



Eastern Europe

Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania & Bulgaria
17 days

Tour Description

Discover the hidden gems of Eastern Europe on this in-depth tour of the highlights of the former Iron Curtain countries. Learn the history of this region from life in medieval and Gothic castles to the Warsaw Uprising through the Cold War. Stroll the Old Town heritage areas of Eastern Europe's main cities and visit serene parks. Eat at local traditional restaurants and bakeries, some of which have been in business for over 100 years.

Highlights

- ❖ **Walking tour of Prague including a visit to Prague Castle**
- ❖ **Opera or Concert performance at Prague's State Opera House**
- ❖ **Guided tour of Warsaw Uprising Museum and John Paul II Collection**
- ❖ **Chopin Concert at Łazienki Park**
- ❖ **Tour of the Wielicka Salt Mine**
- ❖ **Oil lamp tour of the Prague labyrinths**
- ❖ **Tour of the Romanian Peasant Museum and the Romanian Parliament**
- ❖ **Visit Bulgaria's Boyana Church a UNESCO Heritage site**

Sample Tour Itinerary

Prague, Czech Republic – 3 nights

Day 1: Arrive Prague

Arrive in Prague, Czech Republic. Meet your local guide after clearing customs. Embark on a panoramic tour by coach ending at the Prague Castle where you will enjoy a guided 2-hour walking tour. Tour the Old Royal Palace, permanent exhibition "The Story of Prague Castle", St. George's Basilica, Convent of St. George – National Gallery, Golden Lane with Daliborka Tower and the Prague Castle Picture Gallery. After the tour at Prague Castle you will go to the Old Town Square. There will be time for lunch on your own and exploring. You will be transferred to your hotel. This evening your guide will take you on a historic restaurant via local transportation. After dinner return to the hotel with your guide, or stay in Old Town and explore Prague's famous jazz and nightclubs on your own.

Day 2:

Meet your Guide & Coach driver in the lobby. Depart to nearby Karlstejn Castle. You'll enjoy a guided tour and entrance to Karlstejn Castle, and an included Czech lunch at a local restaurant. Return to the hotel with the balance of your afternoon free. Tonight enjoy dinner on your own before meeting back in the lobby. Depart via local transportation to the State Opera House, or Concert Venue.



Day 3:

Today is a free day on your own in Prague. We have a late check-out of the hotel, so you might want to enjoy a cruise on the Vltava River, shop, or just relax at a local cafe. Meet your guide & coach driver in the lobby and transfer to the rail station. Bid your local Prague guide farewell. Depart on overnight train to Warsaw, Poland. 1st Class tickets in a 2 berth sleeping compartment.

Warsaw, Poland – 2 nights

Day 4:

Arrive in Warsaw, Poland. Meet your local guide upon disembarkation at the rail station. Transfer into Old Town via private coach where we'll start with a visit to a local cafe for breakfast. After breakfast, we will take a guided tour of the Warsaw Uprising Museum. Here you will learn not only the military history of a 63-day battle, but also about the life of civilians in a city under siege. Next, we'll take a guided tour of the Museum of John Paul II Collection. Lunch and the afternoon will be on your own in the Historic Old Town. This evening your guide will take you to a traditional Polish dinner via local transportation

Day 5:

Meet your guide & coach driver in the lobby for a tour of the highlights of Warsaw, including the Royal Castle. The Royal Way links the king's residences of the Royal Castle, the Ujazdowski Castle, the Łazienki Palace and the Palace in Wilanow. This road is ten kilometers long. The Royal Way begins at Castle Square with Krakowskie Przedmieście Street - with splendid buildings, palaces, churches and hotels. There we can find the campuses of two institutions of higher education: Warsaw University and the Academy of Fine Arts. The Radziwiłł Palace on the Krakowskie Przedmieście is now the seat of the President of the Republic of Poland. Next visit the most exclusive shopping area in Warsaw, followed by Trzech Krzyży Square with St. Alexander's Church in the middle, Ujazdowskie Avenue full of parks and gardens, Belwederska Street and ending with Wilanowska Avenue with Wilanow Palace. Lunch will be on your own and afterwards you will head to the Łazienki Park. This romantic, landscaped park includes the Palace on the Water, together with various other palaces, pavilions, an amphitheater and two orangeries. Free Chopin Concert at Łazienki Park, after the concert return to the Hotel. Balance of the evening is free on your own.

Krakow, Poland – 2 nights

Day 6:

This morning is free for you to explore Warsaw before meeting your coach driver in the lobby for transfer to the rail station where you'll depart for Krakow, Poland. 1st Class Rail tickets from Warsaw to Krakow. Once you have arrived in Krakow, you'll meet your local guide at the rail station and transfer to your hotel. There'll be time to unpack and freshen up before meeting back in the lobby where your guide will take you by local transport to dinner and then to explore Krakow's nightlife.

Day 7:

Meet your guide & coach driver in the lobby for a panoramic tour of Krakow to see: St. Mary's Church, Rynek Główny Square, Cloth Hall, Barbican fortress, Florian Gate, the Cathedral with Sigismund's Bell and the Royal Route. Depart on a tour to Auschwitz. There will be time for lunch on your own and exploring in a nearby town before departing for Wieliczka for a tour of the Wieliczka Salt. Lying on nine levels, concealed under the town, the mine reaches down to the depth of 327 meters. Subterranean Wieliczka consists of nearly 186 miles of corridors and almost 3,000 chambers. Magnificent chapels, captivating underground lakes, original tools and equipment, traces of mining works allows us to understand the human struggle against the elements, their work, their passion and their beliefs. The Wieliczka miners have left behind many salt carvings and murals. After sightseeing, explore the souvenir shops, a restaurant, and a post office. Dinner tonight at a local restaurant.



Banska Bystrica, Slovakia – 1 night

Day 8:

Meet your coach driver in the lobby for the drive to Banska Bystrica, Slovakia. The oldest reference to the town is from the 13th century. The dominant building of the town is the municipal castle with part of the fortification and barbican. Part of it is the originally Roman parish Church of the Virgin Mary from the 13th century, reconstructed in Gothic style, with the precious altar of St. Barbara from 1509, the work of Master Pavol of Levoča. The second Gothic Church of the Crucifixion from the 15th century is situated nearby. The popular and slightly leaning Clock Tower from 1552 and the Church of St. Francis Xavier from 1715, which is a precious duplicate of a church in Rome, are situated in the upper part of the square. Upon arrival meet your local guide who will show you the best places for lunch (at own expense). After lunch enjoy a walking tour of Banska Bystrica with your guide. Balance of the day is free on your own.

Budapest, Hungary – 3 nights

Day 9:

Meet your coach driver in the lobby for the drive to Budapest, Hungary. Upon arrival meet your local guide who will take you to a local restaurant for some traditional Hungarian cuisine. After lunch, spend some time walking and shopping with your guide, getting oriented to the neighborhood. Meet back in the lobby and travel with your guide to the "Castle Caves" where you will have an evening tour with oil lamps through the Prehistorical Labyrinth, the Historical Labyrinth, the Labyrinth of Another-World and the Labyrinth Gallery.

Day 10:

Meet your guide & coach driver in the lobby for a tour of Budapest. Budapest is truly one of the world's most attractive cities, rich in both natural and architectural beauty. Highlights of the Hungarian capital are Hero's square, city park, Vajdahunyad castle, Opera house, Parliament, Castle District, Fisherman's bastion, Matthias church, Citadel and more. It is no wonder that the Castle District, the River Danube embankments and the whole of Andrassy have been officially recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The tour starts at the famous Ecseri Flea market and continues to the Castle District. Stop in the early afternoon at the Ruszwurm Café, its history dates back to 1824, for coffee and a pasty (on your own). The coffee shop is named for the famous pasty of Romania and the beaters depict how the cream is all done by hand. After the coffee break continue to the Hungarian National Museum for a guided tour. Return to the hotel with time to freshen up and have an early dinner on your own. Meet your guide in the lobby and depart via public transportation to the State Opera House where you will see an opera or ballet. After the show, you will return to the hotel.

Day 11:

Spend the morning sleeping in, or exploring. Be checked-out and ready to depart with your guide for brunch at the famous Gundel Restaurant in business since 1879 and famous for their pancakes. After brunch depart with your local guide to the town of Szentendre, a small town near Budapest, an "artist's town" full of museums and galleries. Visit the baroque style downtown and take time for some last minute shopping. Meet up with your coach and transfer to the rail station. Depart on overnight train to Bucharest, Romania. 1st Class tickets in a 2 berth sleeping compartment.



Bucharest, Romania – 2 nights

Day 12:

Arrive into Bucharest, Romania where you'll meet your local guide at the rail station. You'll see the highlights of Bucharest via private coach. Known for its wide, tree-lined boulevards, glorious Belle Epoque buildings and a reputation for the high life, Romania's capital was once known as the "Little Paris." Remodeled, in the late 19th century, by French and French-trained architects Bucharest even features a Triumphal Arch on the elegant Soseaua Kiseleff, a boulevard longer than Paris' famed Champs-Élysées. Visit the Romanian Peasant museum where you will gain valuable insight to Romania's past and present. After lunch on your own, tour the Palace of the Romanian Parliament, the second largest administrative building in the world by surface area of its floors, just behind the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Return to your hotel to freshen up and then meet back in the lobby where your guide will take you to dinner via local transport in the "must see" Restaurant in Bucharest, Casa Doina, a Bucharest landmark in a spectacular 18th century authentic Romanian villa, fully renovated and perfectly restored.

Day 13:

Today enjoy a full day to explore Bucharest on your own. You might want to visit the National Gallery of Art, the Village Museum of Folk Art, or one of many other attractions – Shop, explore, or just relax at your hotel.

Pleven, Bulgaria – 1 night

Day 14:

Check-out and meet your coach driver in the lobby for the drive to Pleven, Bulgaria via Rousse. Upon arrival in Rousse meet your local guide who will take you on a walking tour. Rousse is particularly known for its Baroque and Rococo architecture. Enjoy time for shopping and lunch on your own. Meet back at your coach and continue on to Pleven. After time to freshen up, meet your guide in the lobby for an evening walking tour of Pleven stopping in a local bar for a pre-dinner cocktail. Your coach driver will meet you to take you to Kailuka Park. Dinner is in the Peshtera (Cave) Restaurant for a 3-course meal with wine. With music and a unique setting, the Peshtera Restaurant is popular with locals and visitors alike!

Sofia, Bulgaria – 2 nights

Day 15:

Depart to Sofia, Bulgaria. Meet your local guide upon arrival for a tour of the city. Sofia has the buzz of a capital city and the convenience of a compact center where all the main sights can be visited on foot. Our coach and walking tour will include: the Parliament Building, Alexander Nevski Memorial Church, St. Sophia Church and the grave of Ivan Vazov, National Palace of Culture, National Theatre, Rotunda of St. George and the Church of Saint Nedelya. You will have time for lunch on your own before visiting the inside of the Alexander Nevski Memorial Church. The balance of the day is free on your own.

Day 16:

Today is a morning trip to the UNESCO site of the Boyana church consisting of three buildings. The Eastern Church was built in the 10th century, and then enlarged at the beginning of the 13th century. The frescoes of the second church, painted in 1259, make it one of the most important collections of medieval paintings. The ensemble is completed by a third church, built at the beginning of the 19th century. This site is one of the most complete and perfectly preserved monuments of east European medieval art.



Return to Sofia with the afternoon free on your own. In the evening you will take local transportation to dinner and evening performance. Farewell Dinner is at a local restaurant near the Opera with an evening performance of an Opera, or Ballet.
Return to the hotel on your own after the performance.

Day 17:

This morning we transfer to Sofia, Bulgaria international airport with ample time to check your luggage and board your flight back to the USA.

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations: Prague 3 nights, Warsaw 2 nights, Krakow 2 nights, Banska Bystrica 1 night, Budapest 3 nights, Bucharest 2 nights, Plevna 1 night, Sofia 2 nights
- Meals: Continental breakfast daily, lunch and dinner as noted in itinerary
- Ground transportation via air conditioned luxury coach
- English speaking assistants and guides
- Admission tickets as outlined in the itinerary