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# Danube Express Luxury Train: Balkan Explorer: Venice to Istanbul

11 Nights • Luxury Experience

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# Overview

As you step aboard the Danube Express Luxury Train for the Balkan Explorer journey, you transform into an adventurer of the soul, ready to uncover the depths of your own spirit. Each click of the train's wheels echoes the rhythm of your heart, awakening a sense of wonder and introspection. You begin to see the world not just with your eyes, but with a new-found openness, embracing the stories that unfold beyond the window. The journey becomes a mirror, reflecting a version of you that is bolder, more connected, and infinitely more alive.

Your odyssey begins in the captivating canals of Venice, where the city's romantic allure sets the stage for your exploration. In Trieste, you feel the whispers of history, while the labyrinthine Postojna Caves stir a sense of awe. As the train glides through Belgrade, you connect with the vibrant pulse of a city reborn. In Sofia, the city's cultural mosaic invites you to delve deeper, before you finally arrive in Istanbul, where East meets West in a symphony of colors and sounds. Each stop on this luxury train journey leaves an indelible mark on your heart, culminating in a profound journey of transformation.

DAY BY DAY

# Your Itinerary

DAY 1

## VENICE

As you step into the enchanting city of Venice, the gentle lapping of the canals resonates with the rhythm of your heart. The vibrant colors of the buildings reflect in the water, evoking a profound sense of wonder and anticipation for the luxury train tour ahead. You breathe in the rich history and artistry that surrounds you, feeling a connection to the stories that linger in the air.

Tonight, as you gather with fellow travelers for a welcome reception, laughter and shared dreams create an unforgettable bond. The warmth of delicious cuisine and fine wines fills you with joy, marking the beginning of a memorable adventure through Italy and beyond.

DAY 2

## VENICE

You find yourself lost in the enchanting embrace of Venice, where every winding street whispers secrets of romance and history.

As you glide through the serene canals, the delicate sounds of water gently kissing the gondola awaken a sense of wonder within you, igniting a passion for discovery that you never knew existed.With each step across the vibrant Rialto Bridge and into the bustling heart of St Mark's Square, you feel a deep connection to this timeless city.

DAY 3

## POSTOJNA / TRIESTE

You glide from the enchanting canals of Venice, where the air is thick with history and romance, to the bustling charm of Trieste, each moment adding to a kaleidoscope of emotions.

As you savor an espresso in one of the city's historic cafés, the warmth of connection and discovery envelops you, reminding you of the simple joys found in every corner of the world.Venturing deep into the Postojna Caves, you find yourself in a realm of wonder, surrounded by nature's artistry.

DAY 4

## PULA

You awaken in Pula, where history whispers through ancient streets, and excitement dances in the air.

As you stand before the grand Roman Arena, the echoes of gladiators fill your heart, igniting a sense of awe and connection to the past, leaving you with memories that shimmer like sunlight on the Adriatic Sea.Your journey continues to the Kumparicka Estate, where the rich flavors of Istrian cuisine bring warmth and joy, allowing you to savor not just the food, but the beautiful landscape that surrounds you.

DAY 5

## SARAJEVO

As you step into Sarajevo, a city steeped in rich history and culture, you feel an immediate connection to its vibrant past, where East meets West. The intricate minarets and the bustling old Turkish quarter whisper stories of resilience and beauty, inviting you to explore the poignant narrative of the Balkan War that shaped this remarkable place.

Your heart swells with both sorrow and admiration as you learn about the enduring spirit of Sarajevo's people. Whether you ascend Mount Trebevic for breathtaking vistas or visit the Tunnel of Hope, each moment deepens your appreciation for life’s fragility and the strength found in unity, leaving you forever changed.

DAY 6

## MOSTAR

You find yourself in the historic heart of Mostar, where the air is thick with stories of resilience and unity. As you gaze at the iconic stone bridge, its arches echo the spirit of connection between cultures, drawing you into a deeper understanding of this Balkan treasure.

