



Journey through Central Europe

Whether you're seeking to recapture your ancestral heritage or simply wish to discover a beautiful and poignant part of the world, this small group tour offers ample opportunity for enrichment, enlightenment, and enjoyment. With both comprehensive touring and time for independent exploration, it provides a generous overview of four distinctly different – and fascinating – nations.

Itinerary

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Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Warsaw, Poland

DAY 2: Day 2: Arrive Warsaw

After arriving in the Polish capital late this morning, we have free time before we gather for tonight's welcome dinner at our hotel.

Meals: Dinner

DAY 3: Day 3: Warsaw

Virtually destroyed during World War II, Warsaw was rebuilt in the decades that followed. With the fall of Communism, the city has become more dynamic and progressive while retaining much of its distinct character. We tour this phoenix city today, visiting the faithfully rebuilt Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the Royal Castle, whose origins date to the late 13th century. We also tour the area of the former Jewish Ghetto and the Jewish Cemetery. As we walk the streets that the Jews of Warsaw once inhabited, we can imagine the 1943 uprising when a small number of Jewish Resistance fighters inside the ghetto held out against Nazi forces for an incredible 22 days. This afternoon is free for independent exploration; before dinner on our own tonight, we enjoy a private classical piano recital.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Day 4: Warsaw/Krakow

Today we journey south to Krakow, Poland's third-largest city and a major center of Polish culture and education. Krakow survived World War II intact, leaving it with more historic buildings and monuments than anywhere else in the country. Its authentic Old Town is a UNESCO cultural site, and the Main Market Square ranks as the largest medieval square in Europe. Upon arrival late this morning, we have time for lunch on our own before we embark on a tour of the city's historic area, featuring St. Mary's Church; the Royal Chambers of Wawel Castle, seat of royalty for more than 500 years; and Wawel Cathedral, the national church. We dine together tonight at our hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5: Day 5: Auschwitz

We travel this morning to the industrial city of Oswiecim – Auschwitz in German – and the concentration camp that is now a museum chronicling the horrors of the Nazis' "Final Solution". We tour Auschwitz I, used mainly to hold prisoners, as well as the vast camp at Birkenau (and Auschwitz II), where more than one million people died during the Holocaust. After this somber visit, we return to Krakow, where the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6: Day 6: Krakow

This morning we tour the Wieliczka Salt Mine, a UNESCO World Heritage site that is a virtual underground city, with galleries, lakes, chapels, and murals – all carved from salt. The mine's centerpiece is the Chapel of Saint Kinga, with its chandelier and mural of *The Last Supper* carved by three miners over a period of 68 years. Though no longer a source of hard salt, the mine does extract and sell salt from ground water in the underground lakes. Then we return to Krakow, where the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration, with lunch and dinner on our own in this historic capital.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7: Day 7: Krakow/Slovakia/Budapest, Hungary

We enjoy the scenic beauty of the Tatra Mountains as we travel by bus from Poland to Hungary via Slovakia, where we stop for lunch. Boasting the highest elevations in the Carpathian mountain range, the Tatras count as a popular winter sports destination. Early this evening we reach the Hungarian capital of Budapest and our hotel, located in Buda's lovely and historic Castle District. A Hungarian king originally built Buda Castle in the aftermath of a 13th-century Mongolian invasion. Destroyed in a 17th-century siege, rebuilt, and decimated once again in World War II, the castle complex was reconstructed according to the original medieval design in an extensive post-war project that lasted through the 1980s. We enjoy dinner together tonight at our hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Day 8: Budapest

Today's half-day tour of the Hungarian capital begins adjacent to our hotel with a visit to Matthias Church, the symbol of Buda's Castle District, and a stroll around Fisherman's Bastion for outstanding views of the Pest side of the city across the Danube. Then we cross the Chain Bridge into Pest where we tour Dohány Synagogue, Europe's largest. Following an afternoon at leisure, tonight we enjoy a typical Hungarian dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9: Day 9: Budapest

We're free to discover the "Paris of the East" on our own today. Among the city's riches, the ornate Opera House stands out as one of Budapest's most spectacular buildings; it is also among the top opera houses in Europe. There's time to take a guided tour of the Opera House or even enjoy an evening performance there (the season runs from September through June); visit the Thermal Bath at the Hotel Gellert with its pools of varying temperatures, steam rooms, and an outdoor artificial wave pool; or the Museum of Fine Arts, displaying Central Europe's most important collection of foreign art. For an outdoor experience, walk one of the many trails in the Buda Hills or take a leisurely stroll on Margaret Island. Lunch and dinner today are on our own.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Day 10: Budapest/Danube Bend/Vienna, Austria

Today we pass through the countryside of Western Transdanubia as we travel by coach to Vienna. En route we visit Szentendre, a small town packed with artisans' shops and a museum showcasing the work of ceramicist Margit Kovács. We continue on to the village of Neszmély where we stop for lunch and then reach the Austrian capital late this afternoon. Dinner tonight is on our own—an opportunity, perhaps, to try Vienna's famed Wiener Schnitzel.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 11: Day 11: Vienna

A half-day tour of this jewel of the Habsburg Empire includes a visit to the ornate Vienna Opera House, one of Europe's grandest, and an inside visit to majestic Schönbrunn Palace. The afternoon is at leisure. Following dinner at a local restaurant, we attend a concert of classical music in this most musical of all cities.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: Day 12: Vienna Woods

This morning we enjoy a tour of the Vienna Woods, which gained renown during the heyday of the Austrian Empire. We visit the medieval abbey of Heiligenkreuz and the health spa town of Baden-Baden before returning to Vienna, where the remainder of the day is free to explore as we wish.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13: Day 13: Vienna/Prague, Czech Republic

We leave this morning for Prague, proud capital of the Czech Republic. We reach Prague this afternoon and join our tour director for an informal walk through Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 14: Day 14: Prague

We spend the morning exploring the Hradcany (castle) district, home of the distinctive castle towering above the Vltava River. Dating to the 9th century, the castle today is the seat of the president of the Czech Republic. Among the highlights of our tour: a visit to Gothic St. Vitus' Cathedral and a stroll along Golden Lane, with its picturesque artisans' cottages. The remainder of the day is free to continue exploring this enchanting city as we wish. Restaurants abound for lunch and dinner on our own today.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15: Day 15: Prague

This morning's visit to Josefov, Prague's historic Jewish ghetto, includes the Old Jewish Cemetery with its centuries-old headstones and generations buried atop one another, as well as several of the once-thriving synagogues now part of the Jewish Museum of Prague. Then the remainder of the day is at leisure, perhaps to stroll through Old Town Square or visit Wenceslas Square, site of the demonstrations that led to the Velvet Revolution. Tonight we enjoy a farewell dinner at our hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 16: Day 16: Depart for U.S.

We transfer to the airport early today for our connecting flights to the U.S.

Meals: Breakfast

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