



**Budapest to Venice
by Private Train
2020**



Budapest to Venice by Private Train

A Balkan Rail Odyssey

Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train

One westbound departure in 2020 – Private Rail Journey – 10 Days

June 17-26

Glide from Hungary's capital on the Danube, Budapest, all the way to the canals of Venice on this deluxe rail journey by private train. Admire the changing scenes on your way through the mountains, valleys, towns and villages of seven countries – Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Italy – stopping at ancient and modern cities along the way and discovering four UNESCO Sites.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive Budapest, Hungary
Day 2	Budapest • board the <i>Danube Express</i> • Lajosmizse and Kecskemét
Day 3	Sighisoara, Romania • Brasov
Day 4	Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria • Plovdiv
Day 5	Belgrade, Serbia
Day 6	Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina • Sarajevo
Day 7	Ljubljana, Slovenia
Day 8	Trieste, Italy • Venice
Day 9	Venice
Day 10	Depart Venice



Tour Features

- Enjoy the comfort and efficiency of your own private cabin on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* luxury train.
- Survey a series of fascinating cities along the rail line.
- Join travelers from around the world to enjoy the casual and relaxed atmosphere aboard the private train, dining in luxury and chatting over drinks in the lounge.
- Relax deeply as you are carried into other lands, a world away from home.

Tour Highlights

Kecskemét	<i>Pushta</i> horse show, art nouveau architecture
Sighisoara	Historic Center/Citadel area (UNESCO World Heritage Site), clock tower, House of Dracula's father
Brasov	Bran Castle ("Dracula's Castle")
Veliko Tarnovo	Tsarevets Hill Royal Fortress, winding cobbled streets
Plovdiv	Old Town, Roman amphitheater
Belgrade	Capital of Serbia, House of Flowers – Tito's mausoleum, Kalemegdan Fortress
Mostar	Old Bridge, or Stari Most (UNESCO World Heritage Site), bazaar, mosque
Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital, Tunnel Museum with a survivor of the siege
Ljubljana	Capital of Slovenia, Preseren Square, Triple Bridge, Dragon Bridge, Plecnik open-air market, Predjama Castle, Postojna Cave
Trieste	Piazza Unita d'Italia, Cathedral of San Giusto
Venice	(UNESCO World Heritage Site), Grand Canal, St. Mark's Square, St. Mark's Basilica, Rialto Market, optional gondola ride

Itinerary



Day One

Arrive Budapest, Hungary

Arriving in Budapest, you are transferred to a five star hotel with time to rest and refresh. Later this evening, gather for a **welcome reception and dinner** to meet fellow travelers.

Budapest*, built in the grand style of the Hapsburgs, has a legacy of fine baroque, neoclassical and art nouveau buildings and broad avenues. Three different cities united in 1873 to form Budapest, the Hungarian capital on the Danube River. 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.

Meals: D – *Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace or similar*

* Please note, there is no scheduled sightseeing itinerary in Budapest on this program. If you would like to add one, contact MIR Corp. to discuss extending your time in Budapest with additional touring services.

Day Two

Budapest • board the *Danube Express* • Kecskemét

Following breakfast, transfer to Budapest Nyugati station for a morning **reception at the Royal Waiting Room** before boarding the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train. Settle into your cabin and have lunch on board as the train heads for **Lajosmizse** for a spectacular **Pusztá horse show**.

On the vast grassy Hungarian Plain, the area called the *puszta* – a word meaning barren or empty – is an environment partially created over two millennia by humans and their herds. Hungarians, descended from the 8th century nomadic Magyars, have been traditionally known for their brilliant horsemanship.



After the show, there is free time to explore **Kecskemét**, a fascinating city at the geographic center of Hungary. Kecskemét is renowned for the wonderful art nouveau buildings surrounding its central square; for its special apricot brandy, called *barack pálinka*, and for being the birthplace of Zoltan Kodály; one of Hungary's most famous composers.

