

NOBLE CALEDONIA

23 nights from
£5895

Across Europe by River

A Journey between the Danube Delta & Amsterdam aboard the Luxurious MS Royal Crown

28 April 2016, 22 June 2016, 17 September 2016,



On this ultimate grand tour of Europe you will sail clear across the continent, visit seven countries, travel more than 2200 miles yet only unpack once as you settle aboard your wonderfully comfortable floating hotel, the luxurious MS Royal Crown. Trace the routes of emperors and kings as you cruise along the Rhine, Main and Danube and live the dream of Charlemagne, who 1200 years ago, dreamed of building a canal connecting the Rhine to the Danube. This is the perfect trip for those who enjoy seeing something new every day, as the MS Royal Crown will transport you in considerable luxury between great cities, towns and villages. Past ever-changing landscapes where the slow speed of the vessel allows us to absorb the views of town and country.

Each port of call has its own unique character waiting to be discovered whilst on one of our guided excursions. From historic locations to iconic buildings, our itinerary is brimming with highlights including the grand cities of Vienna and Budapest; the picturesque towns along the Rhine including Miltenberg and Rudesheim; wine tasting in Wurzburg and music performances including an organ recital in Passau. There will of course also be plenty of time to relax onboard and enjoy some truly beautiful scenery especially whilst cruising through the dramatic Rhine Gorge and through the spectacular Iron Gates. If you have never experienced a river journey it is difficult to explain the sheer pleasure that comes from travelling across Europe observing everyday life on the banks of the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers. You can let the world slip by as you relax on the sun deck or in the lounge and delight in awe-inspiring panoramic views of the passing scenery. Guided excursions with excellent local guides and interesting talks by our guest speakers will create an enjoyable, informative and lively atmosphere onboard as we sail along the European waterways.

Itinerary

Day 1 - London/Manchester/ Bristol/Edinburgh to Bucharest, Romania.

Fly by scheduled flight and transfer to the MS Royal Crown in Cernavoda (approx. 3 hours). Sail this evening.

Day 2 - Tulcea.

Today we arrive in Tulcea, situated at the entrance to the Danube Delta. Enjoy a boat trip into the delta

wetlands, famous for its birdlife. Sail in the early afternoon and tonight meet your fellow travellers at the welcome drinks and dinner.

Day 3 - Bucharest.

Arrive this morning in the port of Oltenita from where we drive to Bucharest. We will explore the main sights of the city and see the boulevards with their decidedly French style. After lunch in a local restaurant there will be a choice of afternoon visits. You may choose to visit the Parliament Palace, the second largest administrative building in the world at 3.77 million square feet. This gargantuan construction is Ceausescu's most infamous creation and makes for a fascinating tour. Alternatively, you may prefer to visit the unique Village Museum, an open-air ethnographic museum located in the Herastrau Park, showcasing traditional Romanian village life. The museum contains 272 authentic peasant farms and houses from all over Romania. After our tour we continue to Giurgiu to re-join our vessel and sail on to Rousse for an overnight mooring.

Day 4 - Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria.

Disembark and enjoy a tour to the city of Veliko Tarnovo, the capital of the second Bulgarian Kingdom from 1187 to 1393. The city formed a natural fortress, located on three hills surrounding the Yantra River. A palace, fortifications and churches were built into the terrain. Across the river, ancient stone houses seemingly perched on top of each other rise up the steep riverbank. After lunch in a local restaurant, visit the museum town of Arbanassi. We will re-join the vessel at Nikopol and sail.

Day 5 - Cruising Through the Iron Gates.

Today the scenery becomes truly spectacular as you cruise through the Iron Gates, a narrow Danube gorge between the Carpathian and Balkan Mountains.

Day 6 - Belgrade, Serbia.

Spend the morning in this interesting city. A half-day tour highlights the city's main attractions, including the Kalemegdan fortress as it looms over the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers, Saint Sava Cathedral, the largest Orthodox Church in the world, and Tito's Memorial.

Day 7 - Osijek, Croatia.

Arrive this morning in Vukovar and take a scenic drive to Osijek, located in the Slavonian region of Croatia and picturesquely positioned on the Drava River. On arrival join a walking tour of this historic and lively city; see Tvrda, the oldest part of the town and the neogothic Church of St Peter & Paul with its 90 metre high bell tower, 40 stained glass windows and stonework from the Viennese sculptor Eduard Hauser. Enjoy some free time here to explore at leisure, perhaps visit the impressive Church of St Anthony, erected on the remains of a Turkish minaret. Later we return to the ship and sail on towards Hungary.

Day 8 - Pecs, Hungary.

From the port of Mohacs, depart after breakfast for a full day scenic tour of Pecs and Villany. The city of Pecs enjoys a fine position on the slopes of the Mecsek Hills. The visit will feature the sites associated with the city's Roman Ottoman Hapsburg past, as well as a short organ recital in the splendid Pecs Cathedral. Continue on to the town of Villany, including lunch and wine tasting. Villany is one of Hungary's top wine regions, known for its reds and rosés. Thanks to the area's sub-Mediterranean climate, wines from Villány are full-bodied and spicy and of the highest quality. Sail in the early evening

towards Kalocsa.

Day 9 - Kalocsa.

Arrive this morning in charming Kalocsa, renowned for paprika production. Your tour of the Pusztá district will include the town and a spectacular display of horsemanship. Depart in the afternoon for a relaxing cruise along the beautiful Danube towards Budapest.

Day 10 - Budapest.

We have the day to explore Hungary's elegant

Day 11 - Passau.

We have the day to explore Hungary's elegant capital city. Spend the morning on an excursion that will include the old quarter, visiting the Matthias Church and the Fisherman's Bastion. Afternoon at leisure. This evening we will be entertained on board by a local gypsy band. Moor overnight.

Day 12 - Bratislava, Slovakia.

Cruise through Hungary to Slovakia, arriving in the capital after lunch. Enjoy a walking tour of the city; see the old quarter, the ornate Baroque Palace and the ancient city gates. Finish your tour with a visit to the beautiful Klarissen Church where a string quartet will perform a concert of music by Dvorak and Mozart. Return to your ship and sail this evening to Vienna.

Day 13 - Vienna.

A morning city tour will include a drive around the Ring and a visit to the Old Quarter including St Stephan's cathedral. In the afternoon there will be a choice of optional excursions; choose from a visit to Schonbrunn Palace and Gardens, the favourite summer residence of Maria Theresa. Alternatively, join a tour to beautiful Helenental (Helen's Valley), where Beethoven gained his inspiration for the 6th Symphony, to Heiligenkreuz Abbey for a guided tour. We then continue through the lovely scenery of the Viennese Woods to Mayerling to see where Crown Prince Rudolf committed suicide with his commoner sweetheart, Maria Vetsera, before returning to the ship.

Day 14 - Wachau Valley.

This morning, visit the magnificent Melk Abbey. Continue by road to Weissenkirchen, a beautiful winegrowing region. Enjoy some wine tasting before returning to the ship for lunch. Your cruise continues through the romantic Wachau Valley, the most beautiful river region in Austria.

Day 15 - Passau, Germany.

Arrive this morning in Passau, where the Inn and Ilz rivers join the Danube. Join the tour that will include a scenic drive and a guided walk through the Old Town. Tour the breathtaking Cathedral of St. Stephan, which contains the world's largest church pipe organ. After a short organ recital, return to the vessel for lunch and an afternoon at leisure before we sail on towards Regensburg.

Day 16 - Regensburg.

Enjoy a morning guided stroll around historic Regensburg, Germany's largest and best preserved medieval city. See the twin-spired cathedral Dom St Peter, the treasury and the tower houses. Return to the ship for lunch, followed by some free time before we sail in the afternoon towards Nuremberg.

Day 17 - Nuremberg.

Join a morning guided tour of this historic city, capital of Franconia. On our tour see the old city within the vast walls and visit Zeppelin Field and the site of the Nuremberg Trials, the Palace of Justice. Afternoon at leisure here to explore further.

Day 18 - Bamberg.

Arrive in Bamberg in the morning and enjoy a tour of one of Germany's loveliest cities. Its relative geographical location, some 40 miles north of Nuremberg, was a key factor in preserving its architectural heritage from the ravages of war. Every single European style from the Romanesque onwards, has left its mark on Bamberg, each bequeathing at least one major building. Your tour will end with a performance at the Residenz by a string quartet from the wonderful Bamberg Symphony Orchestra.

Day 19 - Wurzburg.

After a morning of scenic cruising, arrive in Wurzburg, the wine capital of Franconia. Tour this attractive town including the Prince Bishop's Residenz Palace and the old town with its impressive collection of churches. Your tour in this magnificent palace ends with a wine tasting in the Residenz Cellar, a chance to sample Franconian wines.

Day 20 - Wertheim & Miltenberg.

Morning walking tour of beautiful Wertheim, known as "Little Heidelberg". Return to the ship and sail on to the pretty Franconian town of Miltenberg, renowned for its half-timbered medieval houses. See the picturesque triangular shaped Marktplatz and walk up to the restored castle.