Wandering through the vibrant bazaar, you feel the pulse of history beneath your feet, as the delicate crafts and inviting aromas envelop you. Each moment spent in this charming town fills your heart with joy and gratitude, leaving you with cherished memories of discovery and a profound sense of peace.

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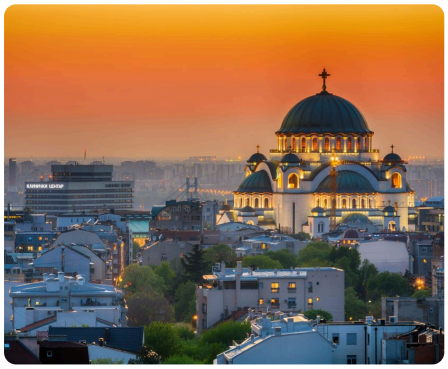

DAY 7

## BELGRADE

As you wander through Belgrade, the vibrant energy of Serbia's capital envelops you, igniting a sense of connection to its rich history. The juxtaposition of ancient Celtic fortresses against modern structures stirs a profound appreciation for the resilience and spirit of its people.

Standing atop Kalemegdan Fortress, the sweeping views of the Sava and Danube rivers evoke a sense of peace, while the grandeur of the Church of Saint Sava inspires awe. Each moment deepens your understanding of this city's soul, leaving you with cherished memories that resonate long after your luxury train tour has ended.

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DAY 8

## BELGRADE

As you step into Tito’s Belgrade, a profound sense of connection envelops you, whispering tales of resilience and history.

The warmth of traditional Serbian bread and salt welcomes you, a ritual steeped in hospitality, as you stand in the shadow of a legacy that shaped a nation. Each moment here stirs a deep appreciation for the vibrant culture and resilient spirit of the Serbian people.With every twirl of colorful folk dances, joy radiates from the heart of Belgrade, igniting a spark of discovery within you.

DAY 9

## SOFIA

As you stroll through the vibrant streets of Sofia, a sense of wonder envelops you, each landmark whispering stories of the past.

The golden dome of Alexander Nevsky Cathedral glistens in the sunlight, inviting you to pause and reflect on the rich history that has shaped this city, from the ancient Roman walls to the delicate artistry of the St George Church.In the heart of Plovdiv, you feel a deep connection to the ages as you wander through cobbled streets lined with Ottoman-era baths and medieval walls.

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DAY 10

## ISTANBUL

As you step into the vibrant streets of Istanbul, a wave of excitement washes over you, blending history and modernity in perfect harmony. The rich aromas of spices from the bustling Spice Market envelop you, igniting your sense of discovery and connection to this legendary city that bridges continents.

Your heart swells with joy as you glide along the Bosphorus, witnessing the majestic skyline adorned with domes and minarets. Each moment spent here shapes your memories forever, from the tranquil beauty of the Blue Mosque to the ancient whispers of the Basilica Cistern, leaving you transformed by the essence of Turkey.

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DAY 11

## ISTANBUL

You awaken in the vibrant heart of Istanbul, the air thick with stories waiting to be told.

As you wander through the opulent halls of Topkapi Palace, the whispers of the Ottoman sultans surround you, igniting a profound connection to a world long past. Each step reveals the splendor of history, and you feel a sense of belonging to something far greater than yourself.Your heart races as you explore the Grand Bazaar, where the colors and sounds envelop you in a symphony of life.

DAY 12

# ISTANBUL

As you savor your final breakfast in the enchanting city of Istanbul, the air brims with a sense of nostalgia.

Each moment spent in this vibrant metropolis has woven unforgettable memories into the fabric of your soul, from the breathtaking views of the Bosphorus to the whispers of history echoing through the Hagia Sophia.With the option to extend your stay, you find yourself yearning to delve deeper into Istanbul's rich culture and timeless charm.

# Tips & Travel Guide

## LUXURY ACCOMMODATION

The *Golden Eagle* Danube Express is your luxurious hotel-on-wheels. Unpack just the once and settle into your well-appointed and comfortable cabin as you begin this voyage of a lifetime.