Return to the train and enjoy a drink in the lounge car and dinner on board as the journey continues across the Great Hungarian Plain towards Transylvania.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*



Day Three

Sighisoara, Romania • Brasov

Arrive in **Sighisoara** and take a walking tour of this **UNESCO-listed medieval town** in the heart of Transylvania. Built by German Saxons, Sighisoara is considered the most beautiful and complete medieval architectural ensemble in Romania. In the 13th century, Hungarian overlords granted the Saxons land



here in return for help defending the area from the Tatars. The Saxons typically built compact villages centered by fortified churches.

The tour begins at the entrance to the citadel, under the massive 210-foot clock tower. Continue along the square to the **house of Vlad Dracul, Vlad the Impaler's father**, and then take the **Scholar's Stairway** up to the 14th century **Gothic Church on the Hill**.



Return to the train for lunch on board before making an afternoon stop in **Brasov**, an old Transylvanian town set at the foot of a mountain and filled with medieval architecture, cobbled streets and small houses.

Here, visit **Bran Castle**, more commonly known as “**Dracula's Castle**,” although despite a popular myth, it was not actually built by Vlad Tepes, the Wallachian prince upon whom the 19th century novelist Bram Stoker is supposed to have based his vampire count. This 14th century castle in the center of Bran village was in fact built by the people of Brasov in 1382 to defend the Bran mountain pass against Turks. Bran Castle

embodies the Gothic image of a Transylvanian castle, and as a result draws crowds from far and wide.

The train twists and turns through the dramatic landscape of the Carpathian Mountains this evening on the way to Bulgaria.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*

Day Four

Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria • Plovdiv

Arrive in **Veliko Tarnovo**, Bulgaria's ancient capital, inhabited since the Paleolithic Age. Thracians and Romans settled here before the 2nd century AD, and the city became the capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire just after its founding in 1186. The **remains of the Royal Fortress** still stand at the top of Tsarevets Hill. The town was conquered and razed by the Turks in 1393, but remained a center of Bulgarian national struggle. The houses of Veliko Tarnovo seem to grow out of each other's roofs. Here, explore the preserved remains of the Royal Fortress and take time to wander the streets of the ancient city.



Arrive in **Plovdiv, the second largest Bulgarian city** and the second oldest European one. Founded in the 12th century BC, Plovdiv began its existence on a site protected by three hills. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius built a 3,000-seat amphitheater here, still in use today. Situated in the center of the East Balkans, on the trade road from western Europe to Asia, Plovdiv has survived millennia. Despite barbarian attacks, destruction, looting and bloodshed, Plovdiv has always risen from the ashes.

Visit the **Old Town** with its characteristic Bulgarian Revival architecture, and the 2nd century **Roman Amphitheater**. Built by Emperor Marcus Aurelius, it originally seated 3,000 spectators and is now used for staging summer festivals.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*



Day Five **Belgrade, Serbia**

Arrive this morning in Belgrade. **Belgrade** is the capital of Serbia, as it was the capital of a united Yugoslavia. The area around Belgrade supported human life as far back as Neolithic times. In the 1st century BC, the Romans made it a border outpost, calling it Singidunum. Strategically located on the Danube, Singidunum became the starting point of the important Via Militaris road, and was the home of a Roman garrison for many years.



From then until the present day, Belgrade has been destroyed and rebuilt between 30 and 40 times, by conquerors like Attila the Hun, the Visigoths, the Magyars and the Turks. The Slavs first appeared in the 7th century, and managed to persist through many different dynasties. Today, Belgrade is a dynamic and sophisticated city of 1.7 million, swiftly becoming one of the hippest places in Europe.

Called the **House of Flowers**, the **mausoleum of Josip Broz Tito** is set in the winter garden complex near his former home. Built in 1975, the House of Flowers was designed as a retreat for the Yugoslav

leader, who was buried here according to his wishes in 1980.

One of the highlights of Belgrade is **Kalemegdan Fortress**, named by the Turks and meaning “fortress amid battlefields.” This ancient citadel includes what is left of Roman Singidunum and the Byzantine fortifications that followed. The Despot Gate and the Roman Well are found in the fortress’ Upper Town and the 18th century Turkish baths in the Lower.

