



# Essential Central Europe 2020



# Essential Central Europe

Highlights of Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary

## Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 8 Days

Your choice of dates, suggested start day: Monday

*Hidden from view for much of the 20th century, the hip and historic countries of Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary boast gorgeous countryside, handsome churches and city centers, warm people, and around two dozen UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Sample the best of their historic capitals on this eight-day overland journey, relishing in medieval masterpieces, breathtaking baroque architecture, sophisticated museums, and up-to-the-minute cultural life. Dynamic Prague, fortified Bratislava, and the stately art nouveau capital of Budapest all retain their old-world dignity while striding into the 21st century. Changing with every moment that goes by, these places should be visited now before they are fully and irretrievably “discovered.”*



## Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Monday	Arrive Prague, Czech Republic
Day 2, Tuesday	Prague
Day 3, Wednesday	Prague
Day 4, Thursday	Prague • train to Bratislava, Slovakia
Day 5, Friday	Bratislava
Day 6, Saturday	Bratislava • train to Budapest, Hungary
Day 7, Sunday	Budapest
Day 8, Monday	Depart Budapest



## Trip Highlights

Prague	Prague Castle, Tyn Church, Mala Strana, Charles Bridge, Old Town (UNESCO World Heritage Site), St. George's Basilica, Lobkowitz Palace, Old Jewish Cemetery, Jewish Quarter, Municipal House, Daliborka Tower
Bratislava	Michael's Gate, Old Town Hall, Mirbach Palace, Palfy Palace, Bratislava Castle
Budapest	UNESCO-listed historic architecture, Parliament Building, Matthias Church, Fisherman's Bastion, Jewish Quarter, Gellert Baths

## Daily Itinerary

### Day One, Monday

#### Arrive Prague, Czech Republic

Upon arrival in Prague, transfer to the hotel for immediate check-in. The remainder of the day is free for you to relax and explore, perhaps finding your way to sample some of what is debatably some of Europe's best beer.

Meals: Independent – *Majestic Plaza or similar*

### Day Two, Tuesday

#### Prague



After breakfast this morning, **begin touring Prague**. Called the "Hundred-Spired City," Prague's beautifully-preserved Gothic, baroque and neoclassical churches and palaces make it one of the great cities of Europe. Czech King Charles IV, crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1355, began work on many of the most renowned monuments, including St. Vitus Cathedral on the castle grounds, the Charles Bridge, the New Town (Nove Mesto), and Charles University, the first in Central Europe. Prague's old section is included on the **UNESCO World Heritage List** for its rich architectural and cultural history.

The first stop on your tour today is **Prague Castle (Hradcany)**. Built on a steeply sloping hill above the river, Prague Castle is the largest ancient castle in the world. It began in the 9th century as a walled hill-fort, and grew as each successive ruler added to it in a different architectural style. A place of coronation and residence of kings and emperors, the castle is the symbol of Prague. The huge complex includes St. Vitus Cathedral, its St. Wenceslaus Chapel decorated in precious stones, the baroque Matthias Gate, and the Renaissance Garden planted in the 16th century.

The oldest part of the castle complex, the **Old Royal Palace**, was begun in the 9th century as a wooden building with a stone foundation. It was converted to stone in the 12th century, and a Gothic wing added in the 14th. The solemn medieval Vladislav Hall was used for state ceremonies, coronations, and tournaments.





Little **St. George's Basilica** with its baroque red façade is the oldest church in the Prague Castle complex. Originally founded in 920, it was expanded to include St. George's Convent, the region's first abbey.

