

Danube Bike & River Cruise: Nuremberg to Budapest

Bike Vacation Only

Enjoy a leisurely Danube cycle, river cruise style, when you embark a deluxe Emerald Waterways river ship. It's the ideal way to explore this legendary river, especially with VBT bikes and Trip Leaders at your beck and call. Unpack your gear just once, then enjoy enriching reels in four countries—Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary. You'll follow the renowned Danube Bike Path into storybook villages. And marvel at the splendor and grace of baroque abbeys and hilltop castles. Join us!



Cultural Highlights

- Admire magnificent riverside vistas by ship, then explore by bike for closer looks from the saddle
- Ride the car-free and scenic Danube Bike Path along the famed romantic river
- Enjoy the ultimate in convenience as you unpack once and cruise from one great ride to the next
- Ride in four countries and explore three capitals of culture, all on one trip

- Experience the Danube your way, choosing from an array of activities from biking to a walking tour
- Admire stunning architecture that spans the ages in old-world medieval cities
- Enjoy an all-inclusive river ship experience, perfectly paired with the pleasures of a VBT biking vacation

What to Expect

On Shore: This tour offers easy riverside terrain, with a few climbs to reach riverside towns. Riding is primarily on bike paths of both pavement and packed gravel, with some road riding through both urban and rural areas. Our VBT support shuttle is available every day at designated points for those who would like assistance.

Onboard Ship: Our group of VBT guests will be part of a larger group on board our 182-passenger river cruise ship. Every day will include your choice of exclusive VBT activities and opportunities to join other activities that are offered by the ship. While in port our ship may be docked adjacent to other ships. This means we may walk through other ships while boarding or disembarking, and some views may be obstructed while in port.

Tour Duration: 8 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 7 - 29

Average Cycling Time: 00:00 - 02:45

Group size: 24 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 67°/49°, Jun 72°/55°, Jul 77°/59°, Aug 77°/59°, Sep 69°/53°, Oct 57°/43°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 2.4, Jun 2.9, Jul 2.5, Aug 2.3, Sep 1.8, Oct 1.6

DAY 1: Nuremberg, Germany / Embark ship / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

You are responsible for making your own way to Nuremberg, Germany, to meet your Emerald Waterways ship. Please arrive between 12:30 and 2:30 p.m. Please note that you cannot embark before 12:30 p.m. as the ship is being prepared for you. If you are late, you must contact the ship as soon as possible to make arrangements to meet the ship.

The ship docks are located outside the town center of Nuremberg. As the exact location of the ship may change, please call the ship on your arrival in Nuremberg for directions.

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m. However, you are welcome to enjoy a light lunch on board, served between 12:30 and 3:30 p.m., relax in the ship's common areas, take a walk, or enjoy the nearby beer garden. Unusually, Nuremberg's cruise dock is located four miles from the city's train station and downtown. Taxis and buses are available for those who would like to head into town to explore or enjoy a traditional German lunch of bratwurst and beer.

At 1:45 p.m., meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for introductions and a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride on a local bike path along the Main-Danube Canal. Later, enjoy a welcome dinner on board. The ship sails for Regensburg this evening.

Please note regarding WiFi on board the ship: Due to the nature of the ship movements, internet access is not always available. If stable internet access is critical to you, VBT recommends that you purchase your own bundle before traveling overseas.

Please note regarding Ride with GPS: There is limited WiFi on board. If you wish to use Ride With GPS on your smartphone, VBT also recommends that you download your VBT Maps & Route Notes from a WiFi zone prior to arrival on the boat. During your vacation, you will be able to follow these route notes on your smartphone with turn-by-turn voice navigation as you ride. As always, VBT also provides our traditional printed maps and route notes during the tour.

Hotel: MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Star

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 km (7 miles)

Afternoon

Warm-Up Ride: 11 km (7 miles)

What to Expect: The ride from our ship is on a packed gravel bike path alongside the Main-Danube Canal. Get acquainted with your route notes, Ride with GPS, your bicycle and the locals. Check your brakes and play with shifting your full range of gears.

DAY 2: Kelheim / Danube Bike Path / Cycle to Regensburg

Enjoy a relaxing breakfast this morning as we sail downstream towards Regensburg. En route, you disembark in Kelheim, a small Bavarian town near the picturesque Danube Gorge, a narrow stretch lined with cliff walls. .

From Kelheim, cycle along the scenic Danube banks. Following the Danube Bike Path, our scenic ride is easy and mostly car-free. This is the famous EuroVelo 6, or EV6, which traverses 10 countries and 2,270 miles from the Atlantic Ocean in France to the Black Sea at Constanta. The EV6 makes a Danube cycle and river cruise of this caliber possible as it includes the Danube Bike Path, the most popular cycling holiday destination in Europe. Stop to enjoy a Bavarian lunch. Weather-permitting, take in the view from tables in the garden.