Day 21 - Rudesheim.

Arrive this afternoon in Rudesheim, a charming riverside town. Drive to nearby Vollrads Castle and Wine Estate, set in charming countryside. This grand estate has been the Greiffendau residence since the 14th century and the making of wine on this site can be traced back to 1211. We will enjoy a visit to the Vinothek to sample some of their splendid wines. Alternatively you may prefer to join a tour of Rudesheim itself, including a visit to Siegfried's Musical Instrument Museum. This afternoon sail onto Koblenz, moor overnight.

Day 22 - Koblenz & Cologne.

Early this morning join a walking tour of Koblenz historic commercial centre. Return to the vessel and spend a relaxing afternoon cruising towards Cologne, arriving there in the late afternoon. Moor overnight.

Day 23 - Cologne.

After breakfast join a guided walk along the promenade and through the old town to the magnificent cathedral, the largest in Germany. Sail in the early afternoon to Amsterdam.

Day 24 - Amsterdam to London/ Manchester/Bristol/Edinburgh.

Disembark after breakfast and join a guided tour to the Rijksmuseum with its splendid collection of old

masters, followed by lunch in a local restaurant before your return scheduled flight.

Amsterdam to Bucharest - 28th April & 17th September 2016

Day 1 - London/Manchester/Birmingham/Bristol/Edinburgh to Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Fly by scheduled flight and transfer to the MS Royal Crown. Moor overnight in Amsterdam.

Day 2 - Amsterdam.

Enjoy a morning in Amsterdam and during the guided tour visit the Rijksmuseum with its splendid collection of old masters. Alternatively and only available on our April departure there will be the opportunity to visit the remarkable Keukenhof Gardens. Later sail to Cologne and this evening enjoy welcome drinks and dinner onboard.

Day 3 - Cologne, Germany.

This morning, relax onboard as we cruise along the legendary Rhine passing Duisburg and Dusseldorf before arriving in Cologne for a tour to see the city's famous cathedral. The cathedral is the largest Gothic church in northern Europe with a total area of almost 8000 square metres, room for more than 20,000 people and the second tallest spire and largest facade in the world. Afterwards visit a "Brauhaus" to sample some of the local Kolsch beer. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure to explore the city independently and sail this evening.

Day 4 - Koblenz & Rudesheim.

Arrive in Koblenz for a walking tour of this historic commercial centre. After lunch, continue cruising through the dramatic Rhine Gorge to Rudesheim, passing romantic castles, lush vineyards and the infamous Lorelei rock. In Rudesheim, we enjoy a tour of Siegfried's Musical Instrument Museum. Moor overnight.

Day 5 - Mainz.

Arrive this morning in atmospheric Mainz. Our walking tour here will include the Hoefchen ("Little Court"), residence of the city's archbishops until the 15th century, the Kirschgarten with its romantic half-timbered houses and Marian-Fountain. Your tour ends with a visit to the Johann Gutenberg Museum. Sail at lunchtime as we enter the River Main.

Day 6 - Miltenberg & Wertheim.

This morning on a walking tour, explore the pretty Franconian town of Miltenberg, known for its half-timbered Medieval houses. Return to the ship for lunch whilst sailing on to beautiful Wertheim where there will be some free time in this charming market town.

Day 7 - Wurzburg.

Arrive this morning in historic Wurzburg, the wine capital of Franconia. Tour this lovely town including the magnificent Prince Bishop's Residenz Palace. Our visit ends with a wine tasting of local wines in the splendid cellars of the Residenz. Also see the old town with its collection of churches which range in style from Romanesque to Gothic, Renaissance to Baroque before returning to the ship for lunch as we sail to

Bamberg.

Day 8 - Bamberg.

This morning, enter the Main- Danube Canal at Bamberg, one of Germany's most beautiful historic towns. Its geographical location, some 40 miles north of Nuremberg was a key factor in preserving its magnificent architectural heritage from the ravages of war. Every European style from the Romanesque onwards has left its mark on Bamberg, each bequeathing at least one major building. Upon arrival you can choose to explore this beautiful Medieval city on a guided walking tour or learn about the city's ancient brewing technique on a tour that includes a tasting of Rauchbier (smoked beer). This afternoon the ship remains in Bamberg, allowing you time at leisure to explore further.

Day 9 - Nuremberg.

The city of Nuremberg's long and sometimes troubled history has left its mark on the city and there's plenty to discover during our morning tour. Three towering castles overlook Nuremberg, and its old city which is contained within vast walls is a joy to explore. Visit the World War II sites, including the Reich Party Rally Grounds. Discover the city's spectacular medieval architecture, including the 900 year-old ramparts that surround the city, the Imperial Castle and more. Sail at lunchtime and continue cruising through the highest point of any commercial waterway in Europe, 1331 feet above sea level.

Day 10 - Regensburg.

Early this morning we enter the Danube River, arriving in Regensburg after breakfast. Join a guided stroll around historic Regensburg, and see the highlights such as the Old Town Hall, the World Heritage listed city centre and the ancient Romanesque Porta Praetoria.

Day 11 - Passau.

Arrive this morning in Passau, where the Inn and Ilz rivers join the Danube. Our guided walking tour will include the old town of this Bavarian city and the breathtaking Cathedral of St. Stephan which contains one of the world's largest church pipe organs. Enjoy an organ recital before returning to the vessel for lunch. Afternoon at leisure in Passau before we cruise into Austria this evening.

Day 12 - Melk & the Wachau Valley to Vienna, Austria.

This morning we will reach the picturesque Wachau Valley, famous for its wine. We will moor in Melk under the shadow of the great Baroque Abbey, situated on a cliff high above the Danube. Enjoy a guided tour of the abbey and for our April and September departures, there will be an exclusive performance by London Festival Opera in the abbey featuring aria ensembles from *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così fan Tutte*, and *Don Giovanni*. During lunch onboard we continue sailing through the Wachau Valley towards Vienna.

Day 13 - Vienna.

A morning city tour of Austria's elegant capital will take us around the famous Ringstrasse and the Old Quarter including St Stephan's cathedral. Return to the MS Royal Crown for lunch and this afternoon is at leisure to explore this grand city independently or relax onboard. Early this evening, for our April and September departures there will be an onboard performance by London Festival Opera of Puccini's heart-rending masterpiece *Madame Butterfly* in costume, followed by dinner in the restaurant.

Day 14 - Vienna.

This morning depart for a visit to the wonderful Schonbrunn Palace and Gardens, the favourite summer residence of Maria Theresa. Return to the vessel for lunch and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure. In the early evening, for our April and September departures, there will be an onboard performance by London Festival Opera of 'A Night in Vienna', a magical repertoire, followed by dinner in the restaurant.

Day 15 - Bratislava, Slovakia.

Arrive this morning in the Slovak capital of Bratislava. Join a guided walking tour of the city, formerly known as Pressburg, a former capital of Hungary. See the old quarter, the ornate Baroque Palace and the ancient city gates. Finish your tour with a visit to the beautiful Klarissen Church where a string quartet will perform a concert of music by Dvorak and Mozart. Return to the ship and later we will cruise to Budapest arriving in the evening. Moor overnight.

Day 16 - Budapest, Hungary.

We have the day to explore Hungary's elegant capital. Spend the morning on an excursion that will include the old quarter, the Matthias Church and the Fishermen's Bastion. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure to relax onboard or explore independently. Tonight there will be an optional evening of music ashore, depending on schedules this will be either at the State Opera House or the Liszt Academy. Sail at midnight.

Day 17 - Kalocsa.

Arrive this morning in charming Kalocsa, renowned for paprika production. Your tour of the Pusztaszentmiklos district will include the town and a spectacular display of Hungarian horsemanship. Depart this afternoon for a relaxing cruise down the beautiful Danube, arriving in Mohacs in the early evening. Moor overnight.

Day 18 - Pecs.

Depart on a morning's excursion to Pecs. Lying between the Danube and Drava Rivers in southern Hungary, the historic city of Pecs enjoys a fine position on the slopes of the Mecsek Hills. The excursion will feature the sites associated with the city's Roman Ottoman Hapsburg past. Return to the ship in Mohacs and enjoy an afternoon of cruising.

Day 19 - Belgrade, Serbia.

Spend the morning in this interesting city. A half-day tour highlights the city's main attractions, including the Kalemegdan fortress as it looms over the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers, Saint Sava Cathedral, the largest Orthodox Church in the world, and Tito's Memorial. This evening enjoy a superb Folklore performance ashore.

Day 20 - Cruising through the Iron Gates.

Today the scenery becomes truly spectacular as you cruise through the Iron Gates, a narrow Danube gorge between the Carpathian and Balkan Mountains.

Day 21 - Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria.

From Svistov, we drive to Veliko Tarnovo, the capital of the second Bulgarian Kingdom from 1187 to 1393. The city formed a natural fortress, located on three hills surrounding the Yantra River. A palace, fortifications and churches were built into the terrain. Across the river, ancient stone houses seemingly

perched on top of each other rise up the steep riverbank. After lunch in a local restaurant, visit the museum town of Arbanassi before we rejoin the MS Royal Crown in Rousse and sail in the late evening.

