

## Danube Bike & River Cruise: Budapest to Prague

### Bike Vacation Only

A bike and boat tour on the Danube doesn't get any better than this! In just a week, you'll explore four different countries—Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, and Germany—as well as a world-class cultural capital, Vienna. Cycle the renowned Danube Bike Path, admiring vistas of storybook villages and castles, lush vineyards, and carpeted hills unfurling along the river banks. Pause to explore medieval cities and the spectacular Melk Abbey, and enjoy a private wine tasting. And at the end of the day, return to a deluxe Emerald Cruises river ship, where attentive service, fine dining, and a welcoming ambiance invite you to relax after an invigorating day. There's no better or more convenient way to experience the heart of Europe!

### Cultural Highlights

- Unpack once, then bike and boat along the Danube in four countries and three cultural capitals—all on one trip
- Follow the car-free and scenic Danube and EuroVelo 6 bike paths in this bicycle-friendly region
- Enjoy an exclusive Viennese concert with the music of Strauss and Mozart
- Choose to be as active or relaxed as you wish from our menu of cycling routes and walking tours
- Visit the one of the oldest breweries in the world in Weltenburg

### 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 vehicle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

**On Board Ship:** Our group of up to 24 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 others. While in port, the ship may be docked adjacent to other ships. This means you might walk through other ships while boarding or disembarking, and some views may be obstructed while in port.

**Tour Duration:** 8 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 4 - 29 miles

**Group size:** 24 max

## Climate Information

### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 57°/39°, May 67°/49°, Jun 72°/55°, Jul 77°/59°, Aug 77°/59°, Sep 69°/59°, Oct 57°/43°

### Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 2.2, May 2.4, Jun 2.9, Jul 2.5, Aug 2.3, Sep 2.3, Oct 1.6

## DAY 1: VBT Bicycle tour begins / Budapest guided walk / Embark ship / Warm-up ride

You are responsible for making your own way to Budapest, Hungary, to meet your trip leaders and fellow guests at 9:30 a.m. at the Mamaison Andrassy Hotel (note that for sailings on August 27, September 8, September 18, and October 1, you will meet instead at Mamaison Hotel Chain Bridge Budapest). Please be dressed ready to walk.

Should you arrive late, please plan to go directly to the ship, which is in port overnight and until mid-day on the following day. Please note that you cannot embark before 12:30 p.m., as the ship is being prepared for you.

The ship will be docked at Batthyany Pier, on the Buda side of the river, directly across from the Parliament building. As the exact location of the ship may change, please call the ship on your arrival in Budapest for directions.

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m. However, you are welcome to relax in the ship's common areas, or explore more of Budapest.

Later, meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for an introduction to the week, followed by a safety and bike-fitting session. After a very short motor coach ride, get acquainted with your bike and with riding on bike paths and in bike lanes on a warm-up ride on the famous Margaret Island. A welcome dinner in the ship's Reflections Restaurant and traditional Hungarian folklore performances are in store

this evening.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Budapest Warm-up – 6 km (4 miles)

#### What to Expect:

A short motor coach ride will take you to a quieter area, where you begin your warm-up ride, away from urban traffic. Your ride follows paved, dedicated bike lanes alongside vehicular traffic on both banks of the Danube, with spectacular views of the city. Your warm-up ride ends at the ship. As you ride, get acquainted with your bicycle, route notes, Ride with GPS, and the locals. Check your brakes and play with shifting your full range of gears.

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 km (4 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 2: Szentendre / Visegrád**

Spin through Margaret Island and the lush outskirts of Buda to Szentendre, a delightful artists' community. Upon arrival in Szentendre you'll have some free time to browse the galleries and shops and to discover its narrow Baroque streets. Afterwards you will learn how to prepare goulash and strudel before lunch at a popular restaurant. Then continue to Visegrád, the former medieval capital of Hungary.

Admire views of ancient ramparts, castles, and the river, as well as time at leisure to explore. Afterwards you are invited to participate in a Knights' Tournament organized by the Saint George Knightly Order. During the performance, you will have the opportunity to familiarize yourself with medieval weapons, while the more adventurous among you may try to shoot with arrows, throw stars, or a *kelevéz* (a Hungarian lance). You're sure to enjoy this historic reenactment in the old fortress.

On your return to the ship, enjoy the Captain's Welcome Cocktail and dinner. With its regional specialties, tonight's meal completes the day's Hungarian theme!

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Budapest to Szentendre – 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon Szentendre to Visegrád – 23 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's biking is on flat, paved bike path along the Danube. The first part of the morning ride is in a relatively quiet, urban environment, while the second part is on a designated bike path away from the traffic. After lunch, an optional ride continues on country roads with some traffic to Visegrád. VBT offers a support vehicle from Szentendre.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20-43 km (12-26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 3: Bratislava / Donau-Auen National Park / Hainburg**

Awake this morning in Bratislava, the riverside capital of Slovakia and the only capital to border two other nations. After breakfast, disembark for an orientation walking tour 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 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 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 delicious lunch in a local restaurant, 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, travel back to Slovakia and to your waiting ship. Alternatively, you can choose to cycle back along the other side of the river, though the small village of Devin, famous for its castle.