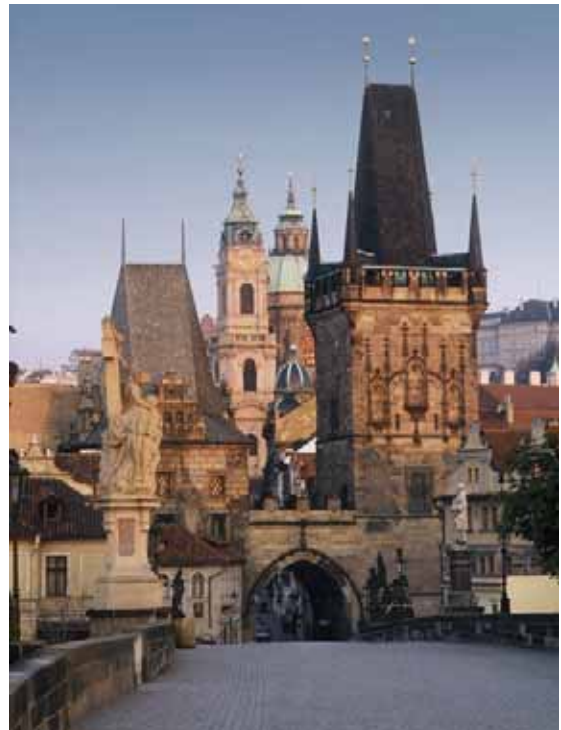
The **Lobkowicz Palace** at Prague Castle has a fascinating history. Built in the mid-16th century, the palace became one of the properties of the noble Lobkowicz family, renowned for their patronage of artists and musicians, most notably Beethoven. The family's properties were seized by the Communists in 1948, and it wasn't until 2002 that the Lobkowicz Palace was returned to an American-born businessman and scion of the family, William Lobkowicz. William has opened to the public a fabulous new permanent exhibit, the Princely Collections, which includes seven centuries of paintings, arms, original musical scores, and instruments.

Next, explore **Golden Lane**, a row of tiny 16th century houses set against one of Prague Castle's fortress walls. Originally built for the marksmen who protected the walls, the houses had to be made small enough so that all the marksmen could be accommodated. Golden Lane got its name because of the many goldsmiths who lived along here in later years.

At the end of the Golden Lane, the 15th century **Daliborka Tower** has a dungeon used to imprison miscreants, who were lowered by pulley into the depths. The first prisoner was Dalibor of Kozojedy, hence its name.

Located on the left bank of the Vltava and connected to the Old Town by the Charles Bridge, **Mala Strana, or Lesser Town**, was created in 1257 from some of the settlements at the foot of Prague Castle. Its lovely baroque architecture, cobbled streets, fine churches, and old burghers' mansions make the area a great place to stroll and shop.

Next, stroll along the **Charles (Karel) Bridge** towards the Old Town. There are 17 beautiful arched stone bridges over the Vltava River running through Prague. The 14th century Charles Bridge, designed by King Karel's architect Peter Parler in the Gothic style, was used for almost five and a half centuries before becoming a pedestrian-only bridge after WWII. The bridge is graced with 30 baroque statues added in the 18th century, including a bronze of St. John of Nepomuk, who was thrown over the bridge to his death for refusing to tell the king what the queen said in confession.



Prague's wonderful **UNESCO-listed Old Town** is where the settlement first began, radiating out from a large marketplace on the Vltava. Originally the town had a moat and a wall with 13 gates. Admire the Town Hall, established in 1338 as the seat of the Old Town authorities. The 15th century astronomical clock at the bottom of the clock tower is complete with astrological signs, with two of the 12 apostles appearing on the hour.

**The King's, or Royal, Road** is the name of the route you've just walked, over the Charles Bridge connecting the King's Court with Prague Castle. This is the route that coronation processions and royal visitors took as they were welcomed by the citizens of Prague. The road passes through Prague's original four towns, the New Town (Nove Mesto), the Old Town (Stare Mesto), the Lesser Town (Mala Strana), and the castle district (Hradcani).



Dominating the Old Town Square is the immense **Tyn Church**, a Gothic cathedral, with its tall spires built between the 14th and the 16th centuries. In the late 17th century, the interior was redone in the baroque style. This was the most important church of the Hussites, a reform group that fought against the Catholic Hapsburgs from their base in Prague.

Built in the late 18th century over the medieval foundations of three different buildings, the rococo **Kinsky Palace** sits on the northeast corner of the Old Town Square. The frothy stucco palace formerly held a gymnasium attended by Franz Kafka, as well as his father's fancy goods shop. Today it is the home of a permanent exhibition of the National Gallery, "*The Landscape in Czech Art, 17th-20th century.*"

A church has been in this spot on Old Town Square since the 13th century, but the current baroque **St. Nicholas Church**, with its bright white facade, was completed in 1735. Its painted, vaulted ceilings were done in the style of the chapel of St. Louis-des-Invalides in Paris. Various classical music concerts happen here throughout the year.