## RELAXING ON BOARD

The social heart of the *Golden Eagle* Danube Express is the Bar Lounge Car, a great place to relax and settle into the unhurried pace of life on board. Unwind in comfortable surroundings and watch the world go by.

## DINING ON BOARD

The *Golden Eagle* Danube Express Restaurant Cars are a delightful venue in which to enjoy meals skillfully prepared by our Executive Chef and his onboard restaurant team.

DATES & PRICING

# Departure Dates & Rates

| DEPARTURE DATE | CLASS / CABIN | SINGLE | DOUBLE (PP) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **May 7, 2027** | Deluxe | **€35,400** | **€23,600** |
| | Superior Deluxe | **€51,200** | **€30,700** |
| **Sep 10, 2027** | Deluxe | **€35,400** | **€23,600** |
| | Superior Deluxe | **€51,200** | **€30,700** |
| **Oct 19, 2027** | Deluxe | **€35,400** | **€23,600** |
| | Superior Deluxe | **€51,200** | **€30,700** |

*Rates shown in Euro (EUR). Approximate USD equivalents available upon request.*

Rates shown are per person. Single rate applies to single occupancy; Double rate applies per person in double occupancy.

🏷️ **Look for Coupons and Special Rates on our website.**

Visit https://www.palacetours.com/tour/balkan-explorer-luxury-train-Venice-to-Istanbul for the latest information.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

# Terms & Conditions

**Booking & Payment**

- **Deposit:** 30% of the total tour cost is due at the time of booking. The deposit is non-refundable.
- **Final payment:** the balance is due no later than 125 days before departure.
- Bookings made within 125 days of departure are payable in full at the time of booking.
- Fares are per person. Your written confirmation shows the exact amounts and due dates.

**Cancellation**

- **125 days or more** before departure: 30% of the total tour cost (the deposit)
- **Less than 125 days** before departure: 100% of the total tour cost

**Changes**

- **Date change:** free of charge, subject to availability, when requested 125 days or more before departure; after that, a fee of 15% of the total tour cost applies.
- **Cabin upgrade:** only the fare difference between cabin categories applies.
- **Cabin downgrade or passenger name correction:** free of charge up to 35 days before departure; within 35 days, EUR 500 per change.

**Changes or cancellation by the train operator**

If the train operator cancels or materially changes a departure, you will be offered a new date or an amended booking, a credit toward a future journey, or a refund of the amounts paid.

All cancellation, change, or update requests must be submitted in writing by email to travel@palacetours.com. A request takes effect only once we have received and processed it, and we will confirm the outcome to you in writing. Timeframes are calculated by reference to local time and business days at the destination; a request received outside business hours is treated as received on the next business day.

**We strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance, including cancellation cover, from the moment you pay your deposit. For information on available plans, please visit www.palacetours.com/insurance.**

COMMON QUESTIONS

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Do you have tour managers on board the Golden Eagle Danube Express?

> We have experienced Tour Managers on board and they are renowned for their travel knowledge and their organizational abilities which allow you to relax and enjoy your rail cruise. Also we receive exceptional passenger comments about our Tour Managers and they ensure you enjoy every minute of your holiday. Usually there is one Tour Manager on board a train, and also a number of assistants depending on the total number of passengers.

## Do you provide arrival and departure airport transfers?

> At the start of the tour, arrival transfers from the international airport to our tour hotel are covered. As the tour ends departure transfers from our tour hotel to the airport are included.

## What is included in terms of hotel and train accommodation?

> During the tour on the Golden Eagle Danube Express you will spend much of your time sightseeing or relaxing in the train's public areas. However, you will find your hotel room or cabin on board the train a welcome retreat at the end of a rewarding day. All hotels that you stay in will be of five-star standard, or the best available. Room upgrades are available on request, subject to availability and at additional cost.

## Is the price of meals included in the tour?

> The price of all the meals is included in the tour cost. This starts with dinner on the first day and ends with breakfast on the last day, unless otherwise stated. The Golden Eagle Danube Express features one or two Restaurant Cars where you can dine on excellent food and wine served by waiters. During the course of the tour you will also be able to sample authentic local cuisine with wine and a selection of drinks on the train, and this is also included in the tour price.