Overnight on the train.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*



Day Six

Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina • Sarajevo



Early morning arrival is scheduled in the historic city of **Mostar**. Mostar was founded in the 15th century and became an important Ottoman regional center until the late 19th century. Named after the guards on its **Old Bridge, Stari Most**, the town passed from the Ottomans to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 19th century. After World War I, it became a part of newly formed Yugoslavia. Engulfed in war after Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence in 1992, the town was shelled repeatedly. Its Old Town, including its namesake bridge, was all but destroyed. After the war ended, UNESCO and donor nations launched a five-year project to rebuild the historic Old

Town and the bridge in an effort to heal the deep ethnic divide that characterized the destruction. The resulting reconstruction was inscribed on the **UNESCO World Heritage List** in 2005.

Following a light lunch, travel along a scenic line to Sarajevo. **Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, is remembered for several historic events. This area in the Sarajevo Valley surrounded by the Dinaric Alps has been settled since prehistoric times. The Ottomans made it theirs in the 15th century, but it belonged to the Austrian-Hungarian empire in 1914, when Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated here, setting off World War I. Since then, it has been the location of the 1984 Winter Olympics and the site of the longest siege in modern history, lasting from April 1992 to February 1996.

Pay a visit to the **Tunnel Museum** under Sarajevo Airport. During the Bosnian War, Serbian and Yugoslav forces besieged and shelled the city of Sarajevo for over 1,000 days, the longest siege in the history of modern warfare. Between March and July of 1993, soldiers and citizens dug a 2,600-foot tunnel that linked the besieged city to the NATO-controlled airport. An estimated 20 tons of food were smuggled into the city through the tunnel, as were medical supplies and munitions. A small oil pipeline and electric and phone lines were laid through the tunnel; soldiers and seriously wounded people could be sent into and out of the city.

Visit the **Sarajevo Tunnel Museum with a survivor** who used the tunnel to get in and out of Sarajevo during the siege. Sixty feet of the life-saving tunnel remain under the house where the tunnel began. A 20-minute film familiarizes you with the building and operation of the tunnel, and many of the original tools and materials are on display.

Overnight on the train

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*

Day Seven

Ljubljana, Slovenia

Arrive in **Ljubljana, Slovenia**. Though the area has been settled since Roman times, Ljubljana was officially mentioned by name in the year 1144 and received town rights in 1220. Shortly thereafter it fell under Habsburg rule, where it remained until 1918 when it became part of Yugoslavia. This long period of



relative stability allowed the town to thrive culturally and architecturally. Partially destroyed in 1511 and again in 1895 by earthquakes, the city is a stunning mix of baroque, Renaissance, neoclassical and Austrian art nouveau styles, epitomized by homegrown architect Jože Plečnik's work, found throughout the city.

Since Slovenia's entrance into the European Union in 2004, Ljubljana has come into its own as a capital city. Small by European standards with a population of nearly 300,000 people, its 50,000-strong student population (drawn to the excellent reputation of the University of Ljubljana) has ensured that the arts, culture and nightlife of Ljubljana are constantly fresh and always flourishing. Look for the dragon motif – the city's symbol – manifested in many different ways.



Stroll the main square, **Prešeren Square**, at the center of the pedestrian zone in the medieval Old Town. Cross the **Triple Bridge**, connecting Prešeren with the Ljubljana Market Colonnade; it's the most frequently crossed bridge in Ljubljana. The middle bridge has stood in this place since 1842. The other two were added by Jože Plečnik during his transformation of the city in the 20th century. This bridge has become a symbol of Ljubljana, and is one of the most frequently photographed points in Slovenia.

Running in a colonnade along the banks of the Ljubljanica River, the bright covered stalls and handcarts of Ljubljana's **Plečnik open-air market** offer visitors a chance to experience the abundance of Slovenia's natural bounty. Sample fresh fruits, Slovenian cheeses and dairy products, local crafts, mushrooms and fresh-cut flowers.

