



# Venice to Istanbul by Private Train 2020



## **Venice to Istanbul by Private Train** **A Rail Expedition Through the Balkans and Beyond** **Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train**

**One eastbound departure in 2020 – Private Rail Journey – 11 Days**

June 23-July 3, 2020

*In a classy introduction to southern Europe, this nine-country adventure by deluxe private train begins in illustrious Venice and follows the early trade routes through the Balkans into Greece, ending in enduring Istanbul. Explore five UNESCO Sites along the way, including Stari Most, the old Ottoman Bridge rebuilt from the ground up in war-ravaged Mostar, and Thessaloniki, Greece, with its early Roman monuments and Byzantine reminders.*



## Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Tuesday, June 23	Arrive Venice, Italy
Day 2, Wednesday, June 24	Venice
Day 3, Thursday, June 25	Venice • board the <i>Danube Express</i> • Trieste
Day 4, Friday, June 26	Ljubljana, Slovenia
Day 5, Saturday, June 27	Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina • Mostar
Day 6, Sunday June 28	Dubrovnik
Day 7, Monday, June 29	Belgrade, Serbia
Day 8, Tuesday, June 30	Skopje, Macedonia • Thessaloniki, Greece
Day 9, Wednesday, July 1	Sofia, Bulgaria • Plovdiv
Day 10, Thursday July 2	Istanbul, Turkey
Day 11, Friday, July 3	Depart Istanbul



## Tour Features

- Enjoy the comfort and efficiency of your own private cabin on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* luxury train.
- Survey a series of fascinating cities along the rail line.
- Join travelers from around the world to enjoy the casual and relaxed atmosphere aboard the private train, dining in luxury and chatting over drinks in the lounge.
- Relax deeply as you are carried into other lands, a world away from home.

## Tour Highlights

Venice	(UNESCO World Heritage Site), welcome dinner, Grand Canal, St. Mark's Square, St. Mark's, Basilica Rialto Market, optional gondola ride
Trieste	Piazza Unita d'Italia, Cathedral of San Giusto
Ljubljana	Capital of Slovenia, Preseren Square, Triple Bridge, Plecnik Market, Predjama Castle, Postojna Cave
Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital, Tunnel Museum with a survivor of the siege
Mostar	Old Bridge, or Stari Most (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Turkish House
Dubrovnik	(UNESCO World Heritage Site), Franciscan Monastery, Museum of Dubrovnik, Rector's Palace
Belgrade	Capital of Serbia, House of Flowers – Tito's mausoleum, Kalemegdan Fortress
Skopje	Macedonia's capital, Old Bazaar, Old Stone Bridge
Thessaloniki	(UNESCO World Heritage Site), Aristotelous Square
Sofia	Bulgaria's capital, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, St. George Rotunda, Banya Bashi Mosque
Plovdiv	Old Town, Roman Amphitheater
Istanbul	(UNESCO World Heritage Site), Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia

## Itinerary



### Day One, Tuesday, June 23

#### Arrive Venice, Italy

Arrive into Venice where you will be met and transferred to the five-star Danieli Hotel (or one of Venice's other top-tier properties), for a two-night stay. The hotel is only a short stroll from St. Mark's Square, the Doge's Palace and the Bridge of Sighs.

Today is at leisure to explore this wonderful city. This evening enjoy a **welcome reception and dinner**, giving you the opportunity to meet your fellow travelers. Meals: D – *Danieli Hotel or similar*





## Day Two, Wednesday, June 24

### Venice

Enjoy a full day in Venice. Queen of European cities by the 13th century, beautiful Venice still rules in travelers' hearts. Built on pylons of alder trees from Slovenia, Venice knits together 118 islands with its 409 bridges over 177 canals. A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987, the city is crowded with gorgeous old *palazzi* (palaces), which in turn are filled with more art per square mile than any other European city. Venice sees more than 20 million travelers every year.