Departing Old Town, head toward the **Estates Theater**. Built in 1783, this beautiful neoclassical building has been at the heart of Prague's cultural scene since its conception. The pastel green horseshoe-shaped theater was the place where Mozart premiered his opera, *Don Giovanni*, and was featured in the movie about his life, "*Amadeus.*"

Touring today ends with a visit to the largest concert hall in Prague, the **Municipal House**. This is also the site where Czechoslovakia declared independence in October of 1918. The grandly decorated art nouveau building hosts regular art exhibitions along with its scheduled classical music, and features paintings done by Czech masters from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Admire the gorgeous decorative art in celebrated Smetana Concert Hall, a number of smaller halls, offices, and beautiful restaurants, including the Oriental Salon and the American Bar.



Lunch and dinner today are independent.  
Meals: B – *Majestic Plaza Hotel or similar*

**Please note:** Today's (Day Two) touring includes learning about Prague and viewing of the buildings from outside only.

## Day Three, Wednesday Prague

After breakfast at the hotel, meet your guide in the lobby to begin a half-day exploration of Prague's rich Jewish history with a walking tour of the **Jewish Quarter, Josefov**. Seven synagogues are the remnants of the old Jewish settlement. With monuments commemorating the life and work of the Jewish community of Prague through the centuries, historic Josefov is no less famous than Prague Castle. The most impressive sights are the Old Jewish Cemetery, with 12 layers of graves and over 12,000 gravestones, and the so-called Old-New Synagogue, built around 1270 and the oldest working synagogue in Europe. Today, the community consists of about 6,000 people, compared with 50,000 before WWII.

The oldest tombstone in Prague's **Old Jewish Cemetery** belongs to poet and scholar Avigdor Karo, from 1439. The community continued to bury its dead here until 1787. An estimated 12,000 tombstones jut from the earth, though the number of burials was much higher than that.

The Gothic **Old-New Synagogue** in Prague's Jewish Quarter is the oldest working synagogue in Europe. The only time that services were not held here was during the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1945. The building, completed in 1270, is believed to have been designed by the same architects who designed the Agnes Convent. Franz Kafka had his bar mitzvah here.

The **Pinkas Synagogue** was originally built in 1535 by the Horowitz family next to their home. After WWII ended, it was made into a memorial to the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia, with their names inscribed on its walls. During renovations in 1968, workers discovered an underground vault and ritual bath. Today, exhibits include drawings from children imprisoned in Terezin.

Built over the city's oldest synagogue, the **Spanish Synagogue** was designed in a Moorish style and decorated in stylized Islamic motifs. The synagogue was reopened in 1998 after 20 years of renovations.

Prague's **Jewish Museum** consists of six Jewish sites within the old Jewish Quarter. The museum began its work in 1906, gathering artifacts from synagogues and homes that had been demolished during the renovation of Josefov a few years earlier. After the Nazis occupied the region, the Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia were told to send the contents of their synagogues to the museum. Many of the sacred objects were stored in Josefov's synagogues, and some can be seen there today.

Located near the entrance to the Old Jewish cemetery, the **Klaus Synagogue** was built in honor of a 1573 visit from Emperor Maximilian II. Rebuilt after a fire in the early 17th century, it was the largest synagogue in Josefov and the headquarters of the Burial Society.

A noblewoman of the early 13th century, **St. Agnes** refused to be married to her betrothed, the son of Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor. Instead, in 1234 she founded a convent for the Order of the Poor Clares in Prague and became its first abbess. The convent is a walled complex of Gothic buildings, which since 2000 has housed the medieval art collection of Prague's National Gallery.



Check into the hotel and enjoy an independent dinner and overnight.  
Meals: B – *Majestic Plaza Hotel or similar*

**Please note:** Entrance fees in the Jewish Quarter have been included in this Dat Three itinerary. You will see the St. Agnes Nunnery from outside only. If you wish to visit the nunnery at the the end of the day's tour, the guide will help you buy entrance tickets so you may explore it on your own. The remainder of the afternoon today is free for rest and independent exploration.

### *Day Four, Thursday* **Prague • Bratislava, Slovakia**

Check out from the hotel and transfer to the railway station this morning to catch a train to the capital city of Slovakia, **Bratislava**. Take a brief detour to enjoy the old art nouveau station and contrast it with

the Soviet era central terminal. While they remained united during the "Velvet Revolution" that swept Communism out of then-Czechoslovakia, these nations soon decided it was mutually beneficial to go their separate ways. Known colloquially as the "Velvet Divorce," the Czech Republic and Slovakia maintain very friendly relations, with citizens of each routinely cheering on the other's national hockey team if their own is eliminated during an international competition.