Visit **Predjama Castle**, perched dramatically at the entrance to a cave high in an overhanging cliff. The only cave castle in Slovenia, its basic features were formed in the 12th and 13th centuries, but the Renaissance gave it a final stamp with the construction of the imposing Kobenz gate tower.

The Postojna Cave system is an underground world of caverns adorned with glittering stalactites and stalagmites. First described in the 17th century, the caves are located below the large limestone Kras Plateau that gave the world the term karst topography. Visitors to the awe-inspiring cave ride a special train through its halls and tunnels, and have the opportunity to admire one of its denizens, the rare proteus anguinus salamander, sometimes referred to as the "human fish" because of its human-like skin.

Overnight on the train.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danube Express private train*



Day Eight

Trieste, Italy • Venice



Nearly surrounded by Slovenia, Trieste is an Italian port city with an Austro-Hungarian background. An early Roman city, then a Byzantine outpost, Trieste voluntarily joined the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1382. Its commodious central square, about 130,000 square feet of free space, is now called **Piazza Unita d'Italia**, or Unity of Italy Square.

Climb to the **Cathedral of San Giusto**, which united two 10th century basilicas and is crowned with a filigreed Gothic rose window. Some of the stones in its façade are re-purposed Roman-era building blocks.

Have a final farewell lunch on board, leaving Trieste and following the Adriatic coast towards Mestre, where the train curves to the left onto the three-mile causeway across the Venice Lagoon and into Santa Lucia station on the Grand Canal. Transfer to the five star Danieli Hotel (or one of Venice's other top-tier properties), for a two-night stay. The hotel is only a short stroll from St. Mark's Square, the Doge's Palace and the Bridge of Sighs. Meals: B, L, D – *Danieli Hotel or similar*

Day Nine

Venice

Enjoy a full day in Venice. Queen of European cities by the 13th century, beautiful Venice still

rules in travelers' hearts. Built on pylons of alder trees from Slovenia, Venice knits together 118 islands with its 409 bridges over 177 canals. A **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1987, the city is crowded with gorgeous old *palazzi* ("palaces"), which in turn are filled with more art per square mile than any other European city. Venice sees 20 million travelers every year.

Walk through the winding lanes beside the **Grand Canal to St. Mark's Square**, which for 1,000 years was the heart of Venetian life. At its eastern end is the arched facade of the famed Basilica with its four horsemen, and in front is the massive freestanding Campanile, rebuilt in 1912. Along both sides of the square are the curved arcades of the former Procurators of St. Mark's, today transformed into restaurants and shops. Along the western end through the Piazzetta, the quay serves as a docking spot for boats on St. Mark's Lagoon.

Sometimes called Chiesa d'Oro ("Church of Gold"), sumptuous **St. Mark's Basilica** (also known as San Marco) was constructed in the 11th century to house the relics of St. Mark (of Matthew, Mark, Luke and





John), purportedly stolen from Alexandria by Venetian merchants. Designed in a combination of Byzantine and Venetian styles, the basilica was continually enhanced with treasures brought by sea from the Far East. Its interior vaults and domes are clad in golden mosaics, and its altarpiece is a huge panel of gold embedded with gems. The church became the city's cathedral in 1807.

Stroll through the Rialto Market before enjoying a free afternoon. For an iconic experience, take a gondola ride at additional charge in the Basin of St. Mark's and along the Grand Canal.

Meals: B, L, D – *Danieli Hotel or similar*

Day Ten **Depart Venice**

The tour ends this morning after breakfast at the hotel, with departure transfers to the airport.

Meals: B

Program Note: *There is no scheduled sightseeing itinerary in Budapest on this program. If you would like to add touring here, contact MIR Corp. to discuss extending your time in Budapest with additional touring services.*



About The Golden Eagle Danube Express Train

Train accommodations

Two styles of accommodation are available on board the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*: Superior Deluxe Class (en suite, with UK king bed), and Deluxe Class (en suite).