Day 22 - Constanta, Romania.

Early this morning, we arrive in Cernavoda at the entrance to the Black Sea Canal. Drive to nearby Constanta, a popular resort city. Its colourful history dates back to ancient Greek and Roman times. On a guided tour see the Museum of National History and Archaeology and the Roman mosaic. Return to the ship for a late lunch and sail in the afternoon along the snaking Danube as we make our way to the Black Sea.

Day 23 - The Black Sea & Tulcea.

Awake early today to experience sunrise over the Black Sea. Weather conditions permitting we hope to make a short cruise into the Black Sea proper, with a good chance of spotting birdlife. Later we cruise to Tulcea, situated at the entrance to the Danube Delta and enjoy an afternoon boat trip into the delta wetlands. Tonight join your fellow travellers for the Gala Farewell Dinner.







Day 24 - Bucharest to London/Manchester/Birmingham/Bristol/Edinburgh.

Disembark after breakfast and transfer to the airport for your return scheduled flight to the UK.

Dates and Prices



SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £1000 PER PERSON ON APRIL & JUNE DEPARTURES PLUS NO SINGLE SUPPLEMENT ON A LIMITED NUMBER OF CABINS






Prices per person based on double occupancy

22 June 2016 to 15 July 2016			
Category		Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
	Junior Suite	£6895	£5895
	Superior Suite	£6995	£5995
	Deluxe Suite	£7095	£6095
	Premium Suite	£7595	£6595
	Royal Suite	£7995	£6995
	Deluxe Suite For sole use	£7095	£6095

Amsterdam to Bucharest - 28th April & 17th September 2016

Prices per person based on double occupancy

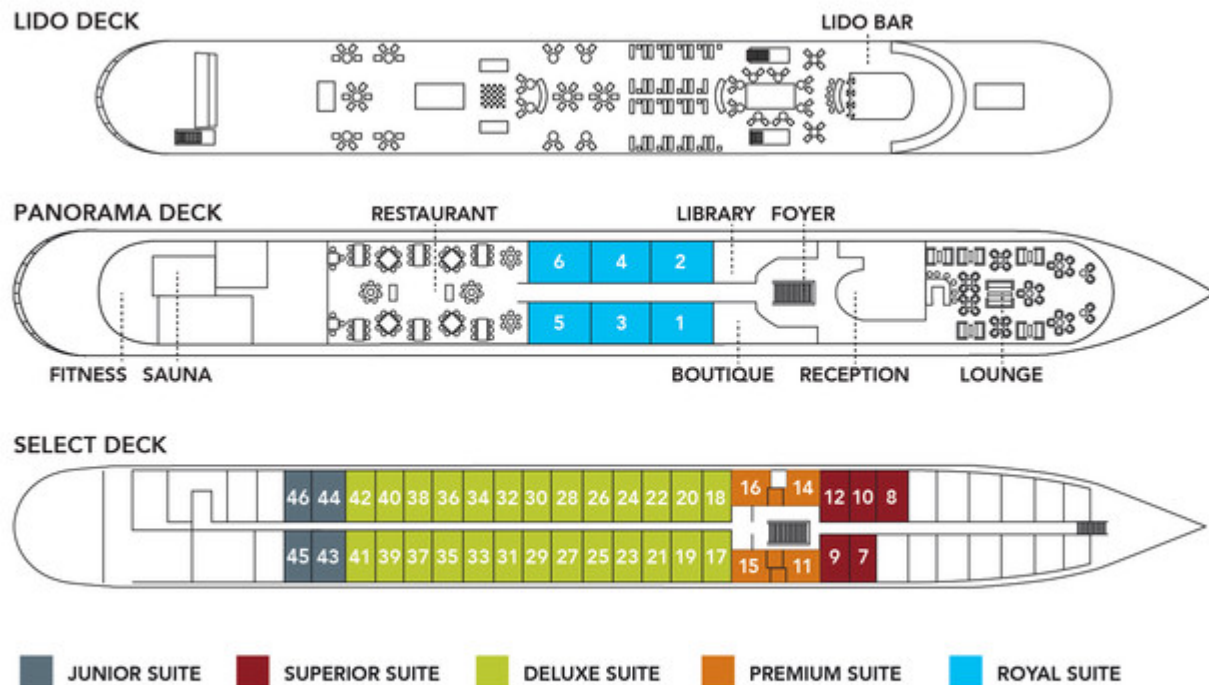
28 April 2016 to 21 May 2016			
Category		Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
	Junior Suite	£6895	£5895
	Superior Suite	£6995	£5995

28 April 2016 to 21 May 2016		
Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
17 September 2016 to 10 October 2016		
Category	Price	
 Deluxe Suite	£7095	£6095
 Premium Suite	£7595	£6595
 Royal Suite	£7995	£6995
 Deluxe Suite For sole use	£7095	£6095
17 September 2016 to 10 October 2016		
Category	Price	
 Junior Suite	£6895	
 Superior Suite	£6995	
 Deluxe Suite	£7095	
 Premium Suite	£7595	
 Royal Suite	£7995	
 Deluxe Suite For sole use	£7095	

Tour Reference Code: RCRC280416/RCRC220616/RCRC170916

Price Includes: Economy class scheduled air travel, 23 nights aboard the MS Royal Crown on full board basis, house wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner, shore excursions and music events as described, guest speaker, services of a cruise director, performances by London Festival Opera (April & September departures only), tour manager, transfers, port taxes, airport taxes, gratuities.

Not Included: Optional evening ashore in Budapest April and September departures only), optional excursions (Day 13, Vienna) travel insurance.



Destinations

Austria

Bulgaria

Hungary

Netherlands

Romania

Serbia

Slovak Republic

Europe

To see our current selection of tours in Europe [click here](#).

Austria

To see our current selection of tours in Austria [click here](#).

Despite its small size, Austria has a long-established international reputation, which is why most visitors arrive with heads full of Habsburg, Mozart and Alpine visions. Some expectations are delightfully met – the mountain scenery is breathtakingly real, there are the omnipresent fingerprints of the old empire in Vienna, and home-

grown musical icons Mozart, Schubert and Strauss are championed everywhere – but Austria also has a few surprises up its sleeve in the form of contemporary art, cutting-edge architecture and innovative cuisine.

Austria is frequently cited as one of the best places to live in Europe, and it is not difficult to see why. Remarkably safe and clean, it offers plenty of affordable culture, natural beauty and elegant Baroque and neoclassical architecture, as well as an efficient public transport system.

It's also surprisingly varied. You can hurtle down a black run in the skiing paradises of Kitzbühel and St Anton, or cosy up with a hot drink in one of Vienna's famous coffee houses. You can skate across icy lakes in winter or seek out wildflower meadows on summertime hikes. You can wonder at the intricate church interiors and the ostentatious opulence of the old Habsburg palaces, or indulge in a more low-key aspect of Mitteleuropa culture over a steaming goulash in a rustic country inn. Or you can ride a horse through pretty wooded tracts, get an eyeful of Rubens, Raphael and Rembrandt, and marvel at Hundertwasser House in Vienna – a fantastical housing complex characterised by its vivid patterns and mismatched colours.

Don't try to squeeze it all in though. More than anything, Austria is a place to recline, relax and relish. Its natural beauty is the result of many millennia of natural activity and its grand art, architecture and culture was painstakingly created by many hands over many centuries. These aren't sights to be hurriedly ticked off a list; allow yourself plenty of time to luxuriate.

Key Facts

Money

Climate

Key Facts

Capital:

Vienna (Wien).

Geography:

Mountainous Austria is a landlocked country at the heart of Europe, bordered by Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Italy. The diverse landscape can be divided into five sections: the Eastern Alps (62.8%), the Alpine and Carpathian Foothills (11.3%), the Pannonian Lowlands (11.3%), the Vienna Basin (4.4%) and the Granite and Gneiss Highlands or Bohemian Massif (10.1%).

Austria's highest mountain is Grossglockner (3,798m/12,465ft) found in the Alps' Hohe Tauern range, and, on its way from the Black Forest in southern Germany to the Black Sea, the winding River Danube flows for approximately 360km (220 miles) through the country.

Nearly half of Austria is covered with forests, with the lower regions particularly densely wooded. Fir predominates above 488m (1,600ft), and gives way to larch and stone-pine beyond 1,219m (4,000ft); the Alpine foothills consist predominantly of arable land and grassland (above 610m/2,000ft); the Pannonian region is characterised by scrub and heathland.

Government:

Federal Republic.

Head Of State:

President Heinz Fischer since 2004.

Head Of Government:

Chancellor Werner Faymann since 2008.

Electricity:

230 volts AC, 50Hz. European plugs with two round pins are standard.

Timezone:

Central European Time: GMT/UTC +1 (GMT/UTC +2 from 27 March to 30 October 2016)

Money

Currency Information:

Euro (€) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2, 1 and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Credit Cards:

Major credit cards are accepted in large cities. However, some smaller hotels may require bills to be paid in cash.

