ENTIRE TRAVEL GROUP

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ITALY & MORE

GOLDEN EAGLE DANUBE EXPRESS: BALKAN EXPLORER

(TOUR CODE: 14038)

STARTS AND ENDS	TRAVEL PERIODS	EXPERIENCE	TRAVEL STYLE
Venice to Istanbul	07 May 27 - 10 Oct 28	Luxury Rail	Rail Journeys

The iconic European Grand Tour journey between Venice and Istanbul visiting seven countries in twelve days by private train.

Highlights

- Discover Sarajevo’s poignant history on a guided tour of the city
- Enjoy a gondola ride through the iconic waterways of romantic Venice
- Explore the ethereal Postojna Cave network of limestone caverns and monuments
- Visit one of the world’s best preserved Roman amphitheatres in ancient Plovdiv
- Tour Istanbul’s magnificent Sultan Ahmet Mosque (the Blue Mosque)

This voyage of a lifetime transports you from the enchanting “City of Water” to the jewel of the Byzantium Empire. Evocative of the refinement and sumptuous elegance of a by-gone era, Golden Eagle trains capture the vintage charm of the golden era of travel. Begin your journey in Venice before meandering through the captivating Balkan Region. Experience exclusive excursions across this iconic route before arriving in the magical city of Istanbul.



INCLUSIONS

- Overnight stay at the Hilton Pucic hotel, Dubrovnic (or similar)
- Private ensuite accommodation on the Golden Eagle Danube Express train
- Quality pre and post tour accommodation in Venice and Istanbul
- Freshly prepared meals on board, using the finest local ingredients
- Authentic dining experiences in local restaurants
- Inclusive alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
- Arrival and departure transfers
- Expertly guided off-train excursions
- Cabin attendant service including evening turndown
- Experienced Tour Management team
- Services of a UK-registered Doctor and medical facilities on board
- All gratuities
- Luggage porterage throughout the journey

ITINERARY

Day 1 Venice

Upon arrival in Venice, you will be transferred to your carefully selected luxury hotel for a two-night stay. This evening, a welcome drinks reception and dinner will be hosted, allowing you to meet your fellow travellers and begin your journey in

style.

Dinner



VENICE, ITALY

Day 2

Venice

Venice is a truly captivating city of romance; its unrivalled beauty takes away the breath of first time visitors and regulars alike. Today offers Freedom of Choice, allowing you to tailor your experience of Venice.

You may choose to join a guided walking tour beginning at the iconic Rialto Bridge. Stroll through Venice's winding streets and across its many bridges, uncovering the city's hidden corners and everyday life. The walk is followed by a short gondola ride, before enjoying lunch at an authentic Venetian restaurant. After lunch, the tour continues to the magnificent St Mark's Square, the historic and cultural heart of the city.

Alternatively, embark on an excursion to the famous Venetian islands. Visit Murano for a traditional glassblowing demonstration and time to browse local workshops, before continuing to Burano, a charming group of small islands renowned for their brightly coloured houses and centuries-old lacemaking tradition. Enjoy a guided walk through the island and a visit to a celebrated lacemaker, before rejoining the group back in Venice for lunch.

This evening, there is an optional private visit to St Mark's Basilica, offering a rare and unforgettable opportunity to experience one of Venice's most extraordinary landmarks in a more intimate setting.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner


ST. MARK'S SQUARE

Day 3 Trieste & Postojna

This morning, guests will transfer by boat directly from the hotel to Santa Lucia station on the Grand Canal. At the station, the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*, awaits.

Mid-morning, the train will depart, threading its way out of Santa Lucia station onto the 3-mile causeway over the Venice Lagoon. After lunch onboard, there will be a brief stop in the Italian port city of Trieste for a short guided tour. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the expansive Piazza Unità d'Italia, one of Europe's largest sea-facing squares, and enjoy some leisure time, perhaps to savour an espresso in one of the city's celebrated historic coffee houses.

Later this evening, guests will have the chance to experience the awe-inspiring Postojna Caves. A journey deep underground aboard a cave train leads to a remarkable network of vast chambers, dramatic stalactite and stalagmite formations, and the mysterious subterranean wildlife that thrives within this extraordinary natural wonder.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner


POSTOJNA CAVES

Day 4 Pula & Rijeka

The morning begins with a guided tour of Pula, where guests will explore the historic centre and the impressive Roman Arena, where a spectacular gladiator performance brings the city's ancient past vividly to life.

