

Highlights of Eastern Europe Uniworld River Cruises

By

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Europe River Cruise Expert

Map From Uniworld



Overview

- Immerse yourself in new cultures as you travel from splendid Budapest to dynamic Bucharest, discovering the best that the revitalized nations of Eastern Europe have to offer along the way.
- Gaze in wonder at the lofty spires of Hungary's Parliament Building as it rises majestically above the Danube in Budapest.
- Sit down for friendly, intimate meals with farmers in Croatia and enthusiastic locals in Bulgaria.
- Uncover scores of little-known treasures and step back in time to investigate the history and legends along the Danube.
- Who will love this cruise? Explorers wishing to discover ancient lands and modern multicultural cities. Photographers, amateur archaeologists, connoisseurs of regional cuisines and anyone who loves beautiful and mysterious locales.

What's Included: Dining

- All meals onboard, prepared using the finest and freshest ingredients
- 9 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 7 dinners
- Captain's Welcome and Farewell Receptions
- Welcome and Farewell Gala Dinners
- Unlimited beverages onboard, including fine wine, beer, spirits, specialty coffee and tea, soft drinks and mineral water

What's Included: Excursions

- 8 days of excursions, including “Choice Is Yours” options, all fully hosted by English-speaking local experts
- Guided “Let's Go” and “Do as the Locals Do” programs
- State-of-the-art Quietvox portable audio-headset system on all excursions
- Use of bicycles and Nordic walking sticks

What's Included: Accommodations

- 7-night cruise in a riverview stateroom on the majestic *S.S. Beatrice* or the imperial *River Duchess*
- 2 nights in Bucharest at the The Marmorosch Bucharest (or similar) with breakfast
- Lavishly appointed riverview staterooms and suites have handcrafted Savoir[®] Beds of England, high thread count 100% Egyptian cotton sheets and European duvets, and a menu of pillow options
- Free Internet and Wi-Fi access

What's Included: Experiences

- 5 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia
- 2 UNESCO World Heritage sites
- Services of an experienced Uniworld Cruise Manager
- Group Transfers are included on arrival and departure days (please see terms and conditions for transfer guidelines)
- Gratuities for onboard personnel (ship staff, crew, Cruise/Tour Manager) are included during the cruise/tour
- Captivating onboard local entertainment
- Cultural enrichment, including a Signature Lecture

Day 1 Budapest (Embark)

- Arrive at Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport.
- If your cruise/tour package includes a group arrival transfer or if you have purchased a private arrival transfer, you will be greeted by a Uniworld representative and transferred to the ship.

Day 2 Budapest

- Located on opposite sides of the Danube, Buda and Pest each have their own distinctive character and allure.
- Explore this dynamic and multifaceted city with your choice of excursions—you can see it from a local’s perspective on our walking tour, cover more ground with a panoramic tour
- or “Let’s Go” with a guided bike ride.
- Vibrant Budapest, Hungary’s capital, offers an enchanting combination of East and West.
- *In the evening, a special Captain’s Welcome Reception and Dinner will be prepared for you.*

Day 2 Budapest Communist Tour

- Following World War II, Hungary spent 40 years as the Soviet-backed Hungarian People's Republic, a fascist regime that was massively unpopular for its oppressive politics, brutal secret police force (the ÁVH) and declining economic conditions. An uprising in 1956 failed to eradicate the Soviet-backed government but did eventually result in more liberal policies. The Hungarian People's Republic finally ended with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989.
- Step into the past for a tour of this fraught history, beginning at the House of Terror. Housed in the former headquarters of the dreaded ÁVH secret police, this museum focuses on the atrocities of Soviet-era Hungary in a permanent exhibition called Double Occupation. You'll learn about the events leading up to the 1956 uprising and develop a deep understanding of the country's complex political background.
- Back on the coach, you'll see Heroes' Square, designed in 1896 to commemorate the millennium anniversary of the ancestral conquest of the Carpathian Basin, which would later become modern-day Hungary.
- Your last stop of the tour will be Gellért Hill for spectacular views over Budapest, where you'll see Hungary's own Statue of Liberty. Originally erected as a monument to the Soviet "liberation" of Hungary from Nazi occupation, the statue's inscription was later altered to celebrate Hungarian independence, freedom and prosperity without mention of Soviet intervention.

