

EXETER

INTERNATIONAL

The Transylvanian Westbound
on board the Danube Express



We are proud to introduce Europe's newest (yet historic) luxury train, the Danube Express. As the very first train to offer understated luxury, modern comforts and traditional service along the scenic routes of Central and Eastern Europe, the Danube Express is changing the way we experience travel in this part of the world. Finally, a train that makes getting there just as much fun as being there.

Day 1

Istanbul

Arrival into Istanbul. VIP arrival services have been arranged for you and you will be met at the aircraft and escorted through immigration and to customs. Your driver will meet you outside of customs and will transfer you to your hotel.

Exeter Services: Transfer

Meals Included: None

Day 2

Istanbul

This morning you will start with a visit to the Blue Mosque, one of the most important temples of worship in the world. It is named for the blue Iznik tile work that decorates its interior and its dome can be seen from all over the Sultanahmet district. It was built by Mehmet Aga, the imperial architect and was very controversial due to its six minarets, which many at that time believed was sacrilegious as it rivaled the architecture of Mecca itself!

Later you will pay a visit to the famous Hagia Sophia Church. Built in the 6th century, this church influenced architecture for centuries. Its original design was created as a mirror of the heavens. Take your time exploring the vast galleries and beautiful mosaics. Given its age, the church is in remarkable condition and the interiors are full of important frescoes and mosaics depicting holy subjects.

You will also visit the dramatic and beautiful Byzantine Underground Cistern, built in the 6th century as a secure water reservoir for the city. It is one of Istanbul's most unusual tourist attractions! It was laid out in 532 under the rule of Justinian. Don't miss the columns resting on busts of Medusa's Head that are believed to be a shrine to the water nymphs!

While in Sultanahmet, your guide will first take you into the extraordinary Imperial residence of 25 Ottoman Sultans, Topkapi Palace. You will see the Herem, the library, the treasure, with its royal jewelry and gem collection, and the imperial living quarters, all surrounded by serene gardens and fountains. Also in the Treasury is the 86-carat Spoonmaker's diamond and a Case-containing bones said to be from the hand of St. John the Baptist.

While visiting Topkapi, you will be able to step back into time as you explore 500 years of Ottoman history. The Topkapi palace complex will be regarded as a multi-ethnic construction with influences from Central Asia, Asia Minor, Persia and Mesopotamia. Within the historically short period of two centuries, the Ottomans rose from a small, feudal principality to become a major -the major- world power, yet at the same time they possessed a court tradition and culture of their own that was over a thousand years old. Undoubtedly Topkapi involved a synthesis of Byzantine elements but yet it can never be completely separated from its Ottoman roots.

Exeter Services: Full Day Vehicle, Driver and Guide
Meals Included: Breakfast

Day 3

Istanbul

This morning your guide will meet you in the lobby of your hotel and accompany you to Eminou to board the local ferry. The best way to take in some of the most interesting sights in Turkey is to take this ferry trip across the Bosphorus. You will depart from Eminonu and sail up the Bosphorus toward the Black Sea, allowing you to see all the interesting structures along this historic waterway.

This is one of the most unforgettable excursions between two continents, Europe & Asia. The cruise takes you along the latest palaces of Ottomans, The Dolmabahce Palace and Beylerbeyi, as well as 19th and 20th century, beautiful wooden kiosks, mansions and modern villas, which form the elegant section of the city. Enjoy the scenery.

You will end your Bosphorus boat cruise on the Asian side where you will be met by your vehicle and driver for a brief exploration tour of Istanbul's Asian part. *(You will have a break in a local café overlooking the Bosphorus)*

Continue to the famous Grand Bazaar where the true atmosphere of Istanbul is found! The Grand Bazaar is the largest and oldest covered Bazaar in Turkey with more than 4,000 shops. A variety of Turkish Handicrafts, Oriental carpets, rare jewels and souvenirs all sold in small shops next to each other. The streets are named according to the trades, such as goldsmiths, silversmiths, carpet sellers, booksellers, purse makers, etc. This Bazaar is composed of two sections, the covered authentic section and the surrounding shops. The covered (authentic) market is a whole quarter/section on its own, surrounded by a wall and entered by eleven gates. Later this afternoon your driver will take you to the rail station for boarding of the Danube Express.

Exeter Services: Full Day Vehicle, Driver and Guide
Meals Included: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4

Veliko Turnovo & Kazanlak

This morning the Danube Express arrives in Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria's ancient capital which lies nestled in a picturesque mountain setting and stone houses are perched one above the other on the steep bank of the Yantra River. You will visit one of the seven ancient monasteries and the superbly preserved medieval Tsarevets Hill and Castle.

