University of Illinois
Alumni Association

Duration
15 days

Activity Level
Moderate

Journey Type
Land
River
Solo-Friendly

Grand Danube Passage

August 27 – September 11, 2027

Sail the glorious Danube River, plus enjoy stays in Prague and Sofia! | Starting from $7,145/pp

Trace a path through eight European countries on an enthralling journey! From medieval villages to wine-soaked landscapes, elegant estates to magnificent natural wonders, you will uncover the soul of old-world Europe. Bookend your adventure with stays in Prague, Czech Republic, and Sofia, Bulgaria, and sail the Danube River where stories are etched around every bend. Enjoy special events on shore and on board, and discover prestigious destinations, traditional foods and centuries-old cities filled with timeless charms. Plus, you can personalize your journey with thoughtfully planned tours that showcase the region's indelible wonders!

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Grand Danube Passage

Air Program: 16 days/15 nights (includes 1 air night)

Land/Cruise Program: 15 days/14 nights

Breakfasts: 14 | Lunches: 10 | Dinners: 10

B | L | D denotes included breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

- This itinerary is subject to change due to operational conditions.
- A special note about air: If you have purchased only the Land | Cruise Program, please book flights that arrive on Day 2, the first day of the Land | Cruise Program. The date is listed at the top of your Reservation Confirmation.
- Activity Level ratings indicate each excursion's physical expectations. To make the best personal choice, please evaluate each excursion's rating and your ability to meet the tour's physical demands. Please note, excursions on this program require: walking on cobblestones, unpaved paths or uneven surfaces; and getting on/off motor coaches and boats.

Mild: Walk under 1 mile on mainly flat terrain; navigate under 50 stairs; stand under 1 hour

Moderate: Walk 1-3 miles on flat/uneven terrain; navigate 50-100 stairs; stand 1-2 hours

Active: Walk 2+ miles on flat/uneven terrain, including up and down inclines; navigate 100+ stairs; stand 3+ hours

- Depending on the excursion, more leisurely alternatives may be available.

Day 1 | Depart gateway city

AHI FlexAir passengers depart for Sofia, Bulgaria. Please check your luggage from your gateway city to your arrival city. Your claim checks should have the following airport code: SOF.

Day 2 | Sofia, Bulgaria

Sofia Hotel Balkan

Arrive at Sofia Airport. Proceed through immigration to the baggage claim area and retrieve your luggage. After completing customs, AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for the group arrival transfer and and/Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer should exit the baggage claim area and proceed to the Arrivals Hall, where an AHI Travel representative will meet you.

Transfer to Sofia Hotel Balkan. Please note, if you arrive before check-in time, your room may not be immediately available.

Free Time: Spend the afternoon at leisure or settle in at the hotel.

Day 3 | Sofia

Sofia Hotel Balkan

B | D

Enrichment: A Prologue to the Bulgarian Revival. The Middle Ages were ending when Ottoman invaders claimed Bulgaria for their empire in the 14th century. Learn about the conditions and events that led to the Bulgarian Revival of the 19th century when Ottoman forces were defeated and expelled.

Sofia – City with the Name of Wisdom. From its ancient history to its unique geographical location, Bulgaria's capital is a fascinating wonder. See the ancient ruins of Serdica. Admire St. George Rotunda, Alexander Battenberg Square, home to the former Royal Palace, and the Cathedral of St. Alexander of Neva. (Moderate)

Free Time: The remainder of the day is free to continue exploring Sofia on your own.

In the evening, join your fellow travelers for a Welcome Reception and Dinner at your hotel.

Day 4 | Sofia | Vidin

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

After breakfast, transfer to Vidin.

Lunch with a View. Savor a memorable lunch and stunning views of rock formations at The Rocks restaurant in Belogradchik. (Mild)

The Ancient City of Vidin. One of Bulgaria's oldest towns, Vidin was settled by the Celts more than 2,000 years ago. During a panoramic tour of the town, see the mosque and library of Osman Pazvantouglu and other highlights. Visit the 17th-century St. Panteleimon Church and the Baba Vida Fortress. (Moderate)

Embark your first-class river ship.

This evening, gather with fellow travelers for a Welcome Aboard Reception, followed by dinner.

Day 5 | Iron Gate Gorge

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Sail past the dramatic cliffs of the Carpathian Mountains. Enter the Iron Gate Gorge, one of Europe's most magnificent natural wonders. The gorge is a passage that is only 530 feet (about 160 meters) wide. Watching the Danube thunder through the gap is a truly thrilling experience. This geological wonder is part of the boundary between Romania and Serbia.

