The Central Europe and Transylvania –
Golden Eagle Danube Express

A Private, Historical and Cultural Tour from
Istanbul to Prague with your English-speaking guides

Day 1  Istanbul, Turkey
Arrive into Istanbul where you will be met and transferred to the iconic five-star Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah, for a two-night stay. The hotel was built in 1892 to cater for guests taking the Orient Express and it was here that Agatha Christie wrote her famous book ‘Murder on the Orient Express’. A fitting Grand Hotel to start your tour.

Today is at leisure for all guests to explore this wonderful city, or relax at this luxurious hotel and spa. This evening we will enjoy a welcome reception dinner, giving you the opportunity to meet your fellow travelers.

Day 2  Istanbul, Turkey
This fabled city that spans Asia and Europe deserves an extended stay so over the next two days you will see how old meets new, east meets west when you visit Istanbul’s must-see historic sites.

One of the most famous monuments in both the Turkish and Islamic worlds, the Sultan Ahmet Mosque (the Blue Mosque) is a superb creation in the classical Ottoman style and features six towering minarets and 260 windows illuminating its vast main chamber, which is decorated with more than 20,000 Iznik tiles.

Now a museum, Hagia Sophia was built in the 6th century by the Emperor Justinian, and was one of the largest basilicas in the Christian world. After the Ottoman conquest, it was converted to a mosque and is today one of the most magnificent museums in the world. Take a moment to linger here to admire the fine Byzantine architecture.

The largest and oldest palace in the world and primary residence of the Ottoman Sultans from 1465 to 1853, Topkapi is the crown jewel of the Ottoman Empire. With its treasury and exotic buildings overlooking the Golden Horn, your visit to Topkapi promises to be a truly fascinating experience.
Day 3  Istanbul, Turkey
Following a leisurely breakfast you visit the Grand Bazaar, which is one of the world’s largest covered markets, with 58 streets and over 4,000 shops. In operation since the 14th century the bazaar is especially known for its jewellery, leather, pottery, spices and carpets.

Later this afternoon you join your private train, the Golden Eagle Danube Express, to begin your long-awaited rail adventure to Budapest.

Note: Continuing engineering works associated with the new Bosphorus tunnel could mean that the train starts on the outskirts of Istanbul.

Day 4  Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria
Today you climb over the Shipka Pass, site of a famous battle in 1878 when the combined forces of Russia and Bulgaria crushed the army of the Ottoman Empire, and on towards to Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria’s ancient capital. Nestled in a magnificent mountain setting, the stone houses seem perched, one above the other, on the steep banks of the Yantra River. A tour includes the superbly preserved medieval Tsarevets Hill and Castle and there is free time to wander through the streets of the ancient city.

Relax in the Bar Lounge Car before dinner is served as your train continues through the scenic landscape as you leave Bulgaria and head across the Romanian border.

Day 5  Brasov & Sighisoara, Romania
Overnight the train twists and turns as it climbs over the Carpathian Mountains and threads its way through the dramatic landscape with crystal clear mountain streams. This morning you arrive into Braşov for a tour of Bran Castle. Popularly known as Dracula’s Castle, this beautiful 14th century building is situated amongst stunning mountain scenery.

You will return to the train for lunch as you continue onto Sighişoara for a walking tour of the town’s main highlights. A World Heritage site rumored to be the birthplace of Dracula, it is one of the best-preserved fortified medieval towns in Europe. Burgher houses and ornate churches line its cobbled streets. Dinner is served as the train continues onto Hungary and across the Great Hungarian Plain.

Day 6  Kecskemét & Lajosmizse, Hungary
This morning you get the opportunity to explore Kecskemét, a fascinating city at the geographical centre of Hungary before the train heads to Lajosmizse for a spectacular ‘Puszta’ horse show. You then arrive late afternoon at the romantic and historic Hungarian capital, Budapest, located on the banks of the magnificent Danube, where you will enjoy a three-night stay in the five-star Four Seasons Gresham Palace hotel, a unique art nouveau landmark which combines historical elegance with ultra-modern comforts.

Day 7  Budapest, Hungary
Budapest is actually two cities separated by the Danube. The old city of Buda and the imposing Royal Palace, dominates the city with stunning views across the Danube to the commercial heart of Pest. Your city tour includes the Royal Palace, St. Mathias Church and a
panoramic view of the city from Gellert Hill. You will also see the Citadel, the Opera House, St Stephen’s Cathedral, Heroes Square and the City Park.