Day 2 Budapest Panoramic Highlights with Synagogue Visit

- Start your tour with a drive down the picture-worthy Andrásy Avenue. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is a masterpiece of Neo-Renaissance architecture and city planning. In addition to the many beautiful museums, palaces, and other public buildings lining its sidewalks, this street is also among the most popular in Budapest for shopping and dining. Marvel at such sites as Heroes' Square, Franz Liszt Memorial House, House of Terror, the Széchenyi Baths, City Park and, of course, the Castle District.
- Your coach will head into Budapest's former Jewish quarter. Despite being one of the smallest districts in Budapest, it is still one of the liveliest, with a dense population and a plethora of bars, coffee shops and street food stands. You'll see the area's unique streets and hidden courtyards before exiting the coach at Dohány Street Synagogue.
- Dohány Street Synagogue, also known as Central Synagogue or the Great Synagogue, is the largest synagogue in Europe and the second-largest in the world. Its gilded onion domes and red-striped facade make it one of the most interesting buildings in Budapest. The interior is even more ornate, with intricately designed ceilings and a combined floor and gallery space that can accommodate thousands of worshippers.

Day 3 MOHÁCS, BATINA (OSIJEK), VUKOVAR

- Welcome to Croatia!
- This ancient country, which has made a remarkable recovery from a brutal civil war, is noted for its beautiful countryside and thriving folk traditions, as well as simple, delicious local rustic food.

Day 3 VUCEDOL CULTURE MUSEUM & LUNCH AT A FAMILY RESTAURANT

- From Batina you'll head to Karanac, a lovely village where you'll learn about traditional Croatian craftsmanship.
- Later, you'll visit the Vucedol Museum. The basic idea behind the concept of this unique museum was integration into the terrain—the entire structure is designed to be mostly buried in the ground and only the façade is open to the landscape. Its shape, as serpentine, follows terrain, and on whose green roof you can reach the archaeological sites over the museum.
- Along the path, you'll encounter the various Vučedol culture archaeological findings that have been discovered to date, which showcase the daily life and customs during a turbulent time of the immigration of the first Indo-Europeans and their relationship with the natives, the blending of material cultures and religions.
- Following your time at the museum, enjoy lunch at the local family restaurant.
- Next, you're off to Vukovar, whose bullet-riddled water tower stands as a reminder of the bitter Croatian War of Independence, fought between 1991 and 1995, when Croatia sought to break away from Yugoslavia. Thousands died during the siege of Vukovar, which was heavily damaged. Here you will see lasting signs of the conflict, but you will also see a revitalized community, determined to rebuild.

Day 3 HOME-HOSTED LUNCH WITH KARANAC CRAFT MUSEUM VISIT

- From Batina you'll head to Osijek. On a walking tour here, you'll learn something of Osijek's long history—which dates to Roman times—and stop by the Church of the Holy Cross, built by the Franciscans after the Ottomans left.
- Next, you'll move on to the idyllic, countryside town of Karanac, known as an “Ethno Village” for how authentically it preserves the region's cultural heritage through its architecture, customs and cuisine.
- Karanac is located in the heart of the Baranja region, over 12 miles from the nearest city, Osijek. In 2016, it was awarded as the best rural destination in Croatia.
- In addition to visiting a museum to learn about local traditions of craftsmanship, we'll join a local family for lunch today. They'll invite you to see their home and garden before its time to re-board our bus and meet the ship in Vukovar.

Day 4 Belgrade

- Belgrade, the modern-day capital of Serbia, is one of Europe's oldest cities, dating back some 7,000 years.
- Signs of its tumultuous history are visible everywhere, juxtaposed with the city's vibrant modern-day present.