Frühschoppen! Laze on deck and join the crew for a fun social event. Eat, drink and be merry as you enjoy the German tradition of drinking beer with Brezeln (pretzels), Weißwurst (sausages) and mustards. (Mild)

Day 6 | Belgrade, Serbia

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Enrichment: Modern Serbia . Get an in-depth look at life in the former Yugoslavian state of Serbia.

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

- Belgrade City Highlights. Enjoy a visit to Kalemegdan Citadel. This impressive structure served as a fort since Celtic times, but much of its present appearance dates from the 17th century. The gates of the citadel are medieval, while the churches are affiliated with the Orthodox faith. The tombs are Muslim and the bath is Turkish. These characteristics reflect the different cultures that have shaped Serbia throughout the centuries. Take in the sights as you drive through Belgrade's main streets. (Moderate)
- Eating Like a Local in Belgrade . Prepare to delight your taste buds today as you take a sensory journey of Serbian gastronomy. From ustipak (donut-like balls) to kajmak (clotted cream) to Rakija (local brandy), you'll encounter a fusion of spices, textures and belly-pleasing flavors. Along the way, learn about the storied customs and traditions that have influenced today's food culture in Serbia. Then end the tour with a BBQ of minced meats, sweet treats and local wines. (Moderate)
- Science and Scientist Tour. Explore the Nikola Tesla Museum. Through interactive exhibits, more than 160,000 original documents and short films, learn how the 19th-century inventor Nikola Tesla left his imprint on wireless technology. The ashes of this remarkable engineer, who is recognized as the father of the electric age and pioneer of radio technology, are also kept on the premises. (Moderate)

Free Time: Spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure in Belgrade. A shuttle will be available for transport to and from the port.

An Evening of Folklore. Following dinner tonight, enjoy an engaging and colorful local folk show on the ship. (Mild)

Day 7 | Vukovar, Croatia | Osijek

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Osijek and Vukovar. Begin your outing in Croatia's Slavonia region with a visit to Rural House in Kopa evo. Watch a short presentation and learn about typical traditions of the area during a video. Then taste typical Slavonian products and delicacies including Ajvar , a roasted red pepper and eggplant relish; Šljivovica (or Slivovitz), a homemade plum brandy; and smoked pork sausage. Continue to Osijek, Croatia's fourth-largest town. This village, which hugs the River Drava, has seventeen parks and an impressive well-preserved historic neighborhood called Tvrda, or "citadel." Take a walking tour along Osijek's cobbled streets and see its collection of baroque buildings, military complexes and university facilities. See the plague column, built in 1729. This monument gives thanks for protection from a plague outbreak, which killed a third of the city's population. (Moderate)

Conclude your excursion today with a visit to Vukovar, the "town on the Vuka River." Vukovar's infrastructure, including most of its monuments and baroque buildings, was mostly destroyed in 1991 during a three-month siege by the Yugoslav National Army. As a symbol of strength and courage, Vukovar began rebuilding and restoring its treasures in 1997 and today, many buildings have been returned to their former glory. Embark on a panoramic tour of the historical city center. Along the way, see baroque arches along the main street, churches, palaces and many other beautiful buildings.

Rejoin the ship and sail to Mohacs, Hungary.

Day 8 | Mohacs, Hungary | Pécs

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Pécs. Enjoy a walking tour of Pécs, a city known for its Roman ruins and Ottoman mosques, which have been turned into churches.- (Moderate)

After joining the ship, sail on to Budapest.

Day 9 | Budapest

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

- Highlights of Budapest. This capital was once two cities — Buda and Pest — on opposite sides of the Danube, which flows through the center of the visually spectacular and united city. See Heroes' Square, the Opera House and the Gothic-style Parliament Building. Enjoy stunning panoramic views from Fisherman's Bastion. (Moderate)
- Living Local . Take a guided tour of Budapest's bustling Great Market Hall, built in the 19th century. Rain or shine, peruse the food and craft stalls that span three floors of this historic structure. Continue to a local coffee house to learn how pastry chefs craft the flakiest, tastiest strudels. Enjoy a piece of strudel with coffee or tea and a sampling of palinka, an Eastern European schnapps. (Moderate)
- Budapest's Jewish Quarter. Enjoy exploring Budapest's Jewish Quarter today. Begin with a visit to the 19th-century Great Synagogue, the largest in Europe and home to the Emanuel Tree Holocaust memorial. Continue to the Holocaust Memorial Center, which occupies the renovated Pava Street Synagogue. Take a tour of this poignant memorial before witnessing Shoes on the Danube, a moving tribute to the Jews who were shot on the banks of the Danube by the local militia in the mid-1940s. (Moderate)