Back in Bratislava, enjoy some leisure time before dinner and the late departure for Vienna.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Bratislava to Schloss Hof – 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon Schloss Hof to Bratislava – 20 km (13 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. The afternoon option is partly along a busy country road.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 – 54 km (21 – 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 4: Danube Island/Vienna**

Your 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 can make use of its abundant bike paths and bike lanes. This morning, you might opt for an out-and-back ride along the Danube to the village of Klosterneuburg, known for its imposing monastery.

After lunch on board, your bike ride leads to the edge of the city and along the Donauinsel, or Danube Island, a 13-mile (21 km) 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 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, you are invited to join the Viennese Evening Concert excursion, featuring the music of Strauss and Mozart. This private event is available only to those on our ship

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Vienna to Klosterneuburg and return – 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon Vienna and Danube Island – 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

The morning offers a “Cyclist’s Extra” option: an out-and-back ride along the Danube to the village of Klosterneuburg, primarily on bike paths. The afternoon ride is a relaxing and easy loop ride through the edge of the city and on Danube Island, a car-free recreational paradise.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 5: Dürnstein / Cycle through The Wachau Valley / Melk**

Your ship is moored in Dürnstein, Austria, when you awake. The town is 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, and you may choose to take the short hike up for the views after breakfast.

Later this morning, cycle through what is perhaps the most beautiful stretch of 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.

On arrival in Melk, celebrate the ride over a lunch of Austrian specialties. Afterward, you can continue cycling along the river on a loop ride, or go for a short walk.

After rejoining the ship in Melk, you’ll board a short shuttle to the city’s spectacular Benedictine Abbey, perched on a scenic bluff. Here, a local guide introduces you to one of Europe’s largest Baroque monasteries. Enjoy a tour of its magnificent rooms and gardens before getting back onboard.

Upon returning to the ship, you’ll have time to relax before dinner on board. This afternoon, the ship charts a course for Engelhartzell and Passau.

Today’s Ride Choices

Morning Dürnstein to Melk – 33 km (21 miles)

Afternoon Optional loop outside Melk – 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

Begin biking from Dürnstein, again following the Danube Bike Path. You can extend your ride after lunch in Melk. Both options are mostly on paved bike paths with some short ascents. In some sections, the bike path is directly adjacent to the roadway.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 – 51 km (21 – 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Engelhartszell / Cycle to Passau**

Your bicycle is waiting for you in Engelhartszell, where you disembark after an early breakfast to start your ride. This morning's route to Passau follows the Danube Bike Path on a leisurely ride. After leaving Austria, continue cycling before taking a short detour along the river Inn, to Passau, the scenic "City of Three Rivers" at the confluence of the Danube, Inn, and Ilz. Enjoy lunch onboard your river cruise ship and join an informative walking tour with a local guide, followed by free time to explore.

Afterward, you may join an optional hike to Veste Oberhaus, Passau's famous castle on the other side of the river. Reboard the ship late afternoon and set sail for Regensburg. Enjoy a Captain's Gala Dinner and evening activities on board.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Engelhartszell to Passau – 33 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Bike along the left bank, on a section of the Danube Bike Path that is mainly flat and entirely paved. You will cycle the last section in an urban environment, across the relatively quiet city center of Passau.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 km (20 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 7: Regensburg / Cycle to Kelheim / Danube Gorge and Weltenburg**

As you'll see when you awake, 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.

After breakfast, cycle along the scenic Danube banks to Kelheim. Following the Danube Bike Path, your scenic ride continues to be easy and mostly car-free.

Board a small ship in Kelheim for a scenic 45-minute sail through the Danube Gorge (Donaudurchbruch), while enjoying a delicious lunch onboard. Upon arrival in Weltenburg, your presence is requested at a world famous brewery for a private visit, followed by a beer-tasting. Afterwards, a shuttle will take you back to the ship for dinner with live music played by a traditional Bavarian band. The ship will moor in Regensburg if you would like to enjoy an evening walk in town.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Regensburg to Kapfelberg with Shuttle to Kelheim — 26 km (16 miles) | Regensburg to Kelheim — 39 km (24 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride options are on the famous EuroVelo 6 bike path. The Danube is your constant companion on this scenic and easy ride upstream to Kelheim. The short option ends at Kapfelberg, with a shuttle on to Kelheim to board the small ship to Weltenburg. 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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 - 39 km (16 - 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 8: Disembark / Travel to Prague / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends**

After breakfast, disembark your ship and conclude your Danube odyssey with transportation to Prague, capital of the Czech Republic.



Your trip ends at the docks in Regensburg, Germany, on the morning of disembarkation. The ship is scheduled to arrive in port the day before. You may travel from here on your own by taxi to the train station, a distance of one mile (1.8 km), which should take about 5 minutes by taxi, to board a train, which takes you directly to the Munich International Airport in one hour and 20 minutes. The ship's staff will be happy to arrange a taxi for you.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### **MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Sun/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Luna (Days: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)**

Emerald Cruises' 'Star-Ships' are designed to provide the most efficient and comfortable journey during your seven nights on board. The 54 generously-proportioned suites and 14 staterooms feature all the amenities you need to begin and end each rewarding day, including a private bath with shower, hairdryer, bathrobes, and slippers. A mini-bar and complimentary bottled water are restocked daily and a safe protects your valuables. Complimentary WiFi and a flat-screen TV with infotainment system keep you plugged in. Onboard power is 220 volts; North American guests may require a power adapter