DAY 4 NIGHTS OUT: SAINT SAVA CONCERT AND WINE TASTING

- This evening, enter the Cathedral of St. Sava in Belgrade, a stunning building with a domed design that is meant to evoke the Hagia Sophia and an interior generously tiled in golden mosaics.
- Explore the crypt and sit for a special choir performance. Hum along to the familiar tune of Schubert's *Ave Maria* and discover a host of Serbian classics.
- After the concert, you will also be treated to a tasting of wine and brandy produced in the region.

DAY 4 BELGRADE CITY TOUR WITH VISIT TO THE ROYAL GROUNDS OF KARADJORDJEVIC DYNASTY PALACE

- As a motorcoach carries you through the city, you'll see a mix of architectural styles that reveal the city's past, ranging from Gothic, Ottoman, baroque and art nouveau to utilitarian Communist apartment blocks and modern high-rises.
- While Belgrade has been no stranger to political upheaval, the 19th-century Residence of Princess Ljubica and serene old residential streets speak of calmer days, as do the bustling present-day café-lined boulevards. You'll pass the tomb and memorial museum of Josip Broz Tito, which is located at the site of Tito's former residence in Belgrade's affluent Dedinje neighborhood.,
- Visit Kalemegdan Fortress, high on a hill above the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers.
- Ancient Romans built the first fortress here, and successive conquerors and defenders—Slavs, Byzantines, Ottomans, Habsburgs—continued to build and destroy fortifications on this site for another 1,500 years. Walk along the old stone walls, passing monuments and memorials (some will surprise you—poets and composers are honored here as well as military actions), for a sense of Serbia's distant and more recent history.
- It's not the only intriguing historical sight you'll see today, however. You will also visit the Karadjordjevic Dynasty Palace and sip a glass of sparkling Serbian wine as you tour a compound of palaces built in the 1920s and 1930s. Serbia's royal family, which is related to most of Europe's royalty, has a strictly honorary position in modern-day democratic Serbia, but Crown Prince Alexander (who did not feel that taking the title of king was appropriate when his father died in exile in the United States in 1972) and his family still live in these palaces. A local expert will show you the public rooms of the Royal Palace, the White Palace, the adjacent chapel and the spacious grounds.

Kalemegdan Fortress Belgrade, Serbia



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Kalemegdan Fortress, Belgrade Serbia

DAY 4 "LET'S GO" "I BIKE BELGRADE" TOUR

- Mount a bike and spend a leisurely half-day getting an up-close look at Belgrade, complete with lively commentary from your guide, who will tell you not just about the tumultuous recent past but also what it's like to live here.
- Ride past Branko's Bridge, Staro Sajmište (a former concentration camp), the Palace of Serbia and Hotel Jugoslavija; after a refreshing stop at a traditional fisherman's bar, you'll be ready to pedal to Kalemegdan Fortress and see a bit of Serbia's more distant past

DAY 4 RAKIJA DISTILLERY VISIT (EXTRA CHARGE)

- Get to know the national drink of Serbia this afternoon with a rakija tasting.
- A drink of great cultural significance to Serbia and its nearby neighbors, rakija is a clear or light fruit brandy with an alcohol content ranging from 40-65%.
- Any fruit can be made into rakija, but the most popular varieties in Serbia are plum and grape.
- After soaking in the Belgradian countryside at the Avala Tower, a popular place for local families to escape the city, head to a local distillery to sample high-quality rakija for yourself.