Superior Deluxe Class

The Superior Deluxe Class on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* is the ultimate in luxury European rail accommodation, featuring only four modern en suite cabins per car, complete with WiFi access. Deluxe cabins include a full-length sofa and two chairs, a double wardrobe, individually controlled air-conditioning, USB ports, power sockets, personal safe, and a newly designed en suite bathroom with its own shower cubicle. At night, your attendant transforms the sofa into a king-sized bed. The two picture windows, one of which opens, bring light and air into your private retreat.

Superior Deluxe Class Cabin information:

- 93 sq. ft. cabin area,
- Sleeps 2 in UK standard king-sized bed (6 ft. 2 in. by 5 ft.)
- Armchair, full-length sofa
- Sitting area with free-standing chairs and table
- Individually controlled air-conditioning
- 2 large picture windows – 1 opens partially
- Adjustable lighting
- Double wardrobe
- Personal safe
- WiFi
- 2 USB ports
- Electrical outlets
- Private en suite bathroom with shower cubicle
- Slippers and toiletries
- Towels and linens changed every three days
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water
- Beer, wine and soft drinks from the Bar Car included (excluding Premium Wine List)



Deluxe Class

The Deluxe Class on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* features newly designed air-conditioned cabins which pair luxury with utility, offering superior accommodations that feature two lower berths and fully en suite facilities. Cabins are furnished with two sofas, an armchair, table and a wardrobe with a safe. Your attendant will convert the two sofas into comfortable twin beds for nighttime use. The en suite bathroom features a shower, hair dryer and heated towel rack.

Deluxe Class Cabin information:

- 83 sq. ft. cabin area
- Sleeps 2 in two twin size beds (6 ft. 3 in. by 2 ft. 7.5 in.)
- Two armchairs, and sitting area with free-standing chair
- Individually controlled air-conditioning
- Large picture window – opens partially
- Full length wardrobe
- Personal safe
- Electrical outlets
- Private en suite bathroom with shower and heated towel bar
- Slippers and toiletries
- Towels and linens changed every three days
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water available morning to night
- Beer, wine and soft drinks from the Bar Car included (excluding Premium Wine List)
- 5 cabins per carriage



Note: cabin configurations and decor may vary from samples depicted



Dates for 2020 – Private Rail Journey

The land itinerary is scheduled to operate on the below dates. Please note that you need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to the tour start date, due to airline flight schedules.

June 17-26, 2020

2020 Package Prices

Land Tour Cost – Per Person:

Deluxe Class, twin share	\$13,695
Deluxe Class, single	\$22,995

Superior Deluxe Class, twin share	\$16,295
Superior Deluxe Class, single	\$27,495

Private Train Tour Deposits – Per Person

Deluxe Class deposit	\$2,500
Superior Deluxe Class deposit	\$5,500

A non-refundable deposit and completed reservation form/signed release are required to hold space.

Land Tour Includes

- Accommodation aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train.
- Hotel accommodation per the itinerary (1 night in Budapest, 2 nights in Venice).
- All meals starting with dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on final tour day.
- A generous allowance of wine or local beer, soft drinks and water with all lunches and dinners.
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water round the clock from your car attendant while on board the train.
- Complimentary draft beer in the Bar Car for all passengers.
- Arrival/departure transfers, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates and in the tour start/end cities.
- All guided off-train tours per itinerary.
- The services of an experienced Train Tour Manager, with local guides for scheduled off-train touring.
- All gratuities.
- Baggage handling.

Not Included

- International airfare or surface transport to the point of joining/leaving the tour. MIR is able to arrange your air itinerary in economy or business class. If you wish to obtain an air quote, please contact us for details.
- Items of a purely personal nature (laundry, telephone, bar account, photography at museums, etc.)
- Optional pre- or post-tour extensions.
- Drinks, beyond draft beer in the Bar Car, and beer and wine at set meals.
- Visa fees, any excess baggage charges, airport departure taxes, vaccination or medical costs.
- 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 or contact Travel Guard at 1.877.709.5596.