The journey continues inland to the Kumparička Estate for a visit and leisurely lunch, featuring a tasting of authentic Istrian flavours in a beautiful rural setting.

In the afternoon, travellers will head to Rijeka for a guided walk through the city centre, including time spent along the lively Korzo promenade, before rejoining the train to continue the journey.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



PULAARENA

Day 5

Sarajevo

An early morning arrival into the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, an intriguing blend of Eastern and Western culture; the city features mosques and minarets, an ancient bazaar, and an atmospheric old Turkish quarter. Guests will discover the city's poignant history through a truly absorbing tour detailing the Balkan War. Sarajevo endured the longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern warfare.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, the afternoon offers two carefully selected options. One option is to ascend by cable car to Mount Trebević, once a venue for the 1984 Olympics, where breathtaking panoramic views unfold across the city and surrounding mountains. Alternatively, guests may visit the Tunnel of Hope, a profoundly moving site that tells the story of Sarajevo's endurance and spirit during the siege of the 1990s, offering a powerful and reflective counterpoint to the city's beauty above ground.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



SARAJEVO

Day 6

Mostar

The journey continues to the historic city of Mostar, a true crossroads of civilisations, cultures, and faiths. Once one of the most important cities of the Ottoman Empire, Mostar is renowned for its striking stone arch bridge, gracefully spanning the Neretva River and symbolically linking the Christian and Muslim quarters of the town. Destroyed during the conflict of the 1990s, the bridge was meticulously rebuilt and reopened in the summer of 2004, standing today as a powerful emblem of reconciliation and continuity.

Guests will enjoy a guided walking tour through the old town, including a visit to a traditional Turkish House and a local mosque, offering insight into Ottoman life and architecture. They will also wander through the narrow bazaar streets, rich with character and colour, where traditional handicrafts and local souvenirs may be found.

Lunch will be enjoyed at a restaurant overlooking the iconic bridge, before following the emerald waters of the Neretva River to the ancient Ottoman fortified town of Počitelj, dramatically set against the hillside and steeped in history.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner


MOSTAR

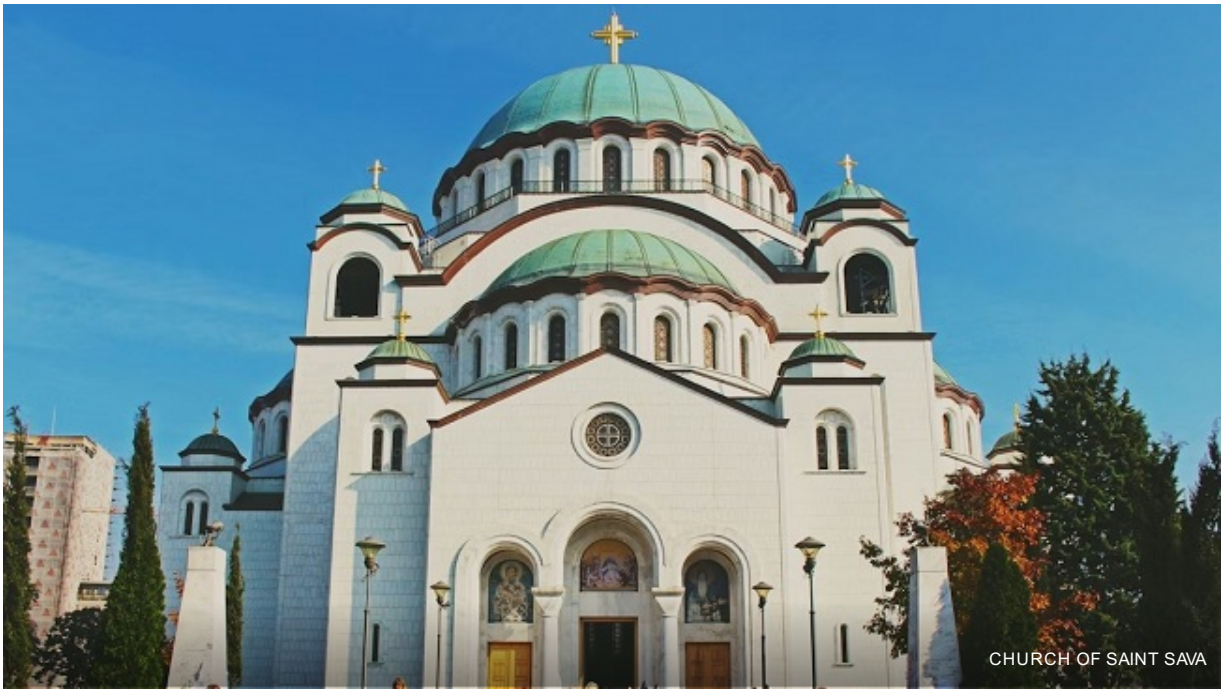
Day 7 Belgrade

Nestled at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers, Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, is one of the oldest and most fascinating cities in Europe. With its turbulent past, it has become a city of contrasts—from Communist-era buildings to Orthodox churches, from old Celtic fortresses to the ruins left by the Balkan wars.

At this point, guests will disembark the train for an *overnight stay at the historic Hotel Bristol*, an elegant landmark reflecting the city's grand past. The day begins with a guided tour of the Old Town and the commanding Kalemegdan Fortress, where sweeping panoramic views unfold at the dramatic confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers.

Following the tour, guests will enjoy a curated wine tasting featuring local Serbian wines, accompanied by regional snacks that showcase the country's emerging wine culture. In the afternoon, a visit to the magnificent Church of Saint Sava, one of the largest Orthodox churches in the world, awaits. This grand structure is renowned for its vast scale, luminous interiors, and spiritual significance.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



CHURCH OF SAINT SAVA

Day 8 Belgrade

Today's exploration focuses on Tito's Belgrade, providing insight into the life and legacy of one of the most influential figures in Yugoslav history. Guests will visit Tito's museum complex, including his former residence and the museum itself, where they will be welcomed with the traditional Serbian offering of bread and salt.

The visit will be complemented by a lively Serbian folk dance performance, bringing local culture and tradition vividly to life and offering a memorable perspective on Belgrade's 20th-century heritage.

Following the visit, guests will rejoin the train and continue southeast towards Sofia, crossing the scenic landscapes of Serbia as the journey progresses into Bulgaria.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



BELGRADE

Day **9**

Sofia & Plovdiv

The day's exploration begins in Sofia, Bulgaria's vibrant capital, set at the foot of Mount Vitosha. Originally settled by the Thracian tribe of the Serdi, the city is a fascinating blend of ancient and modern influences. On the morning tour, guests will see sections of the Roman city walls, admire the early Christian Church of St George, marvel at the golden-domed Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, and visit the historic Turkish Bashi Mosque.

After the morning tour, guests may choose to rejoin the train for lunch as the journey continues to Plovdiv, or take a short drive to a local winery for a light lunch accompanied by wine tasting and a lively Bulgarian folk performance, before travelling onwards by bus to Plovdiv.

Upon arrival in Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second-largest city, known as 'The City of Seven Hills,' guests will discover one of Europe's oldest continuously inhabited settlements, home to over 200 known archaeological sites. In the early evening, a guided tour of the Roman Forum and Amphitheatre will be provided, followed by a walk through the charming Old Town with its cobbled streets, medieval walls, and Ottoman-era baths, soaking in the city's layered history and timeless charm.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



SOFIA & PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

Day 10 Istanbul

The journey arrives in Istanbul—the legendary city that straddles two continents—where luggage will be transferred directly to the luxurious five-star Four Seasons Hotel, perfectly positioned to enjoy the city's vibrant energy and historic grandeur. As the final stop on the journey, Istanbul offers a captivating finale, where East meets West and ancient heritage blends effortlessly with contemporary life.

The day begins with a gentle walk through the historic streets, absorbing the sounds, colours, and rhythm of the city, before entering the atmospheric Spice Market. Guests will enjoy a guided visit through this centuries-old bazaar, taking in the rich aromas and vivid displays of spices and delicacies, whetting the appetite for a traditional Turkish lunch in a historic building dating back to 1772.

After lunch, a scenic cruise along the legendary Bosphorus will be offered, where Istanbul's dramatic skyline unfolds in a sweeping panorama of domes, minarets, and waterfront palaces, offering a unique perspective on the meeting point of Europe and Asia.

