resistance, and the power of the moral and truthful individual.

*The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera (Fiction) Passion, politics, and philosophy; loyalty and lies; these are just some of the themes explored in this novel, which follows a young woman in love with a philandering surgeon in Prague of the 1960s.

## **Hungary**

*A Concise History of Hungary* by Miklós Molnár (History) The title says it all—this book delivers a readable and compact overview of Hungarian history.

*Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture* by John Lukacs (Culture/History) Focusing on an era when Budapest was booming, this book is equal parts history and culture.

*Budapest Noir* by Vilmos Kondor (Mystery) The death of a call girl in a seedy neighborhood a few days after the death of Hungary's Prime Minister doesn't seem to be of interest to anyone, except a dogged reporter. A classic noir-style mystery that unravels in 1930s Budapest.

*The Bridge at Andau* by James Michener (History) For a brief time in 1956 the bridge at Andau became an escape route for Hungarians fleeing the Soviet suppression of a revolt in Budapest. Historian Michener captures the dramatic nature of the true-life events surrounding the revolt and escape attempts.

## **Romania**

*In Search of Dracula* by Raymond T. McNally (History) Examines the fictional vampire who made Transylvania world-famous, and traces the history of the legend and its roots in the historical Transylvanian figures of Vlad Dracul and his son, Vlad the Impaler.

## **Serbia**

*Black Lamb and Gray Falcon* by Rebecca West (History) First published in two volumes in 1941 (in the U.S.), this description of a journey through Serbia and Montenegro (then Yugoslavia) in 1937 is widely recognized as a masterpiece. The landscape and people of Yugoslavia, its history, cultures, religions, and politics are brilliantly observed.

*Serbia: The History of an Idea* by Stevan K. Pavlowitch (History) A readable history focusing on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Serbia.

## **Suggested Movies**

### **Austria**

*The Sound of Music* (1965, Drama) The plot of this famous musical about the Von Trapp Family Singers isn't 100% accurate (for example, the real Von Trapps didn't cross the alps on foot) but the songs are memorable and the scenery breathtaking. Filmed in and around Salzburg and the Austrian Alps.

### **Bulgaria**

*Mila from Mars* (2004, Drama) Arguably the most-awarded film in Bulgaria's recent cinematic history, the film follows a pregnant teen who escapes from a dangerous man to a remote village in order to give birth to her child. Haunted by her troubled past, 16-year-old Mila struggles with embracing the present, and is frightened of the unknown and what will become of her future.

*Stolen Eyes* (2005, Drama) This film by Bulgarian director Radoslav Spasov pulls no punches in depicting a black period of recent Bulgarian history—the late 1980s. The film tells a story of an impossible love between a Turkish woman, Ayten, and a Bulgarian man, Ivan. The unlikely pair first meets at the “regeneration process,” (when ethnic Turks' names were forcibly

changed to Bulgarian ones.) Although they have many cultural differences, they gradually overcome their animosity and are drawn toward each other. The question is—will the people around them accept their choices

*Letter to America* (2001, Drama) In the 2001 Bulgarian drama, a boy named Ivan is denied a visa to the United States and therefore cannot stay by the side of his dying best friend, Kamen. Ivan decides to take a journey to the Bulgarian countryside where he documents his experiences using the camera that was given to him by Kamen. After spending some time there, Ivan writes her a very special letter, detailing all the places he visits and people he meets along the way.

## **Croatia**

*What is a Man Without a Mustache?* (2005, Comedy) A Croatian comedy about a young widow who falls for the village priest and his tough decision between her and the church. In Croatian with subtitles.

*The Duel* (2010, Drama) A beautifully shot American production of a Russian novella starring Irish actors in Croatia turns out to be a complex and interesting period piece.

## **Czech Republic**

*Closely Watched Trains* (1966, Comedy) This movie is about a boy working at a train station in German-occupied Czechoslovakia during World War II. Oblivious to the war around him, the young boy embarks on a journey of sexual awakening and self-discovery—revealing just how the film's subtle comedic flair complements its dramatic underpinnings. Perhaps the pinnacle of all Czech New Wave films, this film offers great insights into the country's unique cultural identity.