Day 5 GOLUBAC, CRUISING THE IRON GATES

- Head ashore to explore a Paleolithic site and an extraordinarily well-preserved medieval fortress. All along the way, history lines the banks of the river.
- Keep an eye out for Trajan's Plaque, which the ancient Romans erected to commemorate the road they anchored in the steep cliffs above the water, and Golubac Castle, built in the 14th century and attacked successively by the Serbs, Magyars and Turks.
- *Unwind onboard as you cruise the breathtaking Iron Gates, an 83-mile-long (134-kilometer-long) stretch of scenic gorges that were cut through the Carpathian and Balkan mountains over eons by the Danube River.*
- *These gorges, which act as a natural border between Serbia and Romania, are among the most dramatic and beautiful sights in all of Europe. This was one of the swiftest and most dangerous stretches of the river before two dams were built: Iron Gate I and Iron Gate II.*
- *Construction on the dams began in 1964 and took 20 years to complete; they have dramatically altered the area's landscape, raising the water level by 114 feet (35 meters) and drowning several islands and villages.*

Stunning River Scenes The Iron Gates



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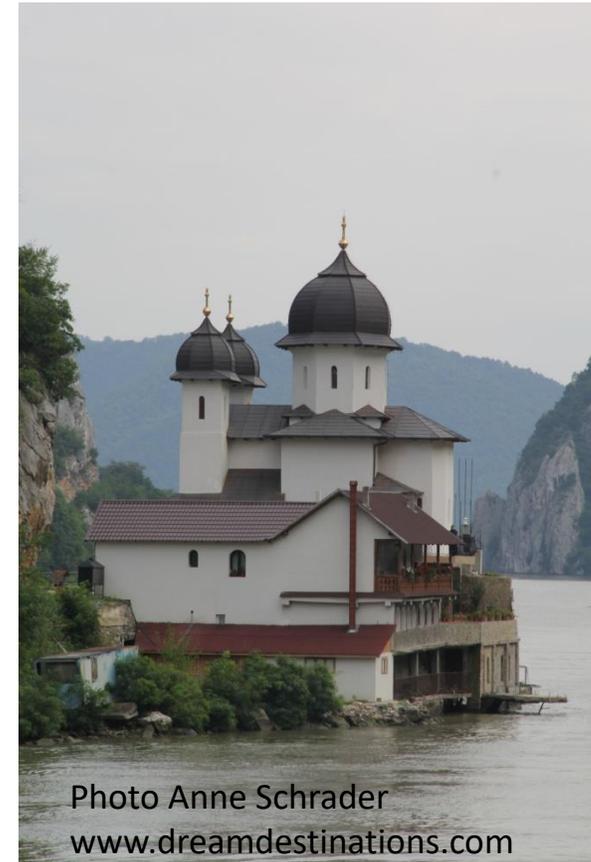


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DAY 5 LEPENSKI VIR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK & GOLUBAC CASTLE

- Your first stop is Golubac Castle, one of the best-preserved medieval fortresses in Europe, a powerhouse that has loomed over the Danube for centuries.
- Later you'll visit Lepenski Vir which is one of the largest and most significant prehistoric archeological sites from the Stone Age, located on the Danube.
- It was once the epicenter of one of the most highly developed prehistoric cultures, with complex social relations and even rudimentary urban planning.
- The discovery of this prehistoric settlement has changed the image experts once had about the early Stone Age, expanding scientists' knowledge about human communities that walked the earth millennia ago.