Walk through the winding lanes beside the **Grand Canal to St. Mark's Square**, which for 1,000 years was the heart of Venetian life. At its eastern end is the arched facade of the famed Basilica, with its four horsemen, and in front is the massive freestanding Campanile, rebuilt in 1912. Along both sides of the square are the curved arcades of the former Procurators of St. Marks, today transformed into restaurants and shops. Along the western end through the Piazzetta, the quay serves as a docking spot for boats on St. Mark's Lagoon.

Sometimes called Chiesa d'Oro (church of gold), sumptuous **St. Mark's Basilica** was constructed in the 11th century to house the relics of St. Mark (of Matthew, Mark Luke and John), purportedly stolen from Alexandria by Venetian merchants. Designed in a combination of Byzantine and Venetian styles, the basilica was continually enhanced with treasures brought by sea from the Far East. Its interior vaults and domes are clad in golden mosaics, and its altarpiece is a huge panel of gold embedded with gems. The church became the city's cathedral in 1807.

Stroll through the Rialto Market before enjoying a free afternoon. For an iconic experience, take a gondola ride at additional charge in the Basin of St. Marks and along the Grand Canal.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danieli Hotel or similar*



## Day Three, Thursday, June 25

### Venice • board the *Danube Express* • Trieste

Take a boat this morning from the hotel directly to Santa Lucia station on the Grand Canal. Here the **Golden Eagle Danube Express** awaits, setting off mid-morning. The train threads its way out Santa Lucia station onto the three-mile





causeway over the Venice Lagoon and on to the first stop at the **port city of Trieste**.

Nearly surrounded by Slovenia, Trieste is an Italian port city with an Austro-Hungarian background. An early Roman city, then a Byzantine outpost, Trieste voluntarily joined the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1382. Its commodious central square, about 130,000 square feet of free space, is now called **Piazza Unita d'Italia**, or Unity of Italy Square.

Climb to the **Cathedral of San Giusto**, which united two 10th century basilicas and is crowned with a filigreed Gothic rose window. Some of the stones in its facade are repurposed Roman-era building blocks.

Return to the train for dinner and overnight on board.  
Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*

## *Day Four, Friday, June 26* **Ljubljana, Slovenia**

Arrive this morning in **Ljubljana, Slovenia**. Though the area has been settled since Roman times, Ljubljana was officially mentioned by name in the year 1144 and received town rights in 1220. Shortly thereafter it fell under Habsburg rule, where it remained until 1918 when it became part of Yugoslavia. This long period of relative stability allowed the town to thrive culturally and architecturally. Partially destroyed in 1511 and again in 1895 by earthquakes, the city is a stunning mix of baroque, Renaissance, neoclassical and Austrian art nouveau styles, epitomized by homegrown architect Jozse Plecnik's work, found throughout the city.

Since Slovenia's entrance into the European Union in 2004, Ljubljana has come into its own as a capital city. Small by European standards with a population of nearly 300,000 people, its 50,000-strong student population (drawn to the excellent reputation of the University of Ljubljana) has ensured that the arts, culture and nightlife of Ljubljana are constantly fresh and always flourishing. Look for the dragon motif – the city's symbol – manifested in many different ways.



Stroll the main square, **Preseren Square**, at the center of the pedestrian zone in the medieval Old Town. Cross the **Triple Bridge**, connecting Preseren with Ljubljana Market Colonnade; it's the most



frequently crossed bridge in Ljubljana. The middle bridge has stood in this place since 1842. The other two were added by Joze Plecnik during his transformation of the city in the 20th century. This bridge has become a symbol of Ljubljana and is one of the most frequently photographed points in Slovenia.



Running in a colonnade along the banks of the Ljubljanica River, the bright covered stalls and handcarts of Ljubljana's **Plecnik open-air market** offer visitors a chance to experience the abundance of Slovenia's natural bounty. Sample fresh fruits, Slovenian cheeses and dairy products, local crafts, mushrooms and fresh-cut flowers.

Continue touring in Slovenia this afternoon with **Predjama Castle**, perched dramatically at the entrance to a cave high in an overhanging cliff. The only cave castle in Slovenia, its basic features were formed in the 12th and 13th centuries, but the Renaissance gave it a final stamp with the construction of the imposing Kobenz gate tower.