Budapest by Night. As your ship departs this evening, delight in the sparkling, awe-inspiring panoramas of Budapest at night. The city's architecture bordering the Danube is illuminated with vivid auburn and butter-toned hues, providing an unforgettable moment during your journey. Sail past the beautiful Parliament, Fisherman's Bastion, Buda Castle, Chain Bridge and more while admiring their rosy reflections cast on the Danube's surface. (Mild)

Day 10 | Bratislava, Slovakia

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Enrichment: The Velvet Revolution. Learn about the Velvet Revolution, a pivotal event that led to the end of communism in Czechoslovakia and preceded the country's split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

- Old Town and Cafe. Enjoy enchanting Bratislava, a medieval town with a rich past. Marvel at St. Martin's Cathedral, once the site of Hungarian coronations. See the Slovak National Theatre and St. Michael's Gate, the only remaining gate of the city's medieval fortifications. Continue to Primate's Palace, where Hungarian archbishops spend their winters. Then visit an impressive café filled with art for a pastry and coffee. (Moderate)
- Old Town and Music . Once the stage for Mozart, Beethoven, Hummel and more, Bratislava has a storied musical history. Explore Old Town, focusing on the venues associated with these renowned composers; then enjoy a performance by a talented young musician. (Mild)
- Iron Curtain Bike Tour. Enjoy a leisurely bike tour along the Danube that explores the Slovak-Austrian border, once part of the Iron Curtain. As you ride on both the left and the right banks of the Danube, enjoy vistas of the marvelous Bratislava castle, see a pre-WWII bunker and learn about the area's urban transformation. (Active)

Day 11 | Vienna, Austria

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Enrichment: Timeless Vienna. Discover the history of Vienna, an elegant and timeless city.

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

- Imperial Vienna. Explore the Imperial Apartments of Hofburg Palace and admire their sumptuous appointments, then drive along the Ringstrasse, one of the most magnificent boulevards in the world. See the University, the oldest in the German-speaking countries, the Houses of Parliament, the Opera House and monuments to Johann Strauss and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. (Moderate)
- Klosterneuburg Monastery and Wine . Journey north of Vienna to nearby Klosterneuburg. Overlooking the Danube is its 12th-century monastery, home to the gilded copper Verdun Altar and a wine estate, the oldest in Austria. Explore Klosterneuburg Monastery's impressive art collection, then visit its winding wine cellar as you learn about the craft of winemaking. Enjoy a tasting. (Moderate)
- Schönbrunn Palace. Visit the beautiful Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage site. This opulent royal residence was the summer home of the Habsburgs from the 18th century through the early 20th century. See the lavish State Apartments, Hall of Mirrors and manicured gardens. Marvel at the baroque architecture of the residence as well as the statues in the gardens. This magnificent estate, built at the height of the Habsburg dynasty, sits on a site of a modest hunting lodge and summer home that was destroyed by Ottoman forces in 1683. Starting from scratch, architects were able to embrace the newest trend, baroque art and architecture. (Moderate)

Free Time: Spend the afternoon at leisure in Vienna, perhaps stopping in a café for a Viennese coffee and Sacher Torte , the famous Austrian cake.

Viennese Waltz . Following dinner, gather with your fellow travelers for a waltz performance. Delight in an evening of Viennese Waltz as your Austrian ballroom guides pass on secrets of ballroom etiquette, tips for a successful ballroom occasion and how to master steps of the original Viennese Waltz gliding across the dance floor. (Mild)

Day 12 | Dürnstein | Melk

MS Amadeus Star

B | L | D

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

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Dürnstein Walking Tour. Take a stroll through Dürnstein, where King Richard the Lionheart of England was held captive during the Crusades. It is considered one of the most beautiful towns in the Wachau Valley. Witness baroque architecture, pass by gorgeous scenery, see vineyards that produce award-winning wine and visit the magnificent Stiftskirche, known for its blue tower. (Moderate)

- Cycling the Danube . Considered one of the most beautiful towns in the Wachau Valley, Dürnstein offers an ideal setting for a bike ride. During this two-hour adventure, explore a small portion of the 745-mile (1,200-kilometer) Danube Bicycle Trail, which runs from Germany to Hungary. Along the way, see quaint villages set against the Danube and lush vineyards of the Wachau Valley with an expert guide. Enjoy a snack stop along the way. (Active)
- Wachau Winery. Pass by stunning vineyards and lush scenery during your walk to a local winery, where you will enjoy a tour and samples from its cellar. (Moderate)

Enjoy daytime sailing through the picturesque Wachau Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the finest landscapes in all of Europe. Along the way, admire pretty villages clustered around charming churches and medieval castles.