Rail Journey by Private Train

Private Train tours are in a class of their own, offering the opportunity to experience remote destinations in unparalleled style. These all-inclusive, overview tours aboard the fully-chartered *Danube Express* private train bring together passengers from around the world. Group sizes are flexible and on the *Danube Express* private train can be up to 90 passengers.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

- This trip is moderately active, and rated **moderate to rigorous** touring due to the daily walking involved and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least a mile a day, keeping up with fellow travelers. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.
- This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets and sidewalks are uneven, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases. Museums generally do not have elevators.
- On the train, restaurant and bar cars may be some distance from your sleeping car. Although portage is provided where possible, you may have to carry your baggage for short distances.
- Passengers may encounter problems getting on and off trains; there may be low platforms, steep steps and/or gaps between the platform and the train.
- In true expedition style, some delays or changes in the itinerary are likely.

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

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/>

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

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

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

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Serbia here:



<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/serbia-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Bosnia here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/bosnia-and-herzegovina-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Slovenia here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/slovenia-travel-advisory.html>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to Italy here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/italy-travel-advisory.html>

Weather

The climate of **Eastern Europe** is a rather severe continental climate, cold in winter and hot in summer. As with traveling anywhere, it is best to bring layers of different weights and thickness to keep you comfortable. In the winter and spring months, a warm coat, hat and gloves will come in handy, and a pair of boots that will withstand wet snow or rain. Autumn is beautiful, particularly in the hills around **Budapest** and in the Northern Uplands. November is one of the rainiest months of the year, and the winter 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 and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region 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 published fares available. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel, 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. Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 for further details and for assistance with custom air reservations from your preferred departure city.

Visas

U.S. passport holders do not require visas for any of the countries visited on this itinerary. You may need a visa for any country you fly through prior to joining the tour, or for a country in which you plan to do a pre- or post-tour extension. Non-U.S. passport holder may need a visa for one or more of the countries on the main tour routing. Please call with any questions about processing visas for this program.

Pre and Post-Tour Extensions

MIR can arrange for an extended program in Russia or Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus or the 'Stans. Contact us for more information.



Also Nearby...

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

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

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 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 Balkans, 14 days. Visit seven Balkan countries in 14 days on this compact overland journey through history. A remarkably complex region, the mountainous Balkan Peninsula is fascinating, diverse and incredibly beautiful.

Essential Caucasus, 10 days. Armenia’s intricate stone *khachkar* crosses, the bounteous wines of Georgia and the ancient petroglyphs of Azerbaijan are icons of these three intertwined Caucasus countries, where you can experience five UNESCO masterpieces in ten days.

Essential Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, 13 days. Explore the markets, mosques and minarets of oasis towns on the fringes of the Kyzyl Kum and Kara Kum deserts. Here spiritual beliefs were the greatest commodities to flow along trade routes, and civilizations blossomed amidst austere natural beauty.

Essential Uzbekistan, 10 days. Roam the great Silk Road oases of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, along with modern Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. Admire their mosques, *madrassahs* and minarets built of mudbricks and clad in ceramic tiles the color of the desert sky.

Essential Turkmenistan, 12 days. From the golden monuments of Ashgabat and the ruins of Parthian Nisa, head into the mountains to overnight in a village home. Visit the Caspian seaport, Turkmenbashi, explore UNESCO-listed Merv and learn about traditional crafts. Camp at the “Door to Hell” and survey Kunya-Urgench, ancient capital of Khorezm.

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

Please note that no partial refunds are available for any missed days of a tour or any whole or part of a tour; accommodation, meal or any other service not utilized by the participant during the tour. The quoted price represents a package price for the services offered and an itemization of individual component costs will not be provided. Please understand there will be no exceptions to our cancellation policies regardless of your situation. Should you need to cancel your travel plans, please notify us in



writing immediately. At the time we receive written notification of cancellation, the following charges apply:

Scheduled Rail Journeys by Private Train:

121 or more days prior to departure-----deposit due or paid in full of \$2,000, \$2,500 or \$5,500

65-120 days prior to departure-----50% of the land tour cost

64 days prior to departure 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 like *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.

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