Nearby, take in the **Postojna Cave** system – an underground world of caverns adorned with glittering stalactites and stalagmites. First described in the 17th century, the caves are located below the large limestone Kras Plateau that gave the world the term karst topography. Visitors to the awe-inspiring cave ride a special train through its halls and tunnels, and have the opportunity to admire one of its denizens, the rare proteus anguinus salamander, sometimes referred to as the “human fish” because of its human-like skin. Continue on board this evening as the train continues toward Sarajevo.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*

*Day Five, Saturday, June 27*

**Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina • Mostar**

Early morning arrival is scheduled into Sarajevo. **Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, is remembered for several historic events. This area in the Sarajevo Valley surrounded by the Dinaric Alps has been settled since prehistoric times. The Ottomans made it theirs in the 15th century, but it belonged to the Austrian-Hungarian empire in 1914, when Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated here, setting off World War I. Since then it has been the location of the 1984 Winter Olympics and the site of the longest siege in modern history, lasting from April 1992 to February 1996.

Pay a visit to the **Tunnel Museum** under Sarajevo Airport. During the Bosnian War, Serbian and Yugoslav forces besieged and shelled the city of Sarajevo for over 1,000 days, the longest siege in the history of modern warfare. Between March and July of 1993, soldiers and citizens dug a 2,600-foot tunnel that linked the besieged city to the NATO-controlled airport. An estimated 20 tons of food was smuggled into the city through the tunnel, as were medical supplies and munitions. A small oil pipeline





and electric and phone lines were laid through the tunnel; soldiers and seriously wounded people could be sent into and out of the city.

Visit the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum with a survivor who used the tunnel to get in and out of Sarajevo during the siege. Sixty feet of the life-saving tunnel remain under the house where the tunnel began. A 20-minute film familiarizes you with the building and operation of the tunnel, and many of the original tools and equipment are on display.

Following a light lunch in Sarajevo, travel along a scenic line to the historic city of **Mostar**. Mostar was founded in the 15th century and became an

important Ottoman regional center until the late 19th century. Named after the guards on its **Old Bridge, Stari Most**, the town passed from the Ottomans to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 19th century. After WWI, it became a part of newly-formed Yugoslavia. Engulfed in war after Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence in 1992, the town was shelled repeatedly. Its Old Town, including its namesake bridge, was all but destroyed. After the war ended, UNESCO and donor nations launched a five-year project to rebuild the historic Old Town and the bridge in an effort to heal the deep ethnic divide that characterized the destruction. The resulting reconstruction was inscribed on the **UNESCO World Heritage List** in 2005.

Also visit the **Turkish House**. The 350-year-old Turkish House was built for a wealthy Bosnian family and is representative of how the upper class lived then. Furnished in lush period carpets and dark woods, the house encloses private gardens and has a special room for women high above the street, where they cannot be seen.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*

*Day Six, Sunday, June 28*

### **Dubrovnik**

Dubrovnik, meaning “village of oak,” seems to grow out of a walled peninsula jutting into the Adriatic Sea in southern Croatia. The original oak dwellings have long since burned, however, and for hundreds of years the town has been a rock fortress. Its rugged stone walls have protected it from attack by sea since the 6th century.



Dubrovnik has been a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1979, its simple limestone buildings with their warm yellow- and red-roof tiles unified by a medieval building code.

Dubrovnik has been under attack by armies and by earthquakes many times, but careful restoration work has been a hallmark of the city ever since it was severely damaged in a 1667 earthquake. More recently, the Institute for the Restoration of Dubrovnik was founded in 1979 after another earthquake. This entity – with the help of donations from around the world – is responsible for restoring the city after the 1991 shelling by the Serbs. It was impossible, however, to match the color of the original tiles, since the original tile factory shut down in the 1950s.