Rejoin your ship in Regensburg in the early afternoon. As you'll see on approach, Regensburg is an imposing town of red-roof houses at the convergence of the Danube and Regen rivers. Its 12th-century stone bridge features 16 arches spanning the Danube and reaching into the Old Town. Join a local guide for a walking tour, gaining insight into the town's medieval history.

A traditional local band performance on deck welcomes you back on board. There'll be time to relax a while before the Captain's Welcome Cocktail and Gala. With its regional specialties, tonight's dinner completes the day's immersion into all things Bavaria! Sail for Passau tonight.

Hotel: MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Star

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 25-39 km (15-24 miles)

Morning

Kelheim to Pentling with a shuttle to Regensburg: 25 km (15 miles)

Kelheim to Regensburg: 39 km (24 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride options are on the famous EuroVelo 6 bike path. The Danube is our constant companion on this scenic and easy ride downstream to Regensburg. The short option ends at our lunch stop, with a shuttle on to Regensburg to meet the ship. The long option is a ship-to-ship ride. Today is the only day with significant sections of packed gravel (about 60%). Almost the entire ride is on vehicle-free bike paths.

DAY 3: Passau / Ferry to Schlägen / Cycle to Aschach / Linz

Arrive in Passau during breakfast. There'll be free time to explore its splendid Gothic and Baroque charms on your own. If you wish, you may stretch your legs with a hike to the hilltop pilgrimage church of Pauliner Kloster Mariahilf. You may access it directly from the Innstadt district via the "heavenly ladder" of 321 canopied steps. From the monastery grounds, enjoy sweeping views of Passau.

In the late morning, enjoy an informative walking tour with a local guide through this scenic "City of Three Rivers" at the confluence of the Danube, Inn, and Ilz. Our walk concludes back at the docks. From here, set off along the Danube onboard a local touring boat, entering Austria's famous Schlägener Schlinge, where the river winds through steep, forested mountains in a series of sharp and scenic bends. After a couple of hours of scenic cruising, arrive in Schlägen. (Note: On October departures, cruising is not available on this stretch of the river and our mode of transport will be a motor coach.)

Your bicycles are waiting for you here, ready for your afternoon reel toward Aschach through a beautiful forest. You follow the Danube Bike Path on a leisurely ride before shuttling the short distance to Linz, Austria, home of the Linzer torte, the oldest cake in the world, and an impressive repository of well-preserved medieval, neoclassical, neo-Baroque, and neo-Renaissance buildings.

Your river ship arrives in Linz late this afternoon, just as we are arriving. There'll be time to relax in your cabin before dinner and evening activities on board.

Hotel: MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Star

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 km (16- miles)

Afternoon

Schlogen to Aschach an der Danau with a Shuttle to ship: 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect: Bike on the left bank, on a section of the Danube Bike Path that is mainly flat and entirely paved.

DAY 4: Melk / Cycle through The Wachau Valley / Weissenkirchen / Dürnstein

Your ship is moored in Melk, Austria, when you awake. After breakfast, join a shuttle to the spectacular Benedictine Abbey of Melk, perched on a scenic bluff. Here, a local guide introduces you to one of Europe's largest Baroque monasteries. After touring its magnificent rooms, you may stroll the gardens before returning to the ship for lunch.

Later, cycle through what is perhaps the most beautiful stretch on the Danube, the Wachau Valley, Austria's celebrated wine-growing region. The "Wachau Cultural Landscape" was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. As for its physical landscape, it is blessed with lush vineyards and hillside orchards set among castle ruins, churches, and abbeys. Few places match the Wachau for its striking beauty and rich viniculture. Ride through the scenic hamlets of Spitz and Wiessenkirchen, nestled between the Danube and its rising banks, reeling into Dürnstein, a center of Wachau wine production. Admire its stunning powder-blue bell tower soaring above red roofs. A cliffside castle, which once held Richard the Lionheart captive, watches over the scenic town.

Rejoin your ship here late this afternoon and perhaps join a guided hike to Dürnstein Castle. Later, enjoy time to relax prior to dinner. This evening, you set a course for Vienna.

Hotel: MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Star

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 26-33 km (16-21 miles)

Afternoon

Melk to Weissenkirchen: 26km (16 miles)

Melk to Durnstein: 33km (21 miles)

What to Expect: Begin biking from Melk, again following the Danube Bike Path. The short option finishes in the charming village of Weissenkirchen, where you can join a shuttle to the ship. You may extend your ride to Dürnstein to meet the ship. Both options are mostly on paved, flat bike paths with a couple of short ascents. In some sections, the bike path is directly adjacent to the roadway, with traffic traveling from the opposing direction.

DAY 5: Ride along the Donauinsel / Explore Vienna

Our ship is in Vienna from very early this morning until very late tonight, so you will have a convenient base from which to explore Austria's glorious capital.