ATMs:

ATMs are available throughout Austria, especially in the major towns and cities. Most accept all of the major bank cards, including Visa and American Express. In Austria ATMs are called Bankomats and can be identified by a sign with a green stripe above a blue stripe.

Travellers Cheques:

These are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in a major currency (Euros, US Dollars, Pounds Sterling).

Banking Hours:

Mon, Tues, Wed and Fri 0800-1230 and 1330-1500; Thurs 0800-1230 and 1330-1730. Different opening hours may be kept in the various federal provinces. The exchange counters at airports and at railway stations are generally open from the first to the last flight or train, which usually means 0800-2200 including weekends.

Currency Restrictions:

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local or foreign currency. However, amounts exceeding €10,000 or equivalent must be declared if travelling from or to a country outside the European Union.

Currency Exchange:

Foreign currencies and traveller's cheques can be exchanged at all banks, savings banks and exchange counters at airports and railway stations at the official exchange rates.

Currencies: Exchange Rates:

1 AUD = 0.71 EUR

1 EUR = 1.00 EUR

1 GBP = 1.32 EUR

1 USD = 0.92 EUR

Climate

Overview:

Austria enjoys a moderate continental climate: summers are warm and pleasant with cool nights - perfect for hiking and biking in the Alps. Winters are sunny, with snow levels high enough for widespread winter sports. Ski season is from December to March.

Best Time To Visit:

The best time to visit Austria is June to September for those seeking sunshine and low rainfall, whilst November to March are ideal for those seeking winter sports.

Required Clothing:

European clothes according to season. Alpine wear for mountain resorts.

[Bulgaria](#)

To see our current selection of tours in Bulgaria [click here](#).

Bulgaria's spectacular mountains, swathe of golden beaches and vibrant cities have begun attracting hordes of eager-eyed tourists over the past few years - a dramatic change to how the country was a mere 10 years ago.

In fact, Bulgaria has been through mammoth changes in the last few years, with many of the cities and resorts undergoing construction booms galore, tempting buyers from Western Europe with relatively cheap property and stunning landscapes.

Bulgaria's beautiful beach and ski resorts are expanding quickly as a result and have lured visitors away from more expensive European destinations with low-priced lift passes and accommodation options. The main cities have shrugged off their weary Communist-era image and have become vibrant and attractive, with well-kept boulevards, varied shopping and lively nightlife. In contrast, many towns and villages have preserved the authentic Bulgarian spirit and hospitality and the country is especially proud of its rich folklore traditions.

Key Facts

Money

Climate

Key Facts

Capital:

Sofia.

Geography:

Bulgaria is situated in Eastern Europe and bordered to the north by the River Danube and Romania, to the east by the Black Sea, to the south by Turkey and Greece and to the west by Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Balkan Mountains cross the country reaching to the edge of the Black Sea and its golden beaches.

The land is heavily cultivated, covered with forests and crossed by rivers. Although Bulgaria lies in the very southeast corner of Europe, the climate is never extreme in summer, even on the red-earthed plains of Southern Thrace. The Black Sea resorts have some of the largest beaches in Europe and offer sunbathing from May until October, while in winter heavy falls of snow are virtually guaranteed in the mountain ski resorts.

Government:

Republic.

Head Of State:

President Rosen Plevneliev since 2012.

Head Of Government:

Prime Minister Boyko Borisov since 2014.

Electricity:

220-240 volts AC, 50Hz. European plugs with two round pins are standard.

Timezone:

Eastern European Time: GMT/UTC +2 (GMT/UTC +3 from 27 March to 30 October 2016)

Money

Currency Information:

Lev (BGN; symbol ₺) = 100 stotinki. Notes are in denominations of ₺100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of ₺1 and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 stotinki.

Note: (a) The Lev is tied to the Euro at a fixed rate; €1 = ₺1.955. (b) Notes dated 1997 and earlier are now out of circulation.

Credit Cards:

American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted in large cities, in larger hotels and car hire offices, and in some restaurants and shops, mainly in Sofia. However, Bulgaria is still a country that operates mainly on cash.

ATMs:

ATMs are widespread, although it is best to check with the relevant bank/card provider prior to travel. Not all Bulgarian bank machines accept every overseas credit or debit card; it may take more than one attempt to withdraw cash successfully.

Travellers Cheques:

Accepted in major hotels and restaurants, although cash is far more common. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars, Pounds Sterling or Euros.

Banking Hours:

Mon-Fri 0900-1600.

Currency Restrictions:

The import and export of local currency is prohibited. The import of foreign currency is unlimited, provided it is declared on arrival. The export of foreign currency is limited to the amount declared upon arrival.

Currency Exchange:

Visitors are advised to exchange money at banks, at large hotels and at independent currency exchange offices, where the rates are clearly displayed. Travellers should not be tempted by a 'better rate' offered at unofficial sources on the street. It is illegal for commission to be charged when changing money at official offices. No store, bank or bureau de change will accept mutilated, torn or excessively dirty foreign currency.

Currencies: Exchange Rates:

1 EUR = 1.97 BGN

1 GBP = 2.59 BGN

1 USD = 1.80 BGN

Climate

Best Time To Visit:

The climate in Bulgaria varies according to altitude. Summers are warmest with some rainfall, with the south feeling the influence of the Mediterranean. The best months to visit are mid-June to September when the days are long and sunny. Winters are cold with good snowfall in the mountains. January is the best month for skiing in Bulgaria. It rains frequently during spring and autumn.

Required Clothing:

Mediumweights most of the year; warmer outdoor wear necessary in winter.

[Hungary](#)

To see our current selection of tours in Hungary [click here](#).

Culturally and linguistically distinct from all of its immediate neighbours, Hungary is very much the 'odd one out' in Central Europe, but for all the most honourable reasons.

This is a nation whose capital, Budapest, can hold up a mirror to classical Vienna; it's a world of well-preserved castles, seductively good wines and quiet stoic pride; a landscape of low-lying mountains, oak forests and

thermal springs.

The Romans were the first to make use of the hot waters, originally for medicinal purposes. Today, the pursuit is relaxation and over time the bathhouses have grown into splendid architectural affairs, most notably in Budapest.

The capital is an elegant, stylish and lively city made up of two separate settlements clustered on either side of the Danube River: hilly Buda has a wealth of graceful Habsburg and neoclassical buildings, while sprawling Pest is its commercial centre with a generous scattering of art nouveau architecture and an ad-hoc party scene.

The city has long been the focus of Hungary's artistic, musical and literary community and is by far the best place in the country for a choice of bars, restaurants and nightclubs.

Smaller cities are equally architecturally fascinating and deserving of a visit in their own right: Pécs for its museums; Eger for its fortifications and infamous Bull's Blood Wine; and Győr whose grand Basilica houses the golden herm of László.

Beyond these urban centres, Hungary's bathes in natural delights. South west of Budapest is Lake Balaton, Central Europe's largest body of freshwater, where locals spend hot summers cooling off in waters that average 20°C (68°F).

In winter, Hungary freezes, and thrill seekers head north to the Bakony Hills for the chance to ski through the forests before unwinding with a dip in the thermal spa.

It may be landlocked, but Hungary is a country content on ploughing its own furrow no matter what seeds its neighbours are sowing and is all the better for it.

Key Facts

Money

Climate

Key Facts

Capital:

Budapest.

Geography:

Hungary is situated in Central Europe, sharing borders to the north with Slovakia, to the northeast with Ukraine, to the east with Romania, to the south with Croatia and Serbia, and to the west with Austria and Slovenia.

Despite much of the country lying lower than 200m (656ft), there are several ranges of hills, chiefly in the north and west. The country's highest point is Kékes in the Matra Mountains northeast of Budapest, which is 1,014m (3,327ft) high. Other, relatively low, mountain ranges include the North Hungarian Mountains, the Transdanubian Mountains and Mecsek north of Pécs. The lowest point, near Szeged in southern Hungary, is just 77m (253ft) above sea level.

The Great Hungarian Plain, which stretches northeast from the Danube to the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, east to the mountains of Transylvania in Romania, and south to the Fruška Gora range in Serbia, covers more than half of Hungary's total territory. It is flat and low-lying throughout, never exceeding more than 183m (591ft) in height. The Little Hungarian Plain is similar, but much smaller, and lies in northwest

Hungary next to the Austrian and Slovakian borders.

Two major European rivers run through Hungary, the Danube and the Tisza. The former flows through Budapest on its way to the Black Sea via Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. The River Tisza, which has its source in Ukraine, flows south through Hungary into Vojvodina in northern Serbia, where it joins with the Danube. Both rivers are navigable in Hungary. Smaller rivers include the Rába, Szamos, Sío and the Drava, which largely defines the Croatian border.

Hungary has no coastline, but the country is home to Lake Balaton in west-central Hungary, which is sometimes referred to as the 'Hungarian Sea'. Lake Balaton is a regionally important freshwater lake, the largest in Central Europe, with a surface area of 592 sq km (229 sq miles). At 78km (48 miles) long and up to 14km (9 miles) wide, it's Hungary's largest recreational area and a popular destination for both summer swimming and winter sports. Hungary also has two much smaller lakes: Lake Velence, which is a bird reserve, and Lake Fertő, which straddles the Austrian border near Sopron.