Tour the **Franciscan Monastery** and its church. Much of the original ensemble, built in the 14th century, was destroyed in the huge earthquake of 1667, but a beautiful Pieta, sculpted by noted masters Petar and Leonard Andrijic, remains. The fine columns of the cloister colonnade also survived the earthquake. The baroque altar and pulpit of the church date from 1713.

Visit the **Museum of Dubrovnik in the Rector's Palace**, with its artifacts, furniture and paintings. The "rector" of Dubrovnik was a short-term appointee who for a month could only leave the palace on official business.

Mid-afternoon head back to the train in Mostar for dinner and departure towards Serbia.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*

## Day Seven, Monday, June 29

### Belgrade, Serbia

**Belgrade** is the capital of Serbia, as it was the capital of a united Yugoslavia. The area around Belgrade supported human life as far back as Neolithic times. In the 1st century BC the Romans made it a border outpost, calling it Singidunum. Strategically located on the Danube, Singidunum became the starting point of the important Via Militaris road, and was the home of a Roman garrison for many years.

From then until the present day, Belgrade has been destroyed and rebuilt between 30 and 40 times, by conquerors like Attila the Hun, the Visigoths, the Magyars and the Turks. The Slavs first appeared in the 7th century, and managed to persist through many different dynasties. Today Belgrade is a dynamic and sophisticated city of 1.7 million, swiftly becoming one of the hippest places in Europe.

Called the **House of Flowers**, the **mausoleum of Josip Broz Tito** is set in the winter garden complex near his former home.

Built in 1975, the House of Flowers was designed as a retreat for the Yugoslav leader, who was buried here according to his wishes in 1980.

One of the highlights of Belgrade is **Kalemegdan Fortress**, named by the Turks and meaning "fortress amid battlefields." This ancient citadel includes what is left of Roman Singidunum, and the Byzantine fortifications that followed. The Despot Gate and the Roman Well are found in the fortress' Upper Town and the 18th century Turkish baths in the Lower Town.

Return to the train for overnight.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*



Day Eight, Tuesday, June 30

Skopje, Macedonia • Thessaloniki, Greece

Arrive this morning in rarely-visited Skopje. **Macedonia's capital and largest city, Skopje** has a population of about 500,000. This is where Mother Teresa (now Saint Teresa) was born and raised, and there is a new monument to her on the main street. The area has been inhabited since the Neolithic Age and has been ruled at various times by ancient Rome, Byzantium, the First Bulgarian Empire and the Ottoman Turks. Its Ottoman influence can be seen best in the wonderful old Turkish quarter, where the teeming bazaar displays hand-loomed carpets, antique silver, spices, woven pillows and *nargileh* (water pipes). Old caravanserais have been transformed into traditional restaurants and little cafés and cubbyhole shops line the streets.



Stroll the flagstone streets of **Skopje's Old Bazaar**, located in this spot since the 12th century. The largest bazaar in the Balkans, it begins at the Old Stone Bridge and stretches to the newer Bit-Pazar, with its abundance of fruits and vegetables.

**Old Stone Bridge** over the Vardar River was built by Mehmet the Conqueror in the mid-15th century, providing a pedestrian link between the Old Bazaar and the newer part of the city.

Return to the train for lunch on board and arrive early this evening in Thessaloniki. **UNESCO-listed Thessaloniki**, Greece's second city, boasts a walkable urban center dotted with early Roman monuments, historic

Christian churches and Byzantine reminders. Founded in 315 BC, its position on the shore of the Thermaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea made it a prosperous seaport and a base for the spread of Christianity.

Opening onto the waterfront, Thessaloniki's **main square, Aristotelous**, was designed in 1918, but only finished in the 1950s. Before 1917, the city's buildings had crowded right up to the waterfront. Surrounded by important municipal buildings and flanked by restaurants and cafés, the square is the preferred site for rallies, speeches and celebrations. Enjoy an al fresco seafood dinner here.