Melk Abbey . Visit Melk's Benedictine abbey, an architectural jewel with impressive interiors that also is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The baroque building dates from 1736, and an amazing view of the mighty Danube waits on the abbey's terrace. (Moderate)

Join your fellow travelers for a Farewell Aboard Reception on the ship, followed by dinner.

Day 13 | Passau, Germany | Prague, Czech Republic

Art Deco Imperial Hotel

B | L

Picturesque Passau . Nestled at the confluence of the Danube, Ilz and Inn rivers, Passau has been called "one of the most beautifully situated towns in the world." See the many highlights of this delightful city including Niedernburg Abbey, the medieval Veste Oberhaus and St. Stephen's Cathedral. (Moderate)

Dine on German fare during lunch at a local restaurant.

Transfer to Prague and check in to the Art Deco Imperial Hotel, located near Prague's Old Town and many fantastic landmarks.

Day 14 | Prague

Art Deco Imperial Hotel

B

Prague Old Town and Charles Bridge . Visit the famous Old Town Horologe (Clock Tower), whose 15th-century astronomical clock still works on its original system of construction. Stroll along Charles Bridge, the city's most familiar landmark. Savor this gem of medieval architecture and after admiring the view you'll be on the left bank in Hradcany, where many of Prague's most famous sites are located. (Active)

Free Time: Spend the rest of the day at leisure and make your own discoveries in Prague.

Day 15 | Prague

Art Deco Imperial Hotel

B | R

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

- Lobkowicz Palace and Museum. Visit this luxurious 16th-century palace, which is located inside the Prague Castle Complex. See stunning masterpieces, works of art, weapons, ceramics and musical instruments from the 12th-20th centuries. Admire Romanesque and Rococo artifacts and learn about the legacies of the noble Lobkowicz family, whose storied history spans seven centuries. (Moderate)
- Prague's Jewish Quarter . Explore the Jewish Quarter and the Prague National Jewish Museum. Founded in 1906, the museum has weathered turbulent times under both Nazi and Communist rule. Today, it is a showcase of Jewish history and religious treasures. The

collections are housed in the quarter's six synagogues, and the exhibits provide a comprehensive look at Jewish history in Eastern Europe. (Moderate)

- Art Nouveau and Cubist Walking Tour. Uncover the captivating 20th-century architecture adorning Prague's streets and squares. As you wend your way through the city, see buildings built in the art nouveau and cubist fashions, and learn to recognize the different elements of these architectural styles, such as their unique angles, geometric patterns and textures. Visit elaborate structures and listen to fascinating historical accounts along the way. (Moderate)

Free Time: Spend the afternoon at leisure and make the most of your last day in Prague.

Tonight, gather with your fellow travelers to recount your Danube adventure during a Farewell Reception at the hotel.

Day 16 | Depart for Gateway City

B

After breakfast, AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for a group transfer and Land/Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer depart for Prague Airport for your return flights home. Your Travel Director will provide the details.

What's Included

Program Overview

- Visit 8 countries during this program.
- 2 nights in Sofia, Bulgaria, at the deluxe Sofia Hotel Balkan.
- 9 nights aboard the exclusively chartered, first-class MS Amadeus Star.
- 3 nights in Prague, Czech Republic, at the deluxe Art Deco Imperial Hotel.
- AHI Connects: Local immersion.
- AHI Sustainability Promise: We strive to make a positive, purposeful impact in the communities we visit.
- Complimentary travel mementos.

Meal Program

- 14 breakfasts, 10 lunches and 10 dinners.
- Welcome and Farewell Receptions and Dinners to mingle with fellow travelers.
- Tea or coffee with all meals, plus wine with dinner.

On-site Features

- Enrichment by expert speakers enhances your insight into the region.
- Engaging excursions showcase the local culture, heritage and history.
- Personalize Your Journey | PYJ: A choice of excursions in each locale.
- Free time to pursue your individual interests.
- Tipping of guides and drivers.
- A personal VOX headset to hear your English-speaking guide clearly.

FlexAir Travel Program

Need assistance booking your travel arrangements? Our experts are here to help. Our air program offers the following benefits.