Government:

Parliamentary Republic.

Head Of State:

President János Áder since 2012.

Head Of Government:

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán since 2010.

Electricity:

230 volts AC, 50Hz. European-style plugs with two round pins are used.

Timezone:

Central European Time: GMT/UTC +1 (GMT/UTC +2 from 27 March to 30 October 2016)

Money

Currency Information:

Hungarian Forint (HUF; symbol Ft). Notes are in denominations of Ft20,000, 10,000, 5,000, 2,000, 1,000, and 500. Coins are in denominations of Ft200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. A large number of commemorative coins in circulation are legal tender.

Credit Cards:

It is possible to withdraw cash by credit card at many post offices. American Express, Cirrus, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted. Credit and debit cards can be used to withdraw money from ATMs, which are found throughout the country.

ATMs:

Credit and debit cards can be used to withdraw money from ATMs, which are reliable and widely available

throughout the country.

Travellers Cheques:

Accepted in most post offices and banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in Euros or US Dollars.

Banking Hours:

Mon-Thurs 0800-1700, Fri 0800-1600.

Currency Restrictions:

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local or foreign currency. However, amounts exceeding €10,000 or equivalent must be declared if travelling from or to a country outside the European Union.

Currency Exchange:

Currency can be exchanged at hotels, banks, post offices, bureaux de change, airports, railway stations, travel agencies and some restaurants throughout the country. Automatic exchange machines are available in Budapest and other main tourist centres.

Currencies: Exchange Rates:

1 AUD = 200.02 HUF

1 EUR = 312.51 HUF

1 GBP = 412.14 HUF

1 USD = 286.04 HUF

Climate

Best Time To Visit:

Hungary has a mild continental climate. There are four distinct seasons, with a very warm summer from June to August where temperatures can rise to as high as 35°C (95°F). Spring and autumn are mild, while winters are very cold, as low as -10°C (14°F), and not a good time to visit rural areas – although city breaks are enjoyable at any time of year. The south of the country around Pécs is a little warmer on average, although the region still experiences snowfall in winter. Annual rainfall is an average of 6cm (23 inches) and is relatively evenly distributed throughout the year, with snowfall common in winter.

Required Clothing:

Lightweights for summer, medium weight clothing for spring and heavier clothing for autumn and winter. Waterproofs can prove useful at any time of year. Long-sleeved shirts, trousers, boots and hats should be worn to protect exposed skin in forested, grassy and lakeside areas in summer to prevent bites from ticks.

[Netherlands](#)

To see our current selection of tours in Netherlands **[click here](#)**.

As flat as a local *pannenkoek*, the Netherlands is a land of colourful tulip fields and canals, sophisticated cities and some of the most striking coastline in Northern Europe. It punches well above its weight culturally, laying claim to the likes of Van Gogh, Rembrandt and Mondrian, amongst others.

At the head of the state sits the country's constitutional monarchy, whose palaces dominate many of the larger cities, including The Hague and the capital city, Amsterdam. The latter, renowned for its step-gabled houses, ubiquitous bikes, seedy red light district and hazy coffeeshops, is bisected by a UNESCO-listed network of waterways, many of which are spanned by beautiful, latticed bridges.

To the south lies Rotterdam, an industrial port city that has benefitted from a complete makeover in recent years, acquiring a slew of excellent museums and an unlikely affinity for hip-hop in the process.

The butt of many a northern joke, the southern city of Maastricht lies in the much-maligned Limbourg region. Despite the teasing, this is a city of delicate beauty, dotted with churches, bisected by a mighty river and home to what is almost certainly the best bookshop in the world, Selexyz Dominicanen.

Back towards the coast, the Netherlands becomes more stereotypically Dutch, with vast colourful fields of tulips dotted with windmills and dairy farms producing the wheels of cheese for which the country is so famous. The low-lying Dutch countryside is scattered with a network of charming towns and villages such as Edam, Haarlem and Leiden, which have changed little over the centuries.

Best of all though, are the sandy, North Sea beaches of Zeeland, which stretch for an almost unbroken 650km (403-miles). With more sunshine than any other part of the Netherlands, Zeeland is the Dutch riposte to the Caribbean – and with better cycling trails and museums, if not the hot weather, to boot.

Key Facts

Money

Climate

Key Facts

Capital:

Amsterdam.

Geography:

The Netherlands shares borders to the south with Belgium and to the east with Germany, while the North Sea lies to the north and west. Large areas of The Netherlands have been reclaimed from the sea and consequently one-fifth of the country lies below sea level. The country is flat and level and is criss-crossed by rivers and canals.

Areas reclaimed from the sea, known as *polders*, are extremely fertile. The landscape is broken by the forest of Arnhem, the bulb fields in the west, the lakes of the central and northern areas, and coastal dunes that are among the most impressive in Europe.

Government:

Constitutional monarchy.

Head Of State:

King Willem-Alexander since 2013.

Head Of Government:

Prime Minister Mark Rutte since 2010.

Electricity:

230 volts AC, 50Hz. European-style plugs with two round pins are standard.

Timezone:

Central European Time: GMT/UTC +1 (GMT/UTC +2 from 27 March to 30 October 2016)

Money

Currency Information:

Euro (EUR; symbol €) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Credit Cards:

American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted. ATMs are widely available.

ATMs:

ATMs are widely available.

Travellers Cheques:

Widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Euros, Pounds Sterling or US Dollars.

Banking Hours:

Mon 1300-1600; Tues-Fri 0900-1600. GWK offices are open seven days a week.

Currency Restrictions:

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local or foreign currency. However, amounts exceeding €10,000 or equivalent must be declared if travelling from or to a country outside the European Union.

Currency Exchange:

Exchange offices are indicated by the letters GWK. GWK is a national organisation with currency exchange offices at major railway stations, at Schiphol Airport and at the border crossings with Germany and Belgium. Hotels tend to charge high commissions. *Verkoop* means sell, while *Koop* means buy.

Currencies: Exchange Rates:

1 AUD = 0.71 EUR

1 EUR = 1.00 EUR

1 GBP = 1.32 EUR

1 USD = 0.92 EUR

Climate

Best Time To Visit:

There is never a bad time to visit the Netherlands, which has a moderate climate with warm summers (average 19°C/66°F) and relatively mild winters (average 3°C/37°F). That said, mid-April to mid-October is probably the best time to go, although coastal resorts and big cities like Amsterdam do get busy during the summer holidays (July-August) - higher prices reflect the increased demand. To see the country's famed bulb fields burst with colours, plan a trip to the Netherlands between mid-April and mid-May. You won't be disappointed.

Required Clothing:

Summers are generally warm with changeable periods, but excessively hot weather is rare. Pack a light jacket or sweater even in mid-summer. Winters can be fairly cold with the possibility of some snow. Rainfall is ever a possibility, and rainwear is advisable year-round.

Romania

To see our current selection of tours in Romania [click here](#).

There aren't many countries in Europe where farmers still drive horse-drawn wagons and covered markets dominate over shopping malls, but then Romania isn't quite like other places.

While other Eastern European countries have become fertile ground for boutique hotels and international restaurants, this traditional country still clings to its dog-eared charm – and good on it.

The first post of call for most travellers is the bustling capital, Bucharest, which was once known as 'Little Paris' due to its sophisticated charm. Crammed with grand architecture, fascinating museums and traditional restaurants, it's well worth a few days exploration. So too are the resorts along the Black Sea Coast, which surprise many with their stunning sandy beaches and ocean panoramas.

Ultimately, though, Romania remains defined by its small, rural communities, many of which still depend on ancient agricultural practices. From the isolated villages clinging to the Carpathian Mountains to the Saxon towns of Transylvania, a tour of Romania's backcountry will uncover traditional ways of life and a treasure chest of cultural gems.

It is, of course, practically illegal to talk about Transylvania without mentioning the legend of Dracula. The Romanians are all too well aware of the interest in Bram Stoker's fictional vampire and the castle at Bran (supposedly the spot that inspired Stoker's story) has been transformed into one of the country's top tourist attractions.

Elsewhere the forests covering the Carpathian Mountains shelter some of Europe's last remaining brown bears, wolves and lynxes, while racoon dogs and rare muskrats gather around the rivers.

While Romania offers travellers the chance to immerse themselves in a defiantly traditional way of life, that isn't to say the locals don't appreciate their creature comforts. The natural spas scattered across the country purport to cure everything from rheumatism to heart disease, and make a luxurious finale to any Romanian adventure.

Key Facts

Money

Climate

Key Facts

Capital:

Bucharest.

Geography:

Romania is bordered by Moldova and Ukraine to the north and northeast; the Black Sea to the east; Bulgaria to the south; and Serbia and Hungary to the west. The country is divided into 41 counties, but essentially there are four geographical regions with decidedly different characters; Transylvania, Moldova, Dobrogea and Muntenia.