**Day 8**  **Budapest, Hungary**

Today is at leisure where you can stroll along the banks of the Danube, visit the historic Great Market Hall with its endless variety of delicious foods and wines or head to one of the city’s famous thermal baths for a rejuvenating dip. Alternatively you can relax at the hotel and indulge in the hotel’s luxurious spa with infinity-edge pool or make use of the state-of-the-art fitness centre.

You may also wish to join our fully included Freedom of Choice wine tasting tour to Eger. Situated in the northeast, the town is rich in historic monuments and famous for its wines such as Bull’s Blood. The fortress of Eger, now a protected historic monument, is the site of the István Dobó Castle Museum. The tour includes a visit to the former cellar system of the Archbishop of Eger. Here in this cellar, wines from the vineyards from around Eger were stored. We will taste some of the local wine.

This evening you will enjoy a beautiful dinner cruise along the Danube.

**Day 9**  **Budapest & Keszthely, Hungary**

After breakfast join the Golden Eagle Danube Express at Ngyyati station after a reception in the Imperial Waiting Room and head to Keszthely on the western shore of Lake Balaton.

At Keszthely you take a tour of the Festetics Palace, a beautiful Baroque palace built on castle ruins in 1745 and expanded 150 years later. Alternatively, take a relaxing boat cruise on the calm waters of Lake Balaton. You re-join the train early evening and have dinner on board as the train heads for Austria.

**Day 10**  **Bratislava, Slovakia & Vienna, Austria**

Wake this morning in Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia where your tour includes the medieval Old Town (Starý Mesto) where you stroll through the cobbled streets of 18th century pastel buildings and the stunning Bratislava Castle perched high above the city on a hill overlooking the Danube. Close to the castle set amongst the many hillside luxury villas is the imposing Soviet War Memorial at Slavín as you learn about the city’s strategic position situated just behind the Iron Curtain.

You then have a light lunch onboard as you travel the short distance onto Vienna for an afternoon touring program. Inspiring the greats from Mozart to Freud, this beautiful city enthrals visitors with its rich heritage. A seductive metropolis of elaborate palaces, renowned coffee houses, classical music and enchanting opera. With your Freedom of Choice touring option guests can choose a city tour with scheduled visits to the former Imperial Palace of Hofburg, the impressive St. Stephen’s Cathedral and a stroll along the main shopping street of Graben with its Holy Trinity Column. Alternatively visit the spectacular Schonbrunn Palace and Gardens, the former summer residence of the Habsburg Family.

This evening there will be a superb private concert at the House of Mozart featuring the Mozart Ensemble followed by a traditional Viennese meal in a local restaurant.
**Day 11  Krakow, Poland**

Once a royal capital with an extraordinary history, and now a lively university town with fashionable bars and restaurants, Krakow is a fascinating city with beautiful monuments and an exuberant atmosphere. Highlights of the city include Wawel Hill, home to the Wawel Castle, an impressive blend of Gothic original architecture and a Renaissance Palace and Rynek Glowny, known as the Main Market Square, it is Europe's largest medieval square. You can explore the city at your leisure in the afternoon and perhaps make the trip across the River Vistula to Podgorze, site of the Jewish Ghetto in Krakow and home to the Schindler factory - much of the film 'Schindler's List' was filmed here.

On your day in Krakow we also offer a number of touring options as part of our Freedom of Choice program outside of the city environs. Close to Krakow is Auschwitz-Birkenau, now a poignant museum, was the largest of the Nazi concentration camps during World War Two where an estimated 1 million people perished.

Alternatively, you can choose to visit the Wieliczka Salt Mines, a unique venue full of chambers excavated and sculpted in rock salt. Descend the 360 steps in to the mines and be amazed at the devotion of the miners who carved the incredible Chapel of Salt, a well-deserved place on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

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**Day 12  Prague, Czech Republic**

A morning arrival into Prague after breakfast where you leave the Golden Eagle Danube Express and spend time to enjoy one of Europe’s most magnificent cities. You will stay at the five-star Four Seasons (or similar) for two nights, located in the middle of the vibrant Old Town Prague, just steps from the Charles Bridge.

Prague is one of the most beautifully preserved cities in Europe. It spans the Vltava River and is dominated by the 9th century Prague Castle, a stunning sight that can be seen almost anywhere in the city. Your tour takes in the Old Town Square with its many historic buildings and Astronomical Clock, the historic 14th century Charles Bridge and the Jewish Ghetto.