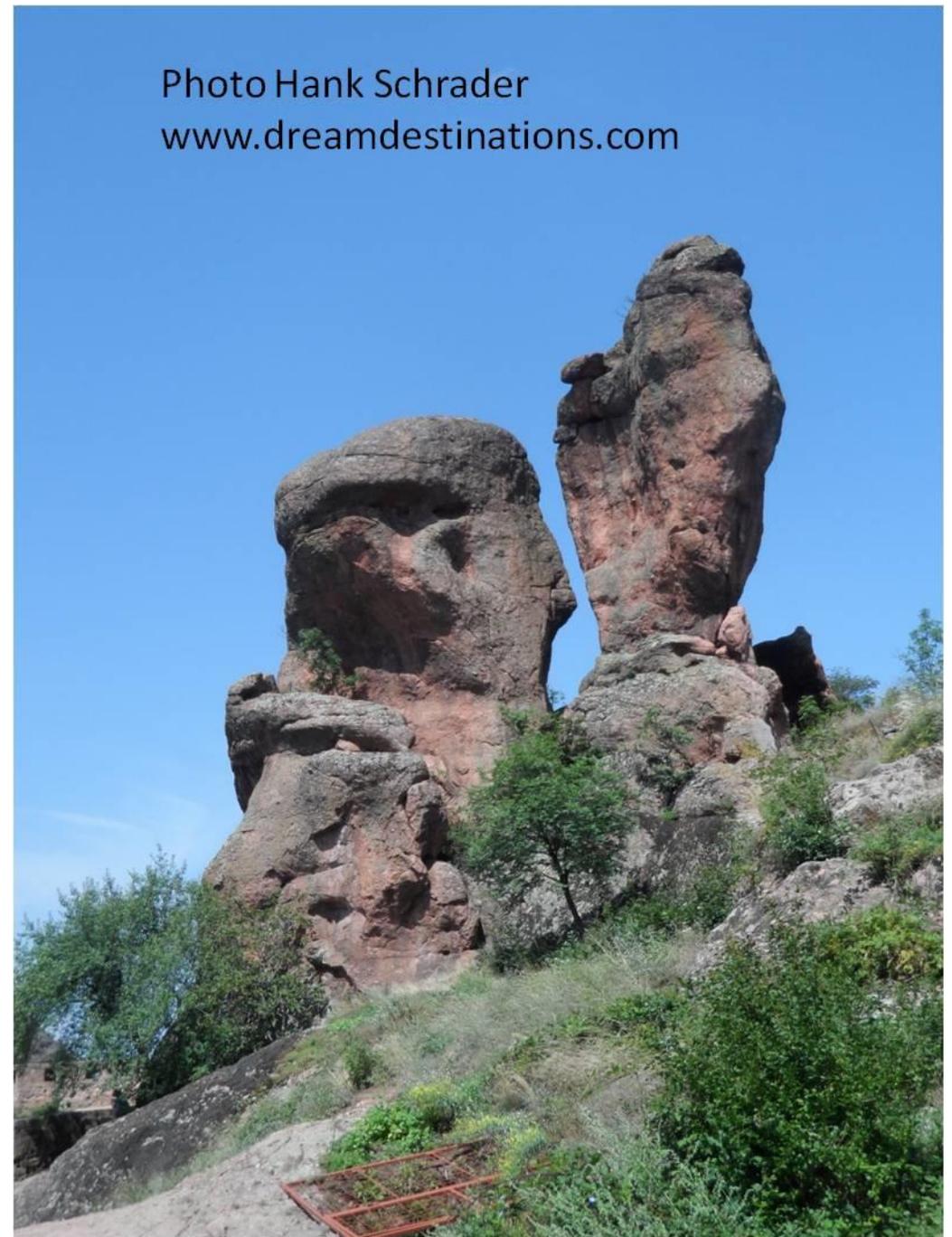
Day 6 Vidin

- Vidin is a port town on the Danube that once played an important role in medieval Bulgarian politics, as the great fortress Baba Vida attests.
- It's your base for an unusual excursion today—a visit to the fascinating Belogradchik rock formations.
- Or you can head to a local's home to bake a traditional Bulgarian dish called *banitza*.