Later, guests will check in at the hotel and have time at leisure to explore the ancient heart of the city, perhaps visiting the nearby Blue Mosque or strolling through the surrounding historic streets.

This evening, a visit to one of Istanbul's ancient cisterns awaits. Guests will explore the Basilica Cistern, the most famous of these remarkable underground structures, before enjoying dinner, concluding the day with a truly memorable and evocative experience.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



BASILICA CISTERN

Day 11 Istanbul

The morning begins with Freedom of Choice options, allowing guests to tailor their final explorations of Istanbul.

One option is to visit the opulent Topkapi Palace, former residence of the Ottoman sultans, exploring its magnificent courtyards, harem, and treasury, each revealing centuries of imperial history. Alternatively, guests may enjoy a guided tour of the Grand Bazaar, including the exhilarating opportunity to follow in James Bond's footsteps with a walk along the rooftop of this vast and historic marketplace.

After lunch, a visit to one of the city's most iconic landmarks, the awe-inspiring Hagia Sophia, is included. Built in the 6th century under Emperor Justinian, it was once among the grandest basilicas of the Christian world. Following the Ottoman conquest, it was transformed into a mosque, and today it stands as one of the most magnificent Grand Mosques in the world —a powerful and enduring symbol of Istanbul's layered history and architectural brilliance.

This evening, the journey will conclude with a Farewell Dinner at the hotel, an elegant and intimate celebration of the remarkable experiences shared across Europe and the Balkans, offering a fitting finale to an unforgettable adventure.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner


HAGIA SOPHIA

Day 12 Istanbul

Following breakfast, guests will be transferred to the airport for their onward journey. For those wishing to linger a little longer, there is the option to extend the stay in Istanbul, allowing further immersion in the city's rich history, vibrant culture, and timeless charm.

Breakfast

ACCOMMODATION

Golden Eagle Danube Express

UPGRADE AVAILABLE

LIFE ABOARD THE GOLDEN EAGLE DANUBE EXPRESS

The Golden Eagle Danube Express is your luxurious hotel-on-wheels. Unpack just the once and settle into your well-appointed and comfortable cabin as you begin this voyage of a lifetime. Your cabin attendant will be on hand to look after all your needs.

In addition to our luxury sleeping cabins, we offer a first class Bar Lounge Car and Restaurant Cars.

DELUXE CABIN

Travel in some of the finest rail accommodation available in Europe.

Private bathrooms feature a shower with constant hot water, washbasin and toilet. There is a heated towel rail, shaver socket and hairdryer. A range of toiletries and a dressing gown are provided. Cabins have individually controlled air-conditioning, lighting with dimmer switches, individual reading lights, power sockets and a safe.

Co-ordinated fabrics complement wood-panelled walls and brass fittings. Two comfortable armchairs provide daytime seating, and a free-standing chair adds flexibility. Cupboards and a full-length wardrobe provide ample storage 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 you early morning tea or coffee.

Room Upgrades

Superior Deluxe Cabin

Superior Deluxe cabins, with private en-suite facilities, offer the ultimate in European rail accommodation in terms of space, facilities, and comfort.

With 12 cabins per departure, each cabin offers comfortable daytime seating with a full-length sofa and two additional chairs. The large cabin also benefits from two full-size picture windows, one of which is openable to add to the bright and airy feel of the interior.

Each evening the cabin is transformed into a luxurious bedroom with a UK-standard King Size bed. All cabins have, as standard, a large double wardrobe with excellent storage space, individually controlled air-conditioning, lighting with dimmer switches, individual reading lights, in cabin Wi-Fi and USB ports, power sockets and a safe.



Prices are dynamic based on travel dates. Please proceed to Book Now or Contact Us for details.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

FROM price reflects the lowest available price within the advertised travel period (e.g. April to October). Pricing varies depending on travel dates, availability and demand, and may not be available on all departures. Higher pricing applies during peak and shoulder periods. Final pricing is confirmed at the time of enquiry or booking. Please refer to **Pricing & Price Conditions** for full details, including inclusions, exclusions and other conditions.

2027 Departure dates:

- 07 May - 18 May, 2027
- 10 Sep - 21 Sep, 2027
- 19 Oct - 30 Oct, 2027

2028 Departure dates:

- 12 May - 23 May, 2028
- 22 Sep - 03 Oct, 2028
- 10 Oct - 21 Oct, 2028