*Divided We Fall* (2000, Comedy) In this comedy drama, a couple from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia agrees to hide a Jewish teenager in their home. During this time, Josef and Marie Cizek's marriage begins to show signs of strain as a result of the political tension and Marie's inability to become pregnant. The situation worsens when an acquaintance of theirs becomes a Nazi collaborator and asks them to house a Nazi clerk. *Divided We Fall* is a reminder of the kinds of choices made by millions of people during times of devastation.

*Last Holiday* (2006, Adventure) In this remake of the 1950 movie with the same name, timid department store clerk Georgia Byrd is diagnosed with an incurable illness, which prompts her to set off on a European adventure. A lighthearted comedy, but one that shows off the beauty of Cesky Krumlov in the Czech Republic.

*The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1988, Drama) Based on a well-known novel by the same name, *Lightness* follows the womanizing Tomas and the two women in his life in 1960s Prague. It's a story that could be set anywhere in the world—until the Russian tanks arrive.

## **Hungary**

*Fateless* (2005, Drama) This Hungarian film follows 14-year-old Gyorgy as he is removed from his home in Budapest and sent to a concentration camp. It's a challenging subject, but the filmmakers handle it with sensitivity. In Hungarian with subtitles.

*The Shop Around the Corner* (1940, Comedy) The setting is 1940s Budapest; the shop is Matuschek and Company. Two of the clerks—Alfred Kralik (played by Stewart) and Klara Novak (played by Syllavan) can't stand each other. But little do they know that they've been writing to each other (and falling in love) as anonymous pen pals.

## **Romania**

*The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (2005, Drama) In this Romanian dark comedy from director Cristi Puiu, a 63-year-old man with a history of excessive drinking starts to feel ill and calls an ambulance for help. Mr. Lazarescu continuously tries to get assistance as his health starts to deteriorate fast. This cynical medical drama reveals Mr. Lazarescu's unpleasant journey from one hospital to the next.

*12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006, Drama) A glimpse of Eastern Europe after that Cold War is presented in this 2006 drama comedy. It's been sixteen years since Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown, and one Romanian newsman wants to put the nation's revolution on the air after the fact. This satirical gem from director Corneliu Porumboiu revolves around the idea of bringing ordinary citizen on air to discuss how their lives have changed post-Communist rule.

## **Serbia**

*The Professional* (2003, Comedy) An award-winning comedy/drama based off the 1990 play of the same name. The film centers on a confrontation between two men, and is able to show the darkest moments in Serbian history in both a dramatic and comedic way.

*Fuse* (2003, Comedy) Two years after the Bosnian civil war, a small town that is plagued by corruption, prostitution, and organized crime must quickly organize a democracy when it's announced that U.S. President Bill Clinton will be paying a visit. Meanwhile, Zaim, a retired police chief experiences alcoholic visions of his dead son, Adnan. One of Adnan's siblings attempts to sort out his brother's death and bring peace to the household.

## Useful Websites

**Grand Circle Forum** (tips from previous travelers)

[www.gct.com/forum](http://www.gct.com/forum)

**Grand Circle Shop**

[www.grandcircleshop.com](http://www.grandcircleshop.com)

**Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions**

[www.gct.com/faq](http://www.gct.com/faq)

**International Health Information/CDC  
(Centers for Disease Control)**

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

**Electricity & Plugs**

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/  
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

**Foreign Exchange Rates**

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

**ATM Locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

**World Weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

**Basic Travel Phrases** (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Packing Tips**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection**

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

**Transportation Security**

**Administration (TSA)**

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

**National Passport Information Center**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

**Holidays Worldwide**

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

# NOTES

---

For information regarding your existing reservation:

Visit [www.gct.com/myaccount](http://www.gct.com/myaccount)

or call us toll-free at **1-800-321-2835**