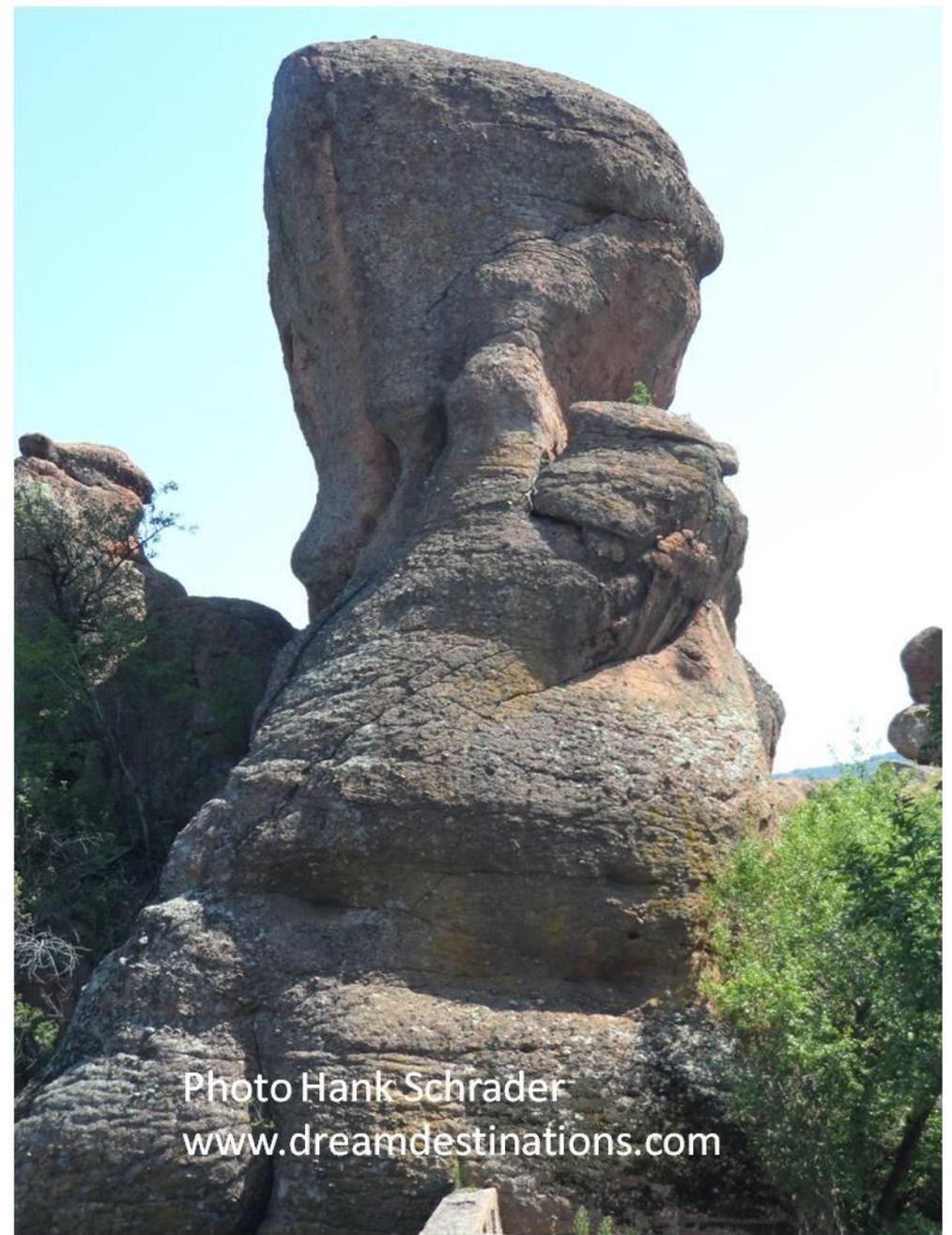
Day 6 BELOGRADCHIK RED ROCK VALLEY

- Drive through the scenic Bulgarian countryside to Belogradchik, a small town in the foothills of the Balkan Mountains, not far from the Serbian border.
- After some light refreshment at a local hotel, you'll be ready to explore the astonishing rock formations nearby, which are over 200 million years old—and have inspired nearly as many legends!
- Many of the strange wind- and weather-hewn shapes have names, such as Adam and Eve, the Bear and the Castle. The outcroppings formed a natural defense for the town that was enhanced with man-made fortifications over the centuries.
- Whether you choose to hike with a local expert to the top of the path or not, you'll be rewarded with spectacular views.
- Your return will take you past some sights that highlight Vidin's mixed heritage: the Orthodox cathedral, the Turkish mosque, the Konak (the 18th-century headquarters of the Turkish police) and the cruciform barracks (which date to the 1790s).
- The final stop will be Baba Vida, whose stern 10th-century stone walls were built on the site of a Roman watchtower.