Transylvania and Moldova comprise the northern half of the country and are characterised by Alpine massifs and dense forests. The Carpathian Mountains run along the border of these two regions and are made up of 14 mountain ranges above 2,000m (6,560ft) with Moldoveanu Peak at 2,544m (8,300ft) the highest point.

The terrain around here is a mix of extinct volcanic cones, lunar plains, thick forests and glacial lakes – perfect for hiking, cycling and adrenaline sports.

Muntenia, also known as Wallachia, lies south of the Carpathians and is home to the capital Bucharest. A relatively flat province, its border with Bulgaria is defined by the River Danube. In the southeast lies Dobrogea, which is home to the Danube Delta. The best-preserved delta in Europe, it is a haven for wildlife and has been declared a biosphere reserve and biodiversity World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The Dobrogea region boasts nearly 200 km (120 miles) of Black Sea coastline, incorporating the port of Constanta and the Danube Delta. Romania's other major rivers include the Olt, the Siret and the Mures.

Government:

Republic.

Head Of State:

President Klaus Iohannis since 2014.

Head Of Government:

Prime Minister Dacian Ciolos since 2015.

Electricity:

230 volts AC, 50Hz. European-style plugs with two round pins are standard.

Timezone:

Eastern European Time: GMT/UTC +2 (GMT/UTC +3 from 27 March to 30 October 2016)

Money

Currency Information:

New Leu (RON; symbol (plural) Lei) = 100 bani. Notes are in denominations of Lei500, 100, 50, 10, 5 and 1. Coins are in denominations of Bani50, 10, 5 and 1. (Old notes were in denominations of Lei1,000,000, 500,000, 100,000, 50,000 and 10,000 and coins in denominations of Lei5,000, 1,000, 500 and 100.)

Credit Cards:

American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted by large hotels, car hire firms and some restaurants and shops.

ATMs:

ATMs (*bancomat*) accepting MasterCard and Visa can be found in main banks, airports and shopping centres but should not be relied upon as a sole source of cash.

Travellers Cheques:

Like credit and debit cards, these are usually only useful in hotels and for obtaining cash at the bank or selected exchange offices. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars or Euros.

Banking Hours:

Mon-Fri 0900-1300.

Currency Restrictions:

The import and export of local currency is prohibited. The import and export of foreign currency is limited to €10,000.

Currency Exchange:

It is recommended that visitors bring Euros, as these can be easily exchanged by shops, restaurants and hotels. Pounds Sterling can be easily exchanged in most resorts. All hard foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks, larger hotels and airports and at authorised exchange offices (*Birou de Schimb Valutar*). Rates can vary from one place to another, so visitors are advised to shop around for the best rate of exchange. Exchanges on the black market are made frequently, but visitors are advised to exchange money through proper exchange channels and to receive a currency exchange receipt, as certain services require visitors to show the receipt as proof of having made at least one financial transaction.

Currencies: Exchange Rates:

1 EUR = 4.52 RON

1 GBP = 5.96 RON

1 USD = 4.14 RON

Climate

Best Time To Visit:

Romania is a great year-round tourist destination. The best times to visit in terms of climate are the end of April to the beginning of July and from end of August to the end of October as temperatures are mild and pleasant. Summers can be hot especially in Southern Romania, including Bucharest, but along the Black Sea Coast, sea

breezes offer moderate temperatures. Winters are coldest in the Carpathian Mountains where there is snow from December through to April. Snow also falls throughout most of the country during winter.

The ski season in Romania runs from December to March, although high resorts such as Stana de Vale often remain open until late April. Prices are cheaper at the beginning and the end of the season, with Christmas often the busiest time.

On the Black Sea Coast, tourism reaches its height between June and August and temperatures during the summer months can reach a sizzling 40°C. Look for deals in May and September, when the weather is still balmy but the season isn't yet in full swing.

Other seasonal activities include bird-watching (from mid-April to mid-May in the Danube Delta) and wine-tasting, which focuses around a series of festivals in September and October.

Required Clothing:

Lightweights are worn in summer on the coast and in low inland areas. Warmer clothes are needed in winter and throughout the year in the uplands. Rainwear is recommended throughout the year.

Serbia

To see our current selection of tours in Serbia [**click here**](#).

Although its reputation took a hammering during the disastrous collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Serbia has since become one of Eastern Europe's most entertaining destinations. Much of that is down to Belgrade, which, despite NATO bombing during the Milosevic regime, has emerged as a dynamic, edgy city with an appetite for hedonism.

Home to numerous excellent museums and galleries, a wide range of restaurants and cafés, and some of the best nightlife in southeast Europe, Belgrade is drawing comparisons with some of the world's coolest cities. It is also helping lead the rest of the country into a bright and hopeful future, with a young generation of creative and outward-looking Serbs reshaping the historic land that was founded as a principality some 1,200 years ago.

Away from the capital, Novi Sad is an attractive, lively city with an elegant centre and picturesque fortress overlooking over the Danube. In the far north, Subotica has an array of secessionist architecture and a notable Hungarian character.

The province of Vojvodina, north of Belgrade, has some excellent wetland habitats that are home to numerous bird species, while south of the capital the countryside consists of lush, wooded valleys with hidden-away Orthodox monasteries. Scattered among the country's more mountainous regions are a number of vast national parks.

Serbia is known for the forthright character of its citizens; its resilient culture has survived numerous occupiers and foreign rulers over the centuries. Despite their formidable reputation, visitors will find Serbs to be passionate but welcoming. As an Orthodox Christian country, it remains to a large degree deeply religious, though this fact is belied somewhat by the hedonism found in its bigger cities.

While there are still some political problems in Serbia, which has yet to formally recognise Kosovo after it unilaterally declared independence in 2008, the country has turned a corner. It is officially a EU candidate and many Serbs are hopeful of the change in economic fortunes that might be brought by becoming a full member.

Key Facts

Money Climate

Key Facts

Capital:

Belgrade.

Geography:

Serbia borders Hungary to the north, Romania to the northeast, Bulgaria to the southeast, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania to the south, Montenegro to the southwest, Bosnia & Herzegovina to the west and Croatia to the northwest. Northern Serbia is dominated by the flat, fertile farmland of the Danube and Tisa valleys. The scenery varies from rich Alpine valleys, vast fertile plains and rolling green hills to bare, rocky gorges as much as 1,140m (3,800ft) deep, thick forests and gaunt limestone mountain regions. Belgrade, the capital, lies at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers.

Government:

Republic.

Head Of State:

President Tomislav Nikolic since 2012.

Head Of Government:

Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic since 2014.

Electricity:

220 volts AC, 50Hz. European plugs with two round pins are used.

Timezone:

Central European Time: GMT/UTC +1 (GMT/UTC +2 from 27 March to 30 October 2016)

Money

Currency Information:

The official currency in Serbia is the Serbian Dinar. Serbian Dinar (RSD; symbol ???.) = 100 paras. Notes are in denominations of ???5,000, 1,000, 500, 200, 100, 50, 20 and 10. Coins are in denominations of ???20, 10, 5, 2 and 1.

Credit Cards:

International credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard are accepted in most shops, hotels and restaurants in Serbia. Diners Club and American Express are not so widely accepted.

ATMs:

ATMs are commonplace across the larger cities of Belgrade and Novi Sad, with most accepting international bank cards. Obtaining cash may be more difficult in the countryside so ensure you have enough money before going to a more rural location.

Travellers Cheques:

Although acceptable in theory, in practice these can be very hard to exchange. It is advisable to take hard currency and credit or debit cards.

Banking Hours:

Mon-Fri 0800-1900, Sat 0800-1500. Some are open on Sunday.

Currency Restrictions:

The import and export of local currency must not exceed €10,000 or equivalent. The import and export of foreign currency is unlimited.

Currency Exchange:

As elsewhere in the ex-Yugoslav republics, the most frequently exchanged currencies are the Euro and US Dollar. Pound Sterling can also be changed with ease. Money should be exchanged through official exchange offices only. There are several money-exchange machines in Belgrade (including one at the airport), accepting Pounds Sterling, US Dollars and Euros, giving back Dinars. Scottish and Northern Irish Pound Sterling bank notes are not accepted.

Currencies: Exchange Rates:

1 AUD = 0.71 EUR

1 EUR = 1.00 EUR

1 GBP = 1.32 EUR

1 USD = 0.92 EUR

Climate

Best Time To Visit:

Serbia has a mild continental climate with cold winters and warm summers. The north of Serbia and the upland regions have a continental climate, with the typical cold winters and hot summers. The summer months of June to August offer a lovely hot climate and little rain. The mountains experience heavy snowfall, and the ski season is generally from December to March.

Required Clothing:

In winter, mediumweight clothing and heavy overcoat; in summer, lightweight clothing and raincoat required.

[Slovak Republic](#)

To see our current selection of tours in Slovak Republic [click here](#).

Like the Czech Republic minus the crowds, Slovakia may sit in the shadows of its neighbour, but the country quietly impresses with its epic alpine scenery, cliff-top castles and exquisite capital.