Meals: B – *Mercure Bratislava Centrum Hotel or similar*



### *Day Five, Friday* **Bratislava**

Meet your guide and driver in the hotel lobby this morning for a full day experiencing the charms of this unheralded city on the Danube.

Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, is situated like Budapest on both sides of the Danube River. The city of 500,000 has a complicated history. The site of Bratislava was settled by Celts and later fortified by Romans. Known by the German name of Pressburg during the 10th century, and capital of Hungary







between 1541 and 1784, Bratislava played second fiddle to Prague when Slovakia became part of Czechoslovakia. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson helped form this country from the remains of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, in gratitude, Bratislava was named Wilson for several months in 1919.

An introduction to Bratislava includes the city's most important places, such as the **National Theater**, the modern city center, and the **Primate's Palace**. Enjoy fantastic views from Bratislava Castle. Later today, take a walking tour of the squares, courtyards, and lanes of the **Old Town**, visiting Michael's Gate, the Opera House, St. Martin's Cathedral, and the Old Town Hall.

One of the few structures dating back to medieval times, **Michael's Gate** is one of Bratislava's oldest buildings. Construction began on the gate in the early 14th century, when it was part of the wall that encircled Bratislava. One of only four gates to the city, it was destroyed in the 16th century and rebuilt to its present state in the 19th. During this last period of construction, a statue of St. Michael was positioned atop the tower. The gate now houses a museum of medieval fortification and arms. Because of its location and height (168 feet), its sixth floor affords a wonderful view of the city.

Located on Francisco Square, the **Mirbach Palace** was commissioned by a wealthy brewer named Michael Spech and built in the late 18th century in the rococo style. Other notable architectural elements include a statue of St. Michael that adorns the roof and a wooden paneled room with inset lettering and rich engravings. It is named after its last owner, Emil Mirbach, who in 1975 donated the building to Bratislava with the condition that it be used as an art gallery.

Built in 1747 for Count Leopold Palffy, the **Palffy Palace** gained fame for housing the first public concert by a then six-year-old Mozart. Reconstruction took place under the direction of Jan Palffy in the mid-19th century in the late classical style. Located on one of the main pedestrian streets, its gate is considered one of the most beautiful in Bratislava.



Established originally in the 10th century, the four-towered rectangular **Bratislava Castle** overlooks the Danube on a hill in the center of Bratislava. When the weather is clear, the view from the ramparts stretches all the way to Austria and Hungary. Today's castle is a 1950s reconstruction of 15th century defensive additions and Maria-Therese's renovations in the 18th century. Within the castle grounds are a branch of the Slovak National Museum devoted to history and folk crafts, as well as a museum of folk music.



Meals: B – *Mercure Bratislava Centrum Hotel or similar*

**Please note:** Entrance tickets to Bratislava Castle are included in today's (Day Five) touring; the rest of the sites will be exterior views and information.

## Day Six, Saturday

### Bratislava • Budapest, Hungary

After breakfast at the hotel, check out and transfer to the train station for your rail journey to **Budapest**. Upon arrival, transfer to your hotel, drop your bags, and enjoy a free afternoon to explore one of Europe's great capital cities.

Meals: B – *Eurostars Budapest Center or similar*

## Day Seven, Sunday

### Budapest



After meeting your guide and driver in the hotel lobby, spend the day exploring **UNESCO-listed Budapest**. Built in the grand style of the Hapsburgs, Budapest has a legacy of fine baroque, neoclassical, and art nouveau buildings and broad avenues. Three different cities united in 1873 to form Budapest: Obuda ("Old Buda"), the oldest and smallest of the three, had been settled since the Stone Age. The Romans built a town here named Aquincum, in honor of the many hot mineral springs in the area. Hungarian, or Magyar, people conquered Obuda



around 900, and after the Mongol invasion of 1241 moved the town south to the high ground above the river. They called their new capital Buda, and the nobles built their homes and palaces here.

Pest was a trade city on the low side of the Danube. Originally a Celtic settlement, it went through a period as a Roman town like Obuda, but grew in importance after 1222. This was when King Andras decreed that the annual assembly of nobles should be held on the plain.

Touring today will feature the highlights of both Obuda and Pest. Budapest's monumental **Parliament Building** faces across the Danube to the Buda Castle and Fisherman's Bastion. Built from 1880 to 1902, the neo-Gothic extravaganza features spires, courtyards, sculptures, frescoes, a 16-sided, 96-meter rotunda, and 88 lbs of gold leaf. Upon its completion, it was the largest parliament building in the world.