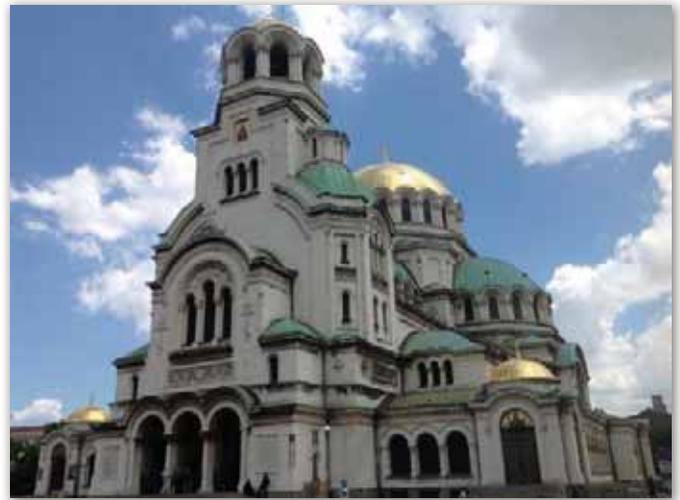
Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*



## Day Nine, Wednesday, July 1

### Sofia, Bulgaria • Plovdiv

Founded over 7,000 years ago, **Sofia** is home to over 250 historic landmarks and architectural monuments that harmonize with the city's modern skyline. The remains of Sofia's protective fortress walls have been incorporated into an underground pedestrian passage where the remnants of the original 2nd century Serdica settlement still lie. Despite its Byzantine ruins and ancient mosques, Sofia's most exciting architecture was built after Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman Empire in 1878.



Major landmarks include the 4th century St. George Rotunda, the oldest building in Sofia, layered with medieval frescoes; the 6th century St. Sofia Church that inspired the city's coat of arms; and the 19th century Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, whose magnificent icons and frescoes are world famous. The National History Museum houses a great collection of Bulgarian artifacts, jewelry, costumes, and works of art.

Built from 1882 to 1912, the **Alexander Nevsky Cathedral** was founded to remember the 200,000 Russian soldiers who died helping to free Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire in 1878. It is the seat of the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Patriarch. The Crypt Museum below the church displays Bulgarian Orthodox icons from the 8th century on.

The only edifice to survive from the 4th century, the **St. George Rotunda** was built by Thracians when their capital city was named Serdi. With frescoes from the 10th, 14th and 15th centuries, this squat brick structure was originally a Roman temple. Later incarnations include an Eastern Orthodox church and a Turkish mosque.

Completed in the 16th century, the **Banya Bashi Mosque** is one of the oldest in Europe, and the only working mosque left in Sofia. Built under Ottoman rule, Banya Bashi, meaning many baths, was named for the neighboring thermal springs under the Central Baths.

Lunch is on board as the train makes its way to Plovdiv. **Plovdiv is the second largest Bulgarian city** and the second oldest European one. Founded in the 12th century BC, Plovdiv began its existence on a site protected by three hills. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius built a 3,000-seat amphitheater here, still in use today. Situated in the center of the East Balkans, on the trade road from western Europe to Asia, Plovdiv has survived millennia. Despite barbarian attacks, destruction, looting and bloodshed, Plovdiv has always risen from the ashes.

Visit the **Old Town** with its characteristic Bulgarian Revival architecture and the 2nd century **Roman Amphitheater**. Built by Emperor Marcus Aurelius during the 2nd century, it originally seated 3,000 spectators and is now used for staging summer festivals.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*



## Day Ten, Thursday, July 2

### Istanbul, Turkey

This morning, arrive into **Istanbul and check in for a two-night stay** at the iconic five star Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah. The hotel was built in 1892 to cater to guests taking the *Orient Express*, and it was here that Agatha Christie wrote her famous book *Murder on the Orient Express*. It is a fitting grand hotel to end the tour.

*Note: Continuing engineering works associated with the new tunnel across the Bosphorus straight could mean that the train stops on the outskirts of Istanbul and buses will transport you to the city center.*



photo: Peter Guttman



First named Byzantium, the city was renamed Constantinople by Roman Emperor Constantine, who moved the capital here in 330 AD. The Roman Empire evolved into the Byzantine Empire, profoundly influenced by the area's Greek-speaking inhabitants. The Byzantine Empire reigned for over a thousand years until the Ottoman Turks, originally from Central Asia, conquered Constantinople in 1453 and renamed the city yet again.