## Are drinks included in with meals?

> Generous amounts of drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, are included with lunch and dinner whether you are on or off the train.

## What is the quality of service on board the train?

> On board the Golden Eagle Danube Express you can expect service which is attentive, friendly and yet un-intrusive. Attendants in your train car will provide housekeeping and bedding turndown services and they will also assist you to ensure that you are comfortable in your cabin. Complimentary tea, coffee and bottled drinking water will be served to you in your cabin.

## What is included in guided off train excursions?

> During the off train excursions, guides will bring alive the history and culture of each place you visit on our rail cruise. All our tours come with a packed sightseeing schedule to make the most of the time you have off the train. These will bring you closer to the culture, people and history of your destinations. Also you will find special little touches included and these will help create magical memories.

## Are there any doctors or medical facilities on board the train?

> All our tours have a doctor on board and he will travel with the group during the entire journey. This means that medical assistance is always available. Importantly the doctor is on call 24 hours a day and can deliver primary care to you on board the train. Usually the doctors will speak in English and be registered with the General Medical Council in the UK. In the case of exceptional circumstances and the doctor does not speak English, translation will be provided.

## Are there any Porterage facilities?

> Once you are on board the train, you will only have to unpack once. Then your luggage and belongings will stay with you on the train throughout the journey. However if necessary, Porterage will be provided between the hotels and stations.

## Do I have to pay any tips/gratuities during the tour?

> During the tour, you will not have to worry about tipping anyone on or off the train. On your rail journey with Golden Eagle Luxury Trains all gratuities are included in the tour price. We encourage passengers to refrain from offering gratuities to crew/hoteliers/drivers etc as we will tip on your behalf. In case of any exceptional service received please inform us and Golden Eagle Luxury Trains will reward people accordingly.

## How many restaurant cars are included on the Golden Eagle Danube Express?

> On board the Golden Eagle Danube Express one or two restaurant cars will be available to guests. However, this depends on the number of guests that are booked for a particular tour. In each car you can enjoy meals prepared by our Executive Chef who is assisted by his on board restaurant team. Meals are prepared using the very best ingredients and these are locally sourced wherever possible.

## What is provided for breakfast on board the train?

> The breakfast on the train includes a wide selection of fruit, cereals, orange juice and cold plates and these are presented to you as a buffet. Alternatively you can enjoy a cooked breakfast delivered by waiters to you table along with tea and coffee.

## What is provided as lunch and dinner on board the train?

> During lunch and dinner you will enjoy fine food created by the Executive Chef that is served along with great wines. Attentive service will ensure you experience a welcoming atmosphere within the restaurant car. We also ensure that your culinary experience reflects the very essence of the countries we travel through, as well as international cuisine. However, vegetarian and other dietary options are also available for our guests.

## What types of wines are served on board the train?

> Lunch and dinner are complemented by an excellent choice of wines from around the world. These are personally selected by Golden Eagle Company Founder Tim Littler but you can also choose to accompany your meals with

## What type of seating arrangement is followed in the restaurant car?

> On board the train the restaurant cars can accommodate all guests in a single sitting. Also you can make use of our open-seating policy to dine wherever, and with whomever you please.

## Is there any dress code on board the train or during tours?

> Throughout the journey there is a casual dress code. In the evening we suggest smart casual.

## What is included in the Bar Lounge Car?

> The Bar Lounge Car is the social heart of the Golden Eagle Danube Express. Here you can rest and relax in comfortable surroundings as you read or enjoy a game of cards with friends or fellow passengers.

## What planning is included in daily tours?

> In the Bar Lounge Car the Tour Manager will outline the activities included for the day. Passengers will be given printed daily itineraries throughout the tour detailing train arrival and departure timings. Up to date weather forecasts for the next destination and information on the following day's excursions and activities will also be provided here.