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**Day 13  Prague, Czech Republic**

This morning in Prague is at leisure for you to discover the hidden treasures of this wonderful city. Stroll the medieval cobbled streets, relax in the ancient squares and admire the many architectural treasures of this ‘City of a Hundred Spires’.

After lunch you join a vintage tram to travel through the city and Wenceslas Square, then up the hill to Prague Castle, the largest medieval complex in Europe and the gothic St. Vitus Cathedral. The castle and its surrounding architectural gems occupy a hillside overlooking the city and river. Your tour includes the delightful Golden Lane and the Changing of the Guard at the castle entrance.

You will also visit Municipal House, originally built to be an administrative and cultural centre. Located just inside the Old Town it was built on the area once occupied by the former Royal Court before it moved to Prague Castle. You’ll have a Czech afternoon tea here and then visit its beautiful concert hall.
Day 14    Prague, Czech Republic
Following breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for onward flight departures. There is also an option to extend your stay in Prague for additional nights to explore more of this fascinating city.
Dates
June 17-30, 2016

Deluxe Twin $18,695 per person double occupancy
Deluxe Single $31,595
Heritage Twin $11,595 per person double occupancy
Heritage Single $16,995

Prices are per person for the fully inclusive tour Istanbul to Prague. Air-fare is not included.
Prices are subject to change until deposit is received.

General Information:
A full passport with at least six months validity from the start of the tour is required. You will need a Turkish visa. This information will be sent in advance of trip starting.

Subject to bookings, this tour may also be operated in the reverse direction on the same dates or cancelled.

A deposit in the amount of $2,500.00 per person is required on all Heritage Class cabins and a deposit in the amount of $3,000.00 per person is required on all Deluxe Class Cabins.

The capacity of the train will be 65 guests.

The Central Europe and Transylvania Tour Price Includes:

Accommodations:
Istanbul
Two (2) nights at the Pera Palace Hotel Jumeirah; Buffet Breakfast and tax included daily.

Golden Eagle Danube Express
One Heritage or Deluxe Class Cabin for Six (6) nights on board the Golden Eagle Danube Express. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included daily.

Budapest
Three (3) nights at the Four Seasons Gresham Palace; Buffet Breakfast and tax included daily.

Prague
Two (2) nights at the Four Seasons Prague; Buffet Breakfast and tax included daily.

Deluxe Cabins
Each deluxe sleeping car has just five spacious yet intimate en-suite cabins offering every convenience and comfort so you may sit back, relax and enjoy the scenery as it rolls by.
Private bathrooms feature a shower with constant hot water, washbasin and toilet. There is a heated towel rail, shaver socket and hairdryer and a range of toiletries are provided.

Bedrooms have individually controlled air-conditioning, lighting with dimmer switches, individual reading lights, power sockets and a safe. Co-ordinated fabrics complement wood paneled walls and brass fittings. Two comfortable armchairs provide daytime seating and a free-standing chair adds flexibility. There is ample storage space and a full length wardrobe whilst the large picture window and full length mirror enhance the spacious feel. A second window will open for fresh air and for that perfect photo opportunity.

During dinner each evening the living room is converted into two comfortable lower beds by your attendant who is also on hand to bring early morning tea or coffee or perhaps later, a glass of wine.

**Heritage Cabins:**
Each carriage has eight sleeping cabins with upper and lower beds. A toilet is available at one end and a shower at the other end of the carriage.

Each cabin has remote controlled air-conditioning, power sockets, hanging space and wood paneled walls. A full length couch provides daytime seating. The large picture window opens for fresh air and that perfect photo opportunity. During dinner each evening the cabin is converted into two comfortable beds by the cabin attendant who is also on hand to bring early morning tea or coffee or perhaps, later, a glass of wine.

**Restaurant and Bar Cars**
There will be two restaurant cars and one bar car included in the train formation.

**Your itinerary includes:**
- Hotel accommodation as noted in the itinerary.
- Accommodation on board the Golden Eagle Danube Express as noted in the itinerary.
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water throughout the day.
- Guided off train sightseeing excursions.
- Arrival and departure transfers.
- The services of experiences tour leaders.
- All gratuities.
- The services of a doctor traveling with the group.

**Not included:**
- International airfare and excess baggage charges.
- Turkish Visas.
- Travel Insurance.
- Personal expenses such as drinks in the hotels or bar car, laundry and telephone calls.
- Any additional activity not specifically mentioned in the tour program.