Trip Transportation

- Assistance in the event of schedule changes or delays
- Arrival and departure transfers on group dates

Price Guarantee

- Price guarantee to protect you from fuel surcharge increases after ticket purchase

Travel and Hotel Accommodations

MS Amadeus Star

Cruise in exceptional comfort and style aboard this sophisticated, 82-cabin ship reminiscent of a grand European hotel while enjoying warm hospitality and personalized attention from its professional crew. The tastefully appointed social spaces feature large windows for expansive views of the unfolding scenery. Savor delicious breakfast and luncheon buffets and indulge in expertly prepared, regionally inspired dinners. Wine, beer and soft drinks complement both lunch and dinner. Each evening, relax in your inviting cabin or suite, which includes a private bathroom with a shower, satellite TV and complimentary Wi-Fi.

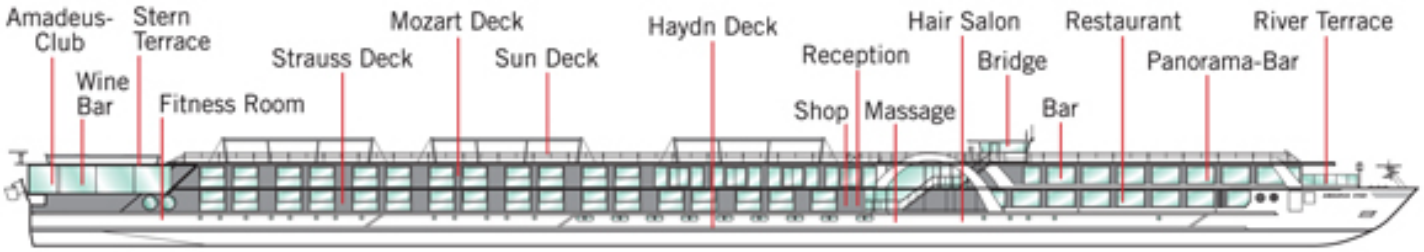
Pricing

$500 Full Payment Discount expires March 30, 2027
$250 Special Savings expires December 14, 2026

Category/Deck	Base Price	Special Savings*	Full Payment Discount*	Special Price
S-Suite	$9,645	**-$250**	**-$500**	$8,895
A-Mozart Deck, Aft	$8,845	**-$250**	**-$500**	$8,095
B-Strauss Mid	$8,345	**-$250**	**-$500**	$7,595
C-Strauss Aft	$8,145	**-$250**	**-$500**	$7,395
D-Haydn Mid	$7,445	**-$250**	**-$500**	$6,695
E-Haydn Mid Aft	$7,145	**-$250**	**-$500**	$6,395

Package rates are per person based on Double occupancy from Land Only. Prices include all service charges; port charges when applicable; US government taxes and fees. The minimum deposit is $1000.00 per person. Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding your airline's checked baggage policies. To view Program Terms and Conditions, close this window and scroll to the bottom of the page.

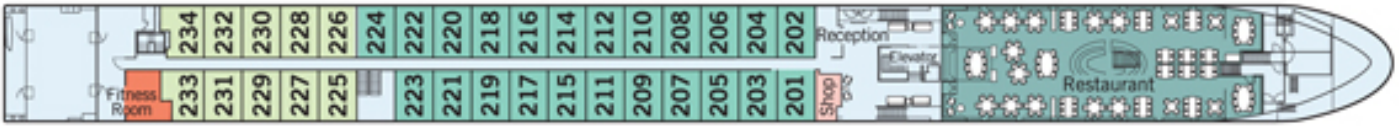
** Full Payment Discounts are only available at the time of booking with initial payment 150+ days prior to departure. This offer only applies to full payment at the time of reservation. Details on how to qualify for this savings will be included when your reservation request is confirmed.



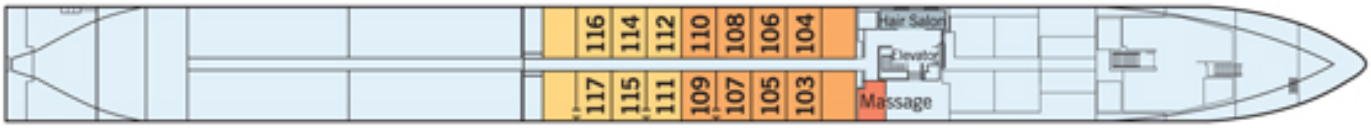
Sun Deck

Mozart Deck

Strauss Deck



Haydn Deck



Suite	A	B	C	D	E

Prague
CZECH REPUBLIC
GERMANY
Wachau Valley
SLOVAKIA
Passau
Dürnstein
Melk
Bratislava
Vienna
Budapest
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
Pécs
Mohács
ROMANIA
Osijek
Vukovar
CROATIA
Iron Gate Gorge
Belgrade
SERBIA
Vidin
BULGARIA
Sofia