## What types of activities are provided to guests on board the train?

> In the Bar Lounge Car and Restaurant Cars you can partake in language lessons and engaging talks hosted by experts and you can learn more about the local history and culture of countries you are traveling through. In the evenings the resident pianist will entertain you in the Bar Lounge Car and you can make use of the bar which stays open until the last person leaves.

## What is included in the Freedom of Choice touring options?

> In specific cities you can customize your journey and enjoy the opportunity to select from an array of Freedom of Choice tours. In these cities off-train excursions will take in all the major attractions but in addition you can choose from a variety of activities and enjoy a tailor-made experience. All these optional activities are included in the tour cost and there are no extra charges which ensure that you get the ultimate in terms of flexibility. However, Freedom of Choice options may vary depending on train timings, minimum number of people and local weather conditions. Occasionally we may offer an optional excursion that requires extra payment. In case you do not wish to take an off-train excursion you can either stay on board the train (Golden Eagle only) or make arrangements privately to go on your own tour. However, you will have to ensure that you are back by the departure time. In case you are not back in time, the train will not be able to wait and must leave as per the schedule.

## Do I need to purchase travel insurance?

> When traveling on our tours you must be fully insured for any medical expenses that may be incurred. To buy travel insurance contact Palace Tours. Please contact us for more details.

## What currency do I need to bring during a tour?

> On board the train US Dollars and Euros are used but guests will not need much currency. However, charges for laundry and bar bills have to be met so bring $500 in cash per person.
> You can also run a 'tab' on board and make a CASH payment at the end of the tour. We do not accept Credit cards on board any of the trains. We also recommend passengers travel with small denominations and clean bills. Importantly, marked or torn US Dollar bills are not accepted in Russia. You will also need money to pay for souvenirs and any shopping done off the train. This can be paid for in local currency and in some instances in US Dollars. If you need to change money contact the Tour Manager and/or guides and they will provide you with more information.

## Is there a safe on board the train?

> Each cabin has a safe in which you can store any cash or valuables.

## Can passengers pay with credit cards and traveler's checks in cities?

> ATM machines are now available in all large towns and cities and all the hotels that we use accept major credit cards. Traveler's checks however, are virtually impossible to exchange.

## Will a representative meet me at the airport / train station?

> When you arrive one of our representatives will be waiting with a Golden Eagle Luxury Trains sign. In case you are arriving by air, you will be met after immigration, and once you have collected your luggage and cleared customs. Our representative will then assist you to your transfer vehicle to the hotel.

## Do any restrictions about luggage apply on the train?

> Within the train there is very limited space inside the cabin for storing luggage therefore, we advise passengers to bring soft-topped luggage as it is easier to store. There is also no space to store luggage under beds. However, there is luggage storage area at the end of each carriage and we recommend that passengers unpack and store their empty luggage here. Our cabin attendants will assist with this process.

## How many people can travel on off tour excursions?

> Each bus can carry up to 35 passengers and tours may be divided into groups.

## Can passengers in wheelchairs go on off train excursions?

> Passengers in wheelchairs can go on off-train excursions but if they require a wheelchair this must be specified at the time of booking the tour. We will do our best to accommodate the request (charges will apply if assistance is required for maneuvering the wheelchair). However, please note it may not be possible to go on all of the excursions.

## Who should I inform in case I go on a private off train excursion?

> During the off-train excursion period, the train may be moved to another platform or depot so you should inform the Tour Manager if you intend to make you own tour plans during the day.

## What should I do if I require a foreign language interpreter?

> If you require a foreign language interpreter please contact our Reservations Department, and they will do their best to accommodate all requests (charges may apply).

## Will I be informed about cities and places that we visit daily?

> Upon boarding the train you will be given a brochure that is specific to the route and it will have details about the journey and the places covered. Additionally, passengers will receive daily updates throughout the tour with detailed timings, weather forecasts and excursion information.

## On average how many passengers do cabin attendants serve?

> During a tour 2 cabin attendants look after 10 passengers.