Following the 'Velvet Divorce' of 1993, which saw Czechoslovakia split into two constituent parts (the Czech Republic and Slovakia), the nation set about reasserting its independent spirit, and today there's a humble, creative nature to Slovakia that wins over visitors of all stripes. Enthusiastic about art and music, the country is even home to a burgeoning hip-hop scene.

A small country of just five million odd inhabitants, Slovakia appeals to a broad range of travellers: from backpackers and businesspeople, to skiers and history buffs. It has one or two surprises up its sleeve. It is, for example, quietly gaining prestige as an alternative skiing destination. With its modern skiing infrastructure and new budget flights, Slovakia's High Tatras mountains are becoming a tantalising destination for winter sports enthusiasts.

As for the capital, it may be compared unfavourably with its neighbour, Prague, but Bratislava is nevertheless an alluring option for a city break. With an air of glamorous Vienna, it is home to gorgeous churches dating back to the 15th century, countless cafes squeezed onto cobblestone streets, and a slew of terrific, sometimes quirky museums.

Part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for centuries, Bratislava's architecture is grand Central European in style. It was the Hungarian capital for nearly 300 years, with 11 monarchs crowned in the extraordinary 500-year-old St Martin's Cathedral.

Beyond its stunning capital, Slovakia boasts some impressive natural landscapes, which remain relatively unspoiled and uncrowded. The country has 10 national parks to speak of, which offer sprawling forests, rolling hills and meandering rivers.

Though Bratislava and the High Tatras mountains remain the star attractions in Slovakia, beyond them lies a diverse and decidedly beautiful land, rich in rewards for those bold enough to explore it.

Key Facts

Money

Climate

Key Facts

Capital:

Bratislava.

Geography:

Known in full as the Slovak Republic, Slovakia is a landlocked central European country, bordered by the Czech Republic, Austria, Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. Bratislava, Slovakia's capital city, sits in the extreme southwestern corner, close to the Austrian border. This bite-sized country, boasts an astounding variety of scenery, from mountains, canyons and caves, to lakes, forests and lowland meadows, Slovakia's natural beauty makes it an appealing year-round destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

Almost half of the country is taken up by the Carpathian Arc: a range of mountains stretching across the north. Within the Arc, smaller ranges include the Lesser Carpathians, White Carpathians, Malá (Lesser) Fatra, Veľká (Greater) Fatra, High and Low Tatras and the Slovenské rudohorie Mountains (Slovak Ore Mountains).

Government:

Republic.

Head Of State:

President Andrej Kiska since 2014.

Head Of Government:

Prime Minister Robert Fico since 2012.

Electricity:

230 volts AC, 50Hz. European plugs with two round pins are standard.

Timezone:

Central European Time: GMT/UTC +1 (GMT/UTC +2 from 27 March to 30 October 2016)

Money

Currency Information:

Euro (EUR; symbol €) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10 and 5 cents.

Credit Cards:

Major credit cards (American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa) and debit cards (Maestro and Visa Electron) are widely accepted.

ATMs:

ATMs are widely available in Slovakia and machines are generally reliable.

Travellers Cheques:

American Express, Thomas Cook and Visa traveller's cheques are accepted in banks and at bureaux de change. Exchange rate charges are at least 1% of the nominal cheque value. To avoid additional charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Euros, US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Banking Hours:

Generally Mon-Fri 0800-1800.

Currency Restrictions:

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local or foreign currency. However, amounts exceeding €10,000 or equivalent must be declared if travelling from or to a country outside the European Union.

Currency Exchange:

Foreign currency (including traveller's cheques) can be exchanged at bureaux de change, main hotels, all banks, road border crossings, as well as major travel agencies.

Currencies: Exchange Rates:

1 AUD = 0.71 EUR

1 EUR = 1.00 EUR

1 GBP = 1.32 EUR

1 USD = 0.92 EUR

Climate

Best Time To Visit:

Slovakia lies in a moderate zone and possesses a continental climate with four distinct seasons. The average daily temperature in Bratislava in winter is -2°C (31°F), rising to 21°C (70°F) in the summer. January is the coldest month, the hottest being July and August. The highest peaks are snow-capped 130 days a year.

Required Clothing:

Medium- to heavyweights and sturdy footwear for winter; lightweights for summer. Rainwear is advisable throughout the year.

[Royal Crown](#)

Built in 1996 and refurbished in 2010, the 90 passenger MS Royal Crown is a luxurious vessel, specially designed for the rivers flowing through the heart of Europe. This elegant vessel combines the nostalgic charm of the 1930s with the comfort, luxury and exquisite service. No expense has been spared to create not only a vessel that is beautiful to look at, but also a great joy to travel on. Spacious teak decks, elegant public rooms and staterooms with mahogany, rosewood and marble, together with rich fabrics, all blend together to create a unique river vessel. Facilities onboard include a library, boutique, fitness area, lounge with panoramic views and a restaurant with open seating. Outside there is a large sun deck.



Royal Crown



Lounge



Restaurant



On Deck



Twin Cabin



Sun Deck



Cabin Bathroom



Bar



Royal Suite

Your Cabin / Suite

The MS Royal Crown has 45 suites which range in size from 145 square feet to the spacious Royal Suites which measure 200 square feet. All suites are fitted with rosewood cupboards, a dressing table, satellite TV and radio, a safety deposit box, individually controlled airconditioning and en-suite facilities with shower and hairdryer. Suites on the Select deck have portholes and the Royal Suites on the Panorama deck have large windows.

Your Space

The elegant Lounge Bar is defined by its 30s inspired Art Deco style, with textured carpets, carved mahogany and plush sofas which create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. Experience unforgettable views from the large windows as you enjoy coffee, tea or a light snack such as a salad or sandwich from the snack menu. The lounge is also where our guest speakers will entertain you with informative presentations. In the evenings, let the day come to an end with a choice of beverages from the extensive menu accompanied by a pianist playing a Steinway & Sons grand piano. The huge sun deck on MS Royal Crown covers almost the entire length of the vessel, interrupted only by the Bridge. Recline on a sun lounger and read a book or watch the changing scenery. For some time out, relax in the wellness centre which includes a sauna with shower facilities, and a fitness room. There is also a small gift shop and a library with a selection of books and games. Daily newspapers are also supplied.

Your Dining

While the most beautiful river scenery passes by, enjoy delicacies created by the Executive Chef and his highly skilled team. Only the freshest ingredients are used to create delicious dishes. Relax and take in the passing landscapes, with pristine white linen to complete your dining experience. The restaurant has open seating allowing you to sit where you like at each meal. In the morning breakfast is served buffet style, lunch is a

delightful salad buffet and served choices, and dinner is served a la carte in four courses. In addition, a fine selection of wines will accompany lunch and dinner.

Life Onboard

The atmosphere onboard is friendly and informal and within days you will have made new friends in the open-seating restaurant, on the shore excursions or whilst relaxing in the comfortable public areas onboard. You will find yourself amongst like-minded people in an English speaking environment and for those who seek peace and quiet, there will always be the opportunity to find a secluded spot on the sun deck or simply rest in your well-appointed cabin. A musician will play each evening whilst you relax in the lounge, guest speakers will provide a series of interesting talks and our cruise director will host informative port briefings. After a day exploring ashore, you will return to the comfort and peace of a well-run and exceedingly comfortable vessel.

For Your Comfort

The Royal Crown is equipped with the latest safety and navigation equipment for sailing Europe's waterways. During your voyage you will have the opportunity to visit the Captain and Officers in the Bridge to learn more about navigating the varying water levels of these meandering rivers. There is no doctor onboard. Smoking is limited to the Sun deck.

[Video/Image Library](#)



Melk Abbey



Saint Sava Cathedral, Belgrade



Canal houses of Amsterdam



Durnstein



Great Black Cormorants, Danube Delta



Schonbrunn Palace, Vienna



Budapest



Bratislava Castle

Our View

" The luxury yacht MS Royal Crown is the perfect way to explore the rich riverside culture of the Rhine, Main and Danube. Elegantly decorated in a 1930s Art Deco style, the vessel transports you to a time when life moved at a slower pace and when people took the time to savour simple pleasures. Let the world slip by as you relax on the sun deck or in the lounge, delight in panoramic views of the passing scenery; lose yourself in the nostalgic sounds of classical music played live onboard. The destinations you will visit are just as romantic as the atmosphere aboard the vessel. The MS Royal Crown provides easy access to Europe's most lively and beautiful cities; each port of call has its own unique character waiting to be discovered. From historic locations to iconic buildings, your cruise itinerary is full of opportunities for making memories that will stay with you long after your return home. For your convenience, our prices include flights as well as gratuities, excursions and drinks with lunch and dinner."



Onboard Experts



Nicholas Merchant

Nicholas Merchant's career has mirrored his abiding interest in Antiques. He has worked for some of the major Auction Houses in London as well as running his own book business devoted to the Decorative and Fine Arts. His particular interest is English 18th century furniture and Country Houses. However, his interest is broad and he likes to discuss objects, not just for themselves but in their historical context.