Belogradchik rock formations



More Belogradchik rocks



More exposed Belogradchik rocks

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Belogradchik Fortress built among the rocks



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More of the Belogradchik fortress



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A passage gate of the Belogradchik Fortress



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Baba Vida Castle, Vidin, Bulgaria



Baba Vida Castle, Vidin Bulgaria



More of Baba Vida Castle

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One of the keep towers of Baba Vida Castle



Statue of Baba Vida outside the castle



Photo Hank Schrader
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Play about the history of the Baba Vida Castle



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Day 6 Banitza Home Baking Experience

- Today, a local baker will welcome you into their home for a demonstration and workshop on how to make a traditional Bulgarian treat, banitza. Typically made with filo dough, yoghurt and cheese, banitza can always be found at Bulgarian celebrations. First, your hostess will show you how the bread is made, then you will try your own hand at preparing this delicious treat while her banitza is in the oven.
- You'll also learn how yoghurt, a Bulgarian staple, can be made at home. When the hostess' banitza is ready, you'll sample it alongside the homemade yoghurt. In the meantime, your own banitza will be baking and will be ready to take back to the ship with you when the tasting is finished.
- Before returning to the ship, you'll stop at a local kindergarten to join the afternoon's lesson. Enjoy some light refreshments while chatting with the kids, lending a hand in their craft session and watching their English poetry and song performance.

Day 7

- Bulgaria's foremost Danube port, Rousse is sometimes called "Little Vienna" for its elegant 19th-century mansions and public buildings.
- *In the evening, a special Captain's Farewell Reception and Dinner will be prepared for you.*

Day 7 Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanassi with Authentic Bulgarian Lunch

- Twice the capital of Bulgaria—before and after the Ottomans conquered the nation—Veliko Tarnovo climbs steep hills above the Yantra River, topped by the ruins of Tsarevets, the stronghold where Bulgaria's kings ruled between 1185 and 1393.
- The remains of the great stone walls and towers that you see formed the historic heart of the Second Bulgarian Empire. History lives in this town, as a quick look at the wares for sale in Samovod Marketplace will show you: Handicrafts are all made by local artisans using ancient, medieval or Renaissance technologies. You'll have time to peruse the exceptional local pottery and textiles there before heading to Arbanassi, home to six amazing 17th-century stone churches, each one decorated with colorful and intricate frescoes.
- Learn something of the multicultural history of this fascinating town at the Ethnographic Museum and visit the UNESCO-designated Nativity Church, where murals of the Nativity, the Last Judgment and the zodiac brilliantly blend religious and humanist iconography.
- At another of the churches, Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, you'll hear the otherworldly singing of an Orthodox choir in a short concert. Your day's adventure includes a traditional three-course Bulgarian lunch, complete with live folk music.

Day 7 Rouse Walking Tour with Ivanovo and Basarbovo Monasteries

- Walk through the woods of Rusenski Lom, a protected region that is home to a wide variety of rare birds, among other wildlife, to Ivanovo Rock Monastery—once an enclave of more than 40 churches and chapels that the devout built inside caves above the Lom River Valley. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is famous for its beautiful and well-preserved 14th-century murals.
- Your next destination, the Basarbovo Rock Monastery, is the only rock monastery where monks still live and worship today. Climb the narrow rock stairway to the 15th-century cloister, which is cut into the limestone cliffs high above the Lom River, and take a look at the arresting frescoes.
- You'll also spend some time in Rouse, a city with an easygoing, gracious feeling. Freedom Square, a huge open plaza, takes its name from the Freedom Monument, which soars from the center of the square; the stately Belle Epoque buildings surrounding the square attest to the city's prosperity in the 1890s. Stroll along wide, tree-lined Alexandrovska, the main pedestrian street that links the city's many attractive squares, encountering such landmark sights as Rouse's grand theater, the city museum and the first movie theater (it opened in 1896).