The Church of Our Lady, commonly known as **Matthias Church**, was originally built in 1255, though few of its elements survive today. In the 15th century, King Matthias Corvinus expanded the church and had both of his royal weddings here. During Turkish rule from 1541 to 1686, the church was used as a mosque and many of its medieval furnishings and frescoes were destroyed. In the late 19th century, Matthias Church was renovated and modified by Hungarian architect Frigyes Schulek, who also built the nearby Fisherman's Bastion.

On the Buda side of the Danube, the mock-medieval **Fisherman's Bastion** provides the most beautiful views in town. The seven-towered limestone structure is said to be named for the Fishermen's Guild, which was responsible for defending this section of the river. The Fisherman's Bastion was built at the turn of the century as part of the renovation of Matthias Church.



Tour the **Jewish Quarter** and explore the most important Jewish monuments of the Hungarian capital, including the largest synagogue in Europe. Walk through the former Jewish ghetto and visit the **Dohany**



**Street Synagogue** and its **Jewish Museum**. Also featured are the Tree of Life Holocaust Memorial, Temple of Heroes, and the Cemetery in the Jewish Garden.

The famous **Gellert Spa and Baths**, next to the Gellert Hotel, is a magnificent art nouveau thermal spa opened in 1918. Soak in the hot mineral pools, take a plunge into the cold pool, swim in calm or wavy waters, and enjoy spa treatments in this luxurious and often-photographed bath house.

Meals: B – Eurostars Budapest or similar

**Please note:** Entrance fees for the Parliament Building have been included in this Day Seven itinerary. You will see the remainder of the buildings from outside only.

### *Day Eight, Monday*

#### **Depart Budapest**

The trip concludes with a transfer to the airport for departure.

Meals: B



### **Tour Days of Operation**

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the date of your choice in 2020, recommended start day Monday. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

### **Private Journey Prices**

2 traveler minimum, from \$2,695 per person, twin share

Single supplement from \$795

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$4,095

### **Hotel Upgrade Prices**

*Upgrade to the Century Old Town Hotel in Prague, Marrol's Boutique Hotel in Bratislava, and the Sofitel Chain Bridge in Budapest, or similar hotels.*

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,295 per person, twin share

Single supplement from \$1,295

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$4,995





*Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and by start day, and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Hotel room category upgrades and additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.*

## **Your Private Journey Includes**

- Accommodations per the itinerary. **See upgrade rates above.** All room types, even in upgraded properties, are standard entry-level doubles or twins; please call for room category upgrade pricing and information.
- 7 breakfasts, per the itinerary. Lunches and dinners are left free to allow independent exploration.
- Restaurant tips for included meals.
- One arrival and one departure airport transfer. (Additional arrival and departure transfers available at additional cost.) MIR will arrange for travelers to be met upon arrival and seen off on departure, whether we make your air arrangements or not.
- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by private vehicle (size of vehicle depends on number of travelers in your group).
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers, and other staff.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.

## **Not Included**

- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Baggage handling.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers.
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

### **Interested in travel insurance?**

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp) or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

## **Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys**

Flexible Essential Private Trips are compact, well-designed, private tour itineraries – researched and ready to book on the dates you choose. They work perfectly as brief overviews of a country or as effortless extensions to group tours – great for solo travelers, couples, or private parties who prefer to travel independently, but appreciate a savvy, pre-designed program.



## Start Planning Next Year Now

### 2021 Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 8 Days

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Please call if you're ready to book now.

*Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Monday of your choice in 2021. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.*

### Private Journey Prices – 2021

2 traveler minimum, from \$2,795 per person, twin share

Single supplement from \$825

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$4,195

### Hotel Upgrade Prices

*Upgrade to the Century Old Town Hotel in Prague, Marrol's Boutique Hotel in Bratislava, and the Sofitel Chain Bridge in Budapest, or similar hotels.*

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,395 per person, twin share

Single supplement from \$1,325

Solo traveler rate, inclusive of single supplement, from \$5,095

*Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and by start day, and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Hotel room category upgrades and additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.*

## Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

It is important to keep in mind that while the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary are fairly modern and cosmopolitan, some aspects may not live up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving in the region; nevertheless you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, rough or unpaved road conditions, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps, and availability of public restrooms.