Return to the train and enjoy lunch as you journey over the Shipka mountain pass.

Afternoon arrival in Kazanlak, capital of the Valley of the Roses and the center of rose oil production. You will have the opportunity to visit the Thracian tomb, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where the vaulted brickwork and splendid murals date back to the 4th century BC.

This evening you may wish to join your fellow travelers in the lounge car before dinner which is served on board as the train heads towards Romania crossing the Danube at the Friendship Bridge.

Services provided by the Danube Express

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5

Sigishoara & Brasov

As dawn breaks the journey continues to Sigishoara where you will be able to enjoy a walking tour of this wonderfully preserved medieval city, rumoured to be the birthplace of Dracula.

Lunch is served on board the train as the track twists and turns through the valley towards Brasov. Dense forests, crystal clear mountain streams and spectacular waterfalls cascade past your window as the train threads its way through this dramatic landscape.

After lunch you will visit Bran Castle, a beautiful 14th century building situated amongst stunning mountain scenery.

This evening dinner is served on board the train and you continue towards Hungary.

Services provided by the Danube Express

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6

Budapest

This morning the train arrives in Budapest and your driver will meet you and transfer you to your hotel in the center of the city. While your room will not be ready you may leave your luggage with the bell-desk.

Your guide will meet you in the lobby of your hotel and accompany you to the Budapest Market Hall. Built by Eiffel in the 19th century, the covered market boasts soaring metal columns, high walkways and beautiful produce shops. More than being a place where one can purchase some handcrafted and typical Hungarian souvenirs, it's a market where locals go to purchase their produce and meats – a meeting place for many and a place where you can enjoy authentic local flavor.

Next you will visit the magnificent House of Parliament, the country's largest building and the symbol of Budapest. Here you will have the opportunity to see the dome, which boasts an elaborate design of Neo-Gothic gilding. Inside the building, the stunning interiors combine sweeping grand staircases, original frescoes, paintings and sculptures. For most, the highlight of this visit is the viewing of the crown jewels of Hungary. One of the most notable items in the collection is the Holy Crown of Hungary, the only crown known today with the "holy" attribute and dating from the 11th century. This crown has had quite a history – seized by the U.S. Army in 1945, it was held in Fort Knox until 1978, when it was returned to Hungary.

Afterwards, drive across the lovely 19th-century Chain Bridge to the Budapest Funicular (vertical rail car), which will take you up the side of Buda's historic Royal Palace, the former Hapsburg palace during the 19-century and rebuilt in the Neo-Classical style after it was destroyed during World War II. The palace now houses National Gallery, which contains a comprehensive collection of some of the most valuable and critically acclaimed Hungarian art in the world - from medieval times to the 20th century. A stroll through the castle area, known as Varhegy, will take you to the Fisherman's Bastion for the most impressive views over Pest, across the Danube. Here you'll see the Matyas Church, a Neo-Gothic reconstruction dating from 1874 and in which many organ and choral concerts can be heard. The entire cobble-stoned area, lined with cafés and small shops.

Exeter Services: Full-Day Vehicle, Driver & Guide
Meals Included: Breakfast on board the Danube Express

Day 7

Budapest onwards

Your driver will meet you at your hotel and transfer you to the airport for departure on your onward flight.

Exeter Services: Transfer
Meals Included: Breakfast at your hotel

Danube Express – The Transylvanian Route
Istanbul (2), Danube Express (3), Budapest (1) - (6 Nights)

\$7,650.00 September 10- 16, 2010

Single Supplement: \$7,100.00

All prices are per person, double occupancy.
Prices do not include any airfare.

Special Note: Some touring during this tour is on foot. Please wear comfortable footwear. If you are tired at any time, your guide can arrange for taxi service on the spot and you can pay locally.

Accommodations on board the Danube Express:

Exeter International will be offering accommodations in Deluxe Class cabins each of which has two lower beds (convertible during the day to a sitting area), individually controlled air-conditioning, and en suite amenities including power showers. Deluxe Class cabins have an area of 83 square feet.



While on the train, Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner are included in the beautifully appointed restaurant car. All guests have beer and wine with dinner included.

Wherever hotel accommodations are included in the program, we prefer to use the best properties in each destination and breakfast is included daily in the hotel.

Upgraded hotel options may be available and you may also add additional guide services. Please contact Exeter International for more details.

Please note that sightseeing may vary dependent on dates of travel and closure days of certain museums or sites.

All arrangements are subject to availability and modification if necessary.

Prices are subject to change if necessary until paid in full.

Exeter International

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