Day 8

- This morning, you'll disembark the ship in Giurgiu and drive through the countryside to Bucharest, where you'll enjoy a panoramic city tour and a visit to People's Palace.
- Tonight, you'll relax in the comfort of a luxury hotel located in the heart of the city, Romania's capital and its cultural and economic center.

Day 8 Bucharest Communist Tour with People's Palace

- Bucharest began as a fortress in the 15th century, a warlike origin that set the tone for its turbulent history. It saw glory days as the summer residence of the Wallachian princes and was burned to the ground by the Ottoman Turks; then Austria-Hungary and imperial Russia fought over it for a century. After Wallachia and Moldavia united to form Romania in the mid-19th century, Bucharest enjoyed a prosperity that was reflected in its extravagant architecture, some of which miraculously survived WWII bombing and Communist building programs.
- You'll see Bucharest's very own Triumphal Arch, which is modeled after the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, and Victoria Boulevard, lined with chic shops and handsomely restored pre-war buildings—and sites where protests brought down Ceaușescu's regime in 1989.
- These days Bucharest enjoys a lively and eclectic cultural scene, hosting international arts festivals and concerts, and a measure of prosperity apparent in its busy cafés and thriving street life.
- For the most dazzling stop of the day, you'll visit the colossal People's Palace, the second largest office building in the world. It's certainly one of the grandest as well, filled with crystal chandeliers, mosaics, marble, gold leaf and stained-glass windows. A remnant of the city's communist history, the building's original design took a team of approximately 700 architects and was inspired by Socialist Realism, Modernism and Neoclassical architecture. Though the People's Palace was ordered by Nicolae Ceaușescu, the last communist leader of Romania, it was not completed until 8 years after his death.
- The Palace now houses the Romanian Parliament and three museums, including a contemporary art museum and the Museum of Communist Totalitarianism.

Bucharest Romania



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Open Air Museum—Rustic homes reassembled



Photo Anne Schrader
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Vlad Tepes in the Lipscani district,



Photo Anne Schrader www.dreamdestinations.com

Palace of the Parliament

Day 9 Bucharest

- Get to know the bustling heart of Romania's capital city with a full day to explore Bucharest on your own.

Day 9 Snagov Palace with Vlad the Impaler's Tomb (Extra Cost)

- Built by Prince Nicolae, brother of King Carol II, in the 1930s, Snagov Palace is a handsome estate on the shores of a lake with which it shares its name.
- On your tour here today, you'll learn about its noteworthy design, as well as the historic figures who have walked its halls.
- We'll complete our visit with a delightfully eerie experience: a quick trip to an island in the middle of Lake Snagov, where we'll find a monastery rumored to house the remains of Vlad the Impaler—the real life Count Dracula.

Day 10 Bucharest

- Check out of your hotel this morning.
- If your cruise/tour package includes a group departure transfer or if you have purchased a private departure transfer, you will be transferred to Bucharest Henri Coandă International Airport for your flight home.

The Ceausescu Mansion - a Dictator's Private Home (Extra Cost)

- Nicolae Ceausescu, the second and last communist leader of Romania, is infamous for many things.
- Today, a very physical manifestation of his dark legacy can be found in Romania's architecture.
- Most famously, Ceausescu ordered the construction of the Palace of Parliament, a massive and undeniably beautiful building that came at the cost of much of historic Bucharest.
- Until quite recently, the dictator's home was not open to visitors.
- Now, however, you can enter Ceausescu's home to see how he lived. As might be expected, the villa is grand; influences of Baroque and Rococo styles mingle with medieval Romanian elements, and gifts from historic heads of state—from Mao Zedong to Queen Elizabeth II—fill its halls.

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