Istanbul's entire **Old Town – Sultanahmet – is UNESCO-listed** and includes the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia. Admire the legendary **Blue Mosque**, soaring upwards with its six minarets and layered domes. Built between 1609 and 1616 at the behest of Ottoman emperor Ahmed I, the mosque was purposely situated on the site of the former Byzantine emperors' Great Palace. Its spacious interior is decorated with blue porcelain tiles.

Continue to **Hagia Sophia**, originally built by Byzantine Emperor Justinian around 537. Its immense dome stands 55 meters above the ground, supported by 40 huge ribs made of special hollow bricks. Colored stone from around the world was brought to Constantinople to decorate the church, and 30 million tiny mosaic tiles adorn the interior.

Meals: B, L, D – *Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah*

## Day Eleven, Friday, July 3

### Depart Istanbul

The tour ends this morning after breakfast at the hotel, with departure transfers to the airport.

Meals: B



## About The Golden Eagle Danube Express Train

### Train accommodations

Three styles of accommodation are available on board the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*: Superior Deluxe Class (en suite, with UK king bed), Deluxe Class (en suite) and Heritage Class (shared facilities).

### Superior Deluxe Class

The Superior Deluxe Class on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* is the ultimate in luxury European rail accommodation, featuring only four modern en suite cabins per car, complete with WiFi access. Deluxe cabins include a full-length sofa and two chairs, a double wardrobe, individually controlled air-conditioning, USB ports, power sockets, personal safe, and a newly designed en suite bathroom with its own shower cubicle. At night, your attendant transforms the sofa into a king-sized bed. The two picture windows, one of which opens, bring light and air into your private retreat.

### Superior Deluxe Class Cabin information:

- 93 sq. ft. cabin area,
- Sleeps 2 in UK standard king-sized bed (6 ft. 2 in. by 5 ft.)
- Armchair, full-length sofa
- Sitting area with free-standing chairs and table
- Individually controlled air-conditioning
- 2 large picture windows – 1 opens partially
- Adjustable lighting
- Double wardrobe
- Personal safe
- WiFi
- 2 USB ports
- Electrical outlets
- Private en suite bathroom with shower cubicle
- Slippers and toiletries
- Towels and linens changed every three days
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water
- Beer, wine and soft drinks from the Bar Car included (excluding Premium Wine List)



## Deluxe Class

The Deluxe Class on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* features newly designed air-conditioned cabins which pair luxury with utility, offering superior accommodations that feature two lower berths and fully en suite facilities. Cabins are furnished with two sofas, an armchair, table and a wardrobe with a safe. Your attendant will convert the two sofas into comfortable twin beds for nighttime use. The en suite bathroom features a shower, hair dryer and heated towel rack.

### Deluxe Class Cabin information:

- 83 sq. ft. cabin area
- Sleeps 2 in two twin size beds (6 ft. 3 in. by 2 ft. 7.5 in.)
- Two armchairs, and sitting area with free-standing chair
- Individually controlled air-conditioning
- Large picture window – opens partially
- Full length wardrobe
- Personal safe
- Electrical outlets
- Private en suite bathroom with shower and heated towel bar
- Slippers and toiletries
- Towels and linens changed every three days
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water available morning to night
- Beer, wine and soft drinks drinks from the Bar Car included (excluding Premium Wine List)
- 5 cabins per carriage