While this program is designed to be the most comfortable possible for travel in this region, it is rated as **moderate to rigorous touring** due to the daily walking involved, the length of some train trips and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot including many staircases. Museums rarely have elevators. Flexibility, a sense of humor are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.

Every effort has been made to make the information in this itinerary accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We will do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in these countries, this may not always be possible.



## Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp)

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to the Czech Republic here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/czech-republic-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to the Slovakia here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/slovakia-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Hungary here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/hungary-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

## Weather

Central Europe is a wonderful place to visit any time of the year, **but spring and fall** — May, September, and October — are particularly good, with daytime temperatures around 65 degrees Fahrenheit. In May, the weather is usually gorgeous and perfect for traveling. Summer and fall may bring festivals and outdoor concerts, and June-August average temperatures in the low 70s. **September is our favorite month** — the biggest crowds of tourists have gone, the region enjoys an Indian summer, and it is the beginning of the new cultural season. Theaters open, churches offer free concerts, coffee shops are full of locals back from their vacations sharing their experiences with friends over a glass of wine or demitasse of coffee. And in winter, the off-season, prices are down and there may be special exhibits. November is one of the rainiest months of the year, and winters can be cold and snowy

**Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable.** This information comes from [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region of Europe you will be visiting.

## International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Lufthansa, Austrian, and Swiss Airlines, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Central Europe.

Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.



## Visas

Please note, no visas are required for U.S. passport holders traveling to the Czech Republic, Slovakia, or Hungary. Citizens of other countries may require visas; please contact us for more details. Visa prices are always subject to change.

## Pre- and Post-Tours

This flexible-date tour is designed to start on a Monday and end on the following Monday. However, the program is generally flexible enough to run in any eight-day time period, making it the perfect tour to link to other 2020 small group tour programs. MIR can arrange extension touring to Poland or the Balkans as well as to Central Asia, Siberia, Western Russia, or the Baltics. All of MIR's destinations are open to you, and all can be attached to this program. Please contact MIR for more details about exciting options for extended travel.

## Also Nearby...

For more tours to this region, you may want to check out:

## Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

**Essential Russia**, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia's political capital, Moscow, and its cultural capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

**Essential St. Petersburg**, 7 days. St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the "White Nights" of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days.

**Essential Ukraine**, 8 days. Ukraine is the new borderland between Europe and Russia. Explore this resilient region influenced by Polish princes, Cossack *hetmen*, Turkish khans, Russian communists and Ukrainian poets and nationalists.

**Essential Poland**, 6 days. On this focused tour, visit four Polish UNESCO sites in six days – Warsaw's Old Town, Krakow's Historic Center, the Auschwitz/Birkenau camp and the Wieliczka Salt Mine.

## Small Group Tours

**Balkan Odyssey: Crossroads of Cultures**, 16 days. From low-lying Belgrade up through the Dinaric Alps, down to the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia and back up to mountainous Macedonia, this overland journey ties together seven wildly divergent Balkan countries – Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.

**Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses**, 16 days. Explore the complex history and fascinating culture of Bulgaria and Romania, two Balkan countries whose rugged terrain and consequent isolation have helped preserve their heritage. Discover the luminous frescoes of the painted monasteries, breathe in the fragrance of the Valley of the Roses, and spend an afternoon visiting with villagers in a tiny Transylvanian town.





**Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova, 14 days.** Traverse a little known region that has changed hands from its earliest history. Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova are three of the least-frequented and least familiar countries in Europe. Time slowed drastically here after the devastation of WWII, but these beautiful countries are emerging from the shadows.

**Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages, 11 days.** Discover where Russian art, architecture and culture began. In between the urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, experience the Russian countryside. The oldest and loveliest churches in Russia, Sergiev Posad's wooden crafts and Fedoskino's glowing lacquer boxes all put a shine on Russia's Golden Ring.

**Kaliningrad & The Baltics, 13 days.** This overland journey roves the countryside and urban centers of four distinct nations: the three independent Baltic countries – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – and Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia.

## Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

## Cancellation and Refund Policy

**Payment Terms:** Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice, the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary):

### *Flexible Essential Trips*

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

## References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

## Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...



## Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

## 30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.



## Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.




## More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

MIR Corporation  
85 South Washington Street, Suite 210  
Seattle, WA 98104  
800-424-7289, 206-624-7289  
Fax 206-624-7360  
info@mircorp.com  
www.mircorp.com

Sellers of Travel: Washington#601-099-932, California# 2082306-40

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