Vienna is renowned as one of Europe's most cycle-friendly cities, so you will make use of its abundant bike paths and bike lanes. From your ship, the morning 'extra' ride is an out and back along the Danube to the village of Klosterneuburg, known for its imposing Monastery

After lunch on board, you ride through the edge of the city and along the Donauinsel, or Danube Island, a

13-mile-long strip where scenic vistas and quiet riding add to your Vienna discoveries. Or, explore Vienna on your own, pursuing your own whims and interests in the city of Strauss, Beethoven, and Mahler. The gracious boulevards of Vienna are awash in culture and elegance. Head to the Ringstrasse, the circular avenue that replaced the city's demolished medieval wall, to marvel at the city's most breathtaking architecture, from the gleaming Imperial Palace and St. Stephen's Cathedral to the famed Vienna State Opera. And be sure to take a break in one of the city's famed coffee houses to experience Viennese café culture firsthand.

This evening, join an optional excursion to a special Viennese Evening Concert, featuring music of Strauss and Mozart. The private event is available only to those on our ship, and transportation is included in the price. Booking details will be provided with your final documents.

Hotel: MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Star

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 20-46 km (12-28 miles) Morning

Vienna to Klosterneuburg and return: 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon

Vienna and Danube Island: 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect: The morning offer's a 'Cyclist's Extra' option. An out and back ride along the Danube to the village of Klosterneuburg. The ride is primarily on bike paths. The afternoon ride is a relaxing and easy loop ride through the edge of the city and on the Danube Island, a car-free recreational paradise.

DAY 6: Bratislava / Donau-Auen National Park / Hainburg

Awake in Bratislava this morning, the riverside capital of Slovakia and the only capital to border two other nations. After breakfast, disembark for an orientation to the city on foot with your trip leader. You'll find an unusual mix of 20th-century Communist-era architecture, Baroque palaces, medieval spires, and the narrowest house in Europe—all overlooked from a hillside by the rectangular white castle and watchtowers of the Bratislava Castle.

Mid-morning, you pedal out of town, crossing the Danube by way of the "UFO" bridge, and traverse the forests and meadows of the Danube-Auen National Park, one of the largest remaining floodplains of the Danube. Arrive in Hainburg, a small town on the Austrian bank where Joseph Haydn studied music as a young boy. After a picnic lunch, arrive at Schloss Hof, the "hunting lodge" of Prince Eugene of Savoy. A guided visit introduces the lodge and the estate. You're invited to roam the splendid gardens and castle.

Mid-afternoon, transfer back to Slovakia and to our awaiting ship..

Back on board, join a cocktail reception and Gala Dinner this evening as the ship starts its voyage to Budapest.

Hotel: MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Star

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon

Bratislava to Schloss Hof: 34 km (21 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride features a combination of bike paths and town streets. While both Slovakia and Austria feature bike paths, we would like to make you aware that the paths in Slovakia are slightly less well-maintained.

DAY 7: Budapest / Szentendre

You will be docked in Budapest all day today and will stay overnight until disembarkation tomorrow morning, giving you ample time to explore this jewel on the Danube. After breakfast, shuttle up river (50 minutes) to start today's ride in Danube-Ipoly National Park. Our destination is the charming town of Szentendre, a delightful artists' community brimming with galleries and workshops. But first, stop to explore the Hungarian Open Air Museum, dedicated to the folk architecture, culture and lifestyle of Hungary in 8 regional units on 150 acres. Continue riding at your leisure into Szentendre, where you'll have some free time to browse the galleries and shops. Your trip leaders will introduce you to their favorite Hungarian specialties during lunch at a popular restaurant. Return to Budapest from Szentendre much faster than you got here: by way of a high-speed water taxi. If you seek time away from your bike today, you may begin your guided explorations with your choice of tours: Explore Budapest as a whole, taking in the major sites of the Buda and Pest sides of the Danube, or walk up the slopes of the right bank for up-close views of Castle Hill and the Old Town, where Fisherman's Bastion provides magnificent views of the city and the elegant Chain Bridge that spans the river. Back on board, enjoy a full roster of entertainment and dining to celebrate your week on the Danube with your fellow travelers. As a special treat, our ship lets loose its moorings once more so that you may witness the panorama of this beautiful city illuminated at night.

Hotel: MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Star

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 km (10 miles)

Morning

Danube-Ipoly National Park to Szentendre: 16 km (10 miles)

What to Expect: A mostly downhill ride through the forest on a quiet road, ending in town along the Danube. Water taxi transfer back to the ship.

DAY 8: Budapest city walk / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After breakfast, disembark your ship and conclude your Danube odyssey with a guided walk directly from the ship, and through the city's highlights. You'll be treated to lasting and up-close views of the Parliament Building and the Castle Complex. Your walk concludes late this morning at the hotel, where your tour comes to an end.

Your tour concludes at the hotel after this morning's city walk. The hotel will help you book a taxi at your own expense to the airport. Important: Train or air departures from Budapest prior to 1:00 p.m. are not recommended. If you depart earlier, you are responsible for your own transfer arrangements from the ship.

Meals: Breakfast

Non-Biking Day: a guided walk through the highlights of Budapest