*Note: cabin configurations and decor may vary from samples depicted*

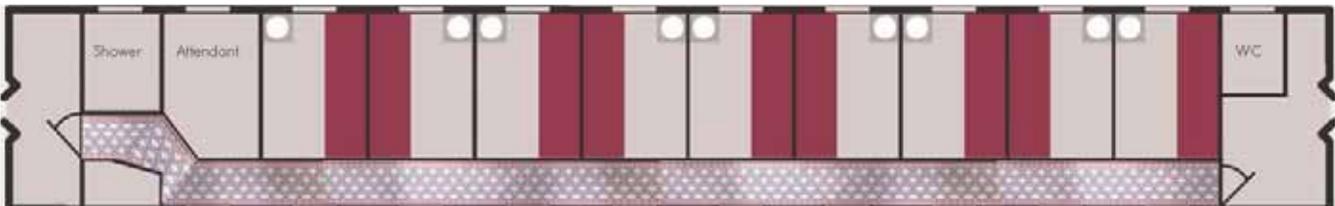


## Heritage Class

Comfortable air-conditioned seating by day is transformed while you dine into upper and lower berths ready for nighttime use. A washbasin is included in the cabin, and large windows make sightseeing pleasant. Toilet and shower facilities are provided in each car at the end of the corridor.

### Heritage Class Cabin information:

- 33 sq. ft. cabins
- Sleeps 2 in upper/lower bunk style twin beds (lower: 6.4 ft. x 2.45 ft.; upper: 5.8 ft. x 2.45 ft.)
- WC and shower shared with other travelers in the same train car
- Personal wash basin with running water in cabin, folds up unobtrusively during the day
- Curtained clothes hanging area, luggage rack above window for baggage storage
- Electrical outlets
- Individually controlled air-conditioning
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water available morning to night
- Beer, wine and soft drinks from the Bar Car included (excluding Premium Wine List)
- 9 cabins per carriage



## Dates for 2020 – Private Rail Journey

The land itinerary is scheduled to operate on the following dates. Please note that you need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to the tour start date, due to airline flight schedules.

June 23-July 3, 2020

## 2020 Package Prices

### Land Tour Cost – Per Person:

Heritage Class, twin share \$9,395  
Heritage Class, single \$13,995

Deluxe Class, twin share \$14,995  
Deluxe Class, single \$25,195

Superior Deluxe Class, twin share \$17,995  
Superior Deluxe Class, single \$30,195

### Private Train Tour Deposits – Per Person

Heritage Class deposit \$2,000  
Deluxe Class deposit \$2,500  
Superior Deluxe Class deposit \$5,500

A non-refundable deposit and completed reservation form/signed release are required to hold space.

## Land Tour Includes

- Accommodation aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train.
- Hotel accommodation per the itinerary (1 night in Budapest, 2 nights in Venice).
- All meals starting with dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on final tour day.
- A generous allowance of wine or local beer, soft drinks and water with all lunches and dinners.
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water round the clock from your car attendant while on board the train.
- Complimentary draft beer in the Bar Car for all passengers.
- Arrival/departure transfers, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates and in the tour start/end cities.
- All guided off-train tours per itinerary.
- The services of an experienced Train Tour Manager, with local guides for scheduled off-train touring.
- All gratuities.
- Baggage handling.

## Not Included

- International airfare or surface transport to the point of joining/leaving the tour. MIR is able to arrange your air itinerary in economy or business class. If you wish to obtain an air quote, please contact us for details.
- Items of a purely personal nature (laundry, telephone, bar account, photography at museums, etc.)
- Optional pre- or post-tour extensions.
- Drinks, beyond draft beer in the Bar Car, and beer and wine at set meals.



- Visa fees, any excess baggage charges, airport departure taxes, vaccination or medical costs.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

### Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp) or contact Travel Guard at 1.877.709.5596.

## Rail Journey by Private Train

Private Train tours are in a class of their own, offering the opportunity to experience remote destinations in unparalleled style. These all-inclusive, overview tours aboard the fully-chartered *Danube Express* private train bring together passengers from around the world. Group sizes are flexible and on the *Danube Express* private train can be up to 90 passengers.

## Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

- This trip is moderately active, and rated **moderate to rigorous** touring due to the daily walking involved and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least a mile a day, keeping up with fellow travelers. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.
- This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets and sidewalks are uneven, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases. Museums generally do not have elevators.
- On the train, restaurant and bar cars may be some distance from your sleeping car. Although portage is provided where possible, you may have to carry your baggage for short distances.
- Passengers may encounter problems getting on and off trains; there may be low platforms, steep steps and/or gaps between the platform and the train.
- In true expedition style, some delays or changes in the itinerary are likely.

## Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp)

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Italy here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/italy-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Slovenia here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/slovenia-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory on travel to Croatia here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/croatia-travel-advisory.html>



Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Bosnia & Herzegovina here:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/bosnia-and-herzegovina-travel-advisory.html>

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<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/serbia-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory on travel to Macedonia here:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/macedonia-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Greece here:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/greece-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Bulgaria here:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/bulgaria-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Turkey here:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/turkey-travel-advisory.html>

## Weather

This region of Europe enjoys a transitional maritime/continental climate, with warm summers and fairly mild winters. In June, temperatures typically range from lows in the mid to upper 50s to highs in the mid to upper 70s.

**Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable.** This information comes from [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.

## International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best published fares available. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 for further details and for assistance with custom air reservations from your preferred departure city.

## Visas

A single-entry Turkish visa is required for this tour. You may also need a visa for any country you fly through prior to joining the tour, or for a country in which you plan to do a pre- or post-tour extension.

The Turkish visa is now an e-visa, issued online and paid directly by your credit card. The process costs about \$20 and does not require the physical passport to be sent to an embassy or consulate. MIR will provide detailed instructions on how and when to complete the online process for the Turkish visa.



## Pre and Post-Tour Extensions

MIR can arrange for an extended program in Russia or Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus or the 'Stans. Contact us for more information.

## Also Nearby...

For more tours to this region, you may want to check out:

## Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

**Essential St. Petersburg**, 7 days. St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the “White Nights” of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days.

**Essential Russia**, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia’s political capital, Moscow, and its cultural capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

**Essential Balkans**, 14 days. Visit seven Balkan countries in 14 days on this compact overland journey through history. A remarkably complex region, the mountainous Balkan Peninsula is fascinating, diverse and incredibly beautiful.

**Essential Caucasus**, 10 days. Armenia’s intricate stone *khachkar* crosses, the bounteous wines of Georgia and the ancient petroglyphs of Azerbaijan are icons of these three intertwined Caucasus countries, where you can experience five UNESCO masterpieces in ten days.

**Essential Central Asia**, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, 13 days. Explore the markets, mosques and minarets of oasis towns on the fringes of the Kyzyl Kum and Kara Kum deserts. Here spiritual beliefs were the greatest commodities to flow along trade routes, and civilizations blossomed amidst austere natural beauty.

**Essential Uzbekistan**, 10 days. Roam the great Silk Road oases of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, along with modern Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. Admire their mosques, *madrassahs* and minarets built of mudbricks and clad in ceramic tiles the color of the desert sky.

**Essential Turkmenistan**, 12 days. From the golden monuments of Ashgabat and the ruins of Parthian Nisa, head into the mountains to overnight in a village home. Visit the Caspian seaport, Turkmenbashi, explore UNESCO-listed Merv, and learn about traditional crafts. Camp at the “Door to Hell” and survey Kunya-Urgench, ancient capital of Khorezm.

## Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.



## Cancellation and Refund Policy

Please note that no partial refunds are available for any missed days of a tour or any whole or part of a tour, accommodation, meal or any other service not utilized by the participant during the tour. The quoted price represents a package price for the services offered and an itemization of individual component costs will not be provided. Please understand there will be no exceptions to our cancellation policies regardless of your situation. Should you need to cancel your travel plans, please notify us in writing immediately. At the time we receive written notification of cancellation, the following charges apply:

### *Scheduled Rail Journeys by Private Train:*

121 or more days prior to departure-----deposit due or paid in full of \$2,000, \$2,500 or \$5,500

65-120 days prior to departure-----50% of the land tour cost

64 days prior to departure or after trip departure----no refund

## References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

## Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

## Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

## 30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.





## Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books like *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.

## More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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