Nicholas is much in demand as a lecturer which has taken him recently to the United States, South Africa,

Europe and all over the United Kingdom, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Since joining the panel of lecturers of the NADFAS in 2004 his convivial style of lecturing has resulted in over 500 lectures all over the world. Nicholas is the West Yorkshire representative of the ArtFund. His company Aspect Events is responsible for arranging, hosting and lecturing in major hotels on specialist short breaks for collectors. Nicholas also lectures extensively on board selected cruise-lines

Nicholas Merchant will be on the following tour dates: 28 April 2016 to 21 May 2016 • 17 September 2016 to 10 October 2016



Ticu Gamalie

Born in Constanta, Romania, Ticu began his career in the travel industry at young age guiding short tours in the Black Sea in his summer holidays. This led to longer tours such as “The Painted Wonders of Bucovina”, “Bucharest – the Little Paris”, “Dracula – between myth and history” for various cruise ships and being invited to give lectures on board.

He then graduated from Bucharest Physics University and worked for 10 years as a high school teacher in Romania, whilst continuing to guide in the holidays. He was also a member of “Pro-Democracy”, a Romanian NGO involved in elections-surveillance in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania (under OSCE).

In 1998 he was invited to the United States as an exchange professor where he graduated with a Masters in Science of Education. He has been working as an Assistant Professor at Arkansas State University - Beebe since 2000 and teaches a variety of courses including Physics, Earth Science and Environmental Science.

Ticu Gamalie will be on the following tour dates: 28 April 2016 to 21 May 2016 • 22 June 2016 to 15 July 2016



Dr Alan Borg

Alan began his career teaching the history of art at Indiana and Princeton Universities . Returning to Britain in 1970, he became Assistant Keeper in the Royal Armouries in the Tower of London. In 1982 he became Director General of the Imperial War Museum, where he was responsible for the complete refurbishment and

reinterpretation of the Museum, the opening of the Cabinet War Rooms, the preservation of HMS Belfast and the development of Duxford Airfield as a major aviation museum. In 1996 he became Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, where he undertook the redisplay of the entire sequence of British Galleries. He retired from the Museum in 2001 and is currently Vice President of the Foundling Museum, and Librarian of the Priory of England and the Islands, the Venerable Order of St John. Awarded the CBE in 1991, he also a Knight of the Order of St John.

His publications include books on Romanesque art, the history of Arms and Armour, War Memorials, Histories of the Painter-Stainers' Company and the Cooks' Company and A History of Vauxhall Gardens, together with numerous articles.

Dr Alan Borg will be on the following tour dates: 28 April 2016 to 21 May 2016



Prof Martyn Rady

Martyn Rady is Professor of Central European History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, a part of University College London. He has written books on German, Hungarian and Romanian history, and has edited and translated some of the leading texts for the history of Hungary – most recently the earliest Hungarian chronicle, written in Latin about the year 1200, and an eye-witness account of the Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241. He has broadcast extensively on television and radio, discussing subjects ranging from contemporary politics in Central Europe to vampirism and the history of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Prof Martyn Rady will be on the following tour dates: 22 June 2016 to 15 July 2016



Henry Davis

Henry Davis lectured in International & European Studies at the Birkbeck College (University of London) and is Convener of International & European Studies at the School of Oriental & African Studies (University of

London). His main academic area of interest is European history and politics. Apart from his writings on British foreign policy, he has had published several articles and from time to time has broadcast on the countries of Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia, re travel and academically-related topics. He was the Editor of 'Albanian Life' for four years.

He has organised and led scores of study-tours, and has been a Noble Caledonia tour-leader and lecturer since the Company was created.

Henry Davis will be on the following tour dates: 17 September 2016 to 10 October 2016

London Festival Opera

Exclusive Performances by London Festival Opera - April & September departures

We are delighted that members of London Festival Opera will be joining us for three performances during our April and September departures. Bringing together established opera singers from major British opera companies, London Festival Opera have achieved a considerable reputation for presenting opera and music performances in a wide variety of worldwide venues. They will perform a Mozart Opera Celebration featuring arias ensembles from The Marriage of Figaro, Cosi Fan Tutte, Don Giovanni and The Magic Flute in the beautiful setting of Melk Abbey. They will also present their highlight production of Puccini's heart-rending masterpiece Madame Butterfly in costume and a magical repertoire "A Night in Vienna" onboard the MS Royal Crown whilst we are moored in Vienna.



River Guides

Danube

Main

Rhine

To see our current selection of tours for the river Danube [click here](#).



Danube

More than any other river in the world, the Danube will always conjure thoughts of music. The Danube rises in the Black Forest of Germany and reaches its end in the Black Sea, passing through four capital cities on its way (more than any other river in the world) and ten countries – Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Croatia, Ukraine and Moldova. It has many tributaries, some important rivers themselves. The Danube is all about high culture and the historic cities that appear in close succession along its banks.

Vienna, for instance, is a jewel. Its Ring created by Franz Joseph in the 1860s is a parade of imperial magnificence, opera house after university, palace after cathedral, interspersed with shaded gardens designed for outdoor summer concerts. Yet this is a city centre small enough to walk around easily – though you can take a tour in a horse-drawn carriage. Must-sees include the Hofburg and the Schonbrunn but if you might want to try a must-do, go to the Music House where you can virtually conduct the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra on screen – if you get to the end, the orchestra stands up and applauds you!

Bratislava is a tiny city dominated by its castle on the hill and a historic gem. The Old Town is completely pedestrianized which makes for pleasant walking. Besides the Gothic Cathedral and an exquisitely pretty Old Town Hall, look out for the humorous statues – the Good Soldier Schweik's head emerging from a manhole on the street for instance. Budapest is a city of two halves. Buda is hilly and wooded with Gothic houses and cobbled streets. Pest is all grand boulevards and Baroque buildings including a jewel of an opera house. For music lovers, there are museums to Liszt and Bartok and plenty of concerts on offer. And for everyone there are breath-taking views from the Fisherman's Bastion perched high above the city where, in the sunshine, the Danube turns a perfect blue.

To see our current selection of tours for the river Main [click here](#).



Main

The Main is one of the most important tributaries of the River Rhine and is formed by the joining of its two headstreams, the Red Main and the White Main near Kulmbach. The former rises in the Jura Mountains, the latter in the Fichtelgebirge mountains. The Main then flows through the German states of Bavaria, Baden-Wurttemberg and Hesse and it is navigable from Mainz to Bamberg. It is connected to the Danube via the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal and this waterway, some 2200 miles (3500km) long connects the North Sea to the Black Sea. It is often seen as the dividing line between northern and southern Germany, with the Catholic part of the country extending from its southern banks.

Along the Main's river banks are vineyards and farms and forested mountain ranges. This is a river that flows, too, through several important cities including Frankfurt, Wurzburg, Karlstadt, as well as many pretty smaller towns with red-roofed houses and graceful bridges. Wurzburg is a centre of the German wine trade and its architecture has been restored so beautifully that its Baroque bishop's palace, with its gardens and squares and frescoes by Tiepolo, has become a UNESCO World Heritage site. Aschaffenburg is a typical Bavarian town surrounded by the forests of the Spessart mountains with a Renaissance castle and just 20 miles (30km) from Frankfurt. One of Germany's most ancient cities, Frankfurt is now an important commercial centre – this was where the Rothschild family built its banking empire. It is also, of course, the place you'll find those excellent sausages known as frankfurters.

To see our current selection of tours for the river Rhine [click here](#).



Rhine

Together with the Danube, the Rhine was the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire and was then an important commercial waterway. It has remained so throughout history and is now the busiest river in Europe. It is also one of the longest rivers in the world – 766 miles (1232km). It has a dual source in Switzerland – Vorderrhein (or Anterior Rhine) from Lake Toma and Hinterrhein (or Posterior Rhine) from the Paradies Glacier near the Rheinwaldhorn. From Switzerland, it flows through Liechtenstein and into Austria as the Alpenrhein (or Alpine Rhine). This section of the river empties into lake Constance and through the Rhine Falls (the second largest waterfall in Europe), after which it is swollen to double its previous size by the River Aar. It continues into Germany and is joined by such major tributaries as the Main and Moselle. The Middle Rhine flows through the Rhine Gorge – a UNESCO world heritage site, noted for its beautiful castles, picturesque towns and vineyards. The Lower Rhine passes through a number of important cities including Cologne, Dusseldorf and the Ruhr area – the largest conurbation in Germany.

The Rhine turns west into the Netherlands and splits into three – the Waal, Nederrijn and IJssel. It eventually merges with two more rivers to form the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta emptying at various points into the North Sea. Canals connect the Rhine with cities and waterways across Europe. The Rhine was of major strategic importance to the Romans who stationed garrisons along its banks. The river was throughout history a natural border between countries and remains so today. It is also a river that is surrounded by legend, an inspiration to writers and composers – most notably, perhaps, Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* in the Ring Cycle. It is still hauntingly beautiful with fairy-tale castles, picturesque medieval towns and ancient vineyards lining its banks.

Book with Confidence

Speak to one of our advisors on 020 7752 0000