## Are there any gym facilities on board the train?

> Gym facilities are only available in the tour hotels. There are no such facilities on board the train however, tours involve a moderate degree of walking.

## What is the best time to travel on a tour?

> Going on tours depends on your personal preference.

## What time should I arrive at the hotel on the first day of the tour?

> We recommend that guests arrive between 11.00 and 16.00 hours, as this will give them time to join the Welcome Dinner. In most hotels check-in is at 12 noon. Early check-ins are dependent on hotel availability (charges may apply).

## How can I extend my tour?

> When you are on a tour you can extend it by choosing extensions that take you to St Petersburg, Beijing, Gobi Desert and Shanghai. Please contact our office for further details

## Can I use my mobile phone on the train?

> When using your mobile phone on board the train you will notice that coverage is limited. It may also be limited in rural areas. Please check with your service provider for more information on coverage.

## Will I get access to internet on board the train?

> The train does not have Wi-Fi, however there are a number of internet USB adaptors, which you can use in the Golden Eagle Bar Lounge Car. These can only be used on personal laptops carried by passengers and are provided on a first come, first served basis. However, internet coverage is limited and is usually available when the train passes through larger cities and towns.

## Will I get access to beauty treatments on board the train?

> Beauty treatments are not available on board but are available in tour hotels

## Can specific dietary needs of passengers be accommodated on tours?

> Most of the special dietary requirements that passengers have can be catered for. Please contact our office for further details.

## What languages are tours conducted in?

> The main language used for tours is English. However, guides speaking other languages are available on selected tours and these are often subject to minimum numbers of passengers requesting for a particular language, or on request at additional cost. Please contact us for more information.

## Are vaccinations needed for the trip?

> We advise guests to contact their GP or local travel clinic to get up to date information on what vaccinations are required. In case you are traveling from America you can check the CDC website if you need further information. We advise guests to contact their GP or local travel clinic to get up to date information on what vaccinations are required. In case you are traveling from America you can check the CDC website if you need further information.

## Should I bring my prescription medication?

> We advise guests to bring enough medication to last the duration of the tour. Also ensure that you have spoken to your primary care physician and received a medical clearance prior to traveling. Finally, our doctor on board the train must be advised of prescription medication that you are traveling with.

## Are toiletries provided on board the train?

> A range of L'Occitane toiletries are provided in each cabin and these include shower cream, shampoo and conditioner. Within the cabin you will also find a hairdryer, bathrobes, slippers and towels.

## What footwear should I bring for this tour?

> All our tours require some walking so we recommend that passengers bring comfortable walking shoes with rubber soles to avoid slipping.

## What happens in case I require hospitalization?

> We will ensure that you are escorted to a hospital and make every effort to ensure that you receive the highest possible level of care. If needed we will also get in touch with your relatives at home. We recommend that you purchase travel insurance as it will cover expenses associated with hospitalization and loss of luggage.

## Where is my luggage stored, and how might I access it during a long journey?

> Empty suitcases are stored at the end of each carriage. Ask your steward if you need to access your suitcase during the journey. Generally, the Danube Express follows an, “unpack once,” mentality whereby passengers unpack their items into their cabin at the beginning of the trip, and use a smaller carry on bag at excursions and hotel stops.

## Are there safety measures or precautions in place?

> There are certain safety measures already in place for passengers. Smaller numbers in group tours allow for more accountability and personal attention, and therefore a heightened sense of safety during excursions. While there has currently been no trouble in areas of Golden Eagle’s tours, if necessary, changes will be made to the itinerary. The safety of the passengers is Golden Eagle’s top priority.

## Are there accommodations for families on board?

> There are no interconnecting rooms on the Danube Express, but families spread across multiple cabins will be placed next to each other in the carriages. The Danube Express train is an adult-oriented train and there are no cots or changing facilities. It is up to parents if they choose to bring their children, but there is a wide range of ages aboard the train.

# Ready to Book Your Journey?

Contact Palace Tours for personalized rates and departure dates

travel@palacetours.com | 786-408-0610

www.palacetours.com

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