

Tauck Black Sea to Budapest

By

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Europe River Cruise Expert

Map from Tauck River Cruises



Tauck Value Includes:

- All gratuities to ship staff, drivers, local guides, Tauck Directors and Tauck Cruise Director
- Tauck's private shore excursions and distinctive inclusions valued at \$2,533
- Two nights at a hotel in Budapest and two nights in Bucharest at a hotel with an ideal location next to the Parliament Palace
- Choices of bicycle excursions in Budapest & Belgrade
- Dinner at the massive Parliament building (the "People's Palace") in Bucharest
- Visit with a Croatian family in their private home in Vukovar
- A visit to the city of Pécs in Hungary, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Tauck Value Includes:

- Passage through the Iron Gate on the Danube River
- Choice of Romanian excursions exploring the story of Vlad Tepes, 15th-century inspiration for Bram Stoker's "Dracula"
- In Romania's capital, Bucharest, you have a choice of visits to either the National Museum of Art of Romania or the Village Museum, an open-air ethnographic museum located in King Michael I Park, showcasing traditional Romanian village life
- Unlimited complimentary beverages aboard ship include regional wine, beer and premium spirits in addition to specialty coffee, water and soft drinks
- Airport and trains station transfers upon arrival and departure as noted
- 30 meals; service charges, taxes, portorage, and applicable fuel surcharge

Experience with Tauck

- TAUCK EXCLUSIVE – Enjoy a Tauck Exclusive dinner at the Royal White Palace of the Serbian Royal Family, built in the 1930s and set within the same complex as the Royal Palace in Dedinje, home to HRH Crown Prince Alexander II of Serbia and his family

Day 1 Begin your Danube Cruise in Bucharest

- **Tour begins: 6:00 PM, JW Marriott Bucharest Grand Hotel.**
- A transfer is included from Bucharest Henri Coanda International Airport to the JW Marriott Bucharest Grand Hotel in the heart of the city, ideally located adjacent to Bucharest's monumental Palace of Parliament.
- This is the site of tonight's Tauck Exclusive, after-hours gala welcome reception and dinner, where you'll meet your fellow travelers and Tauck Directors to kick off this extraordinary lower Danube cruise in true Tauck Style.

Day 2 Transylvania and Bran Castle – or Sinaia and Peles Castle – or Targoviste

- A choice of sightseeing today echoes the legacy of 15th-century Romanian prince Vlad Tepes (a.k.a. "Vlad the Impaler"), thought to be the historical model for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.
- You may choose to take a full-day excursion to Transylvania's 14th-century Bran Castle, which Tepes once used as a fortress during his military campaigns; the excursion includes a visit to the castle and free time in Bran.
- Alternatively, you can travel on a full-day excursion into the Carpathian Mountains to the mountain resort town of Sinaia for a visit to Peles Castle.
- Or drive to Targoviste to visit the formal royal court of Vlad the Tepes a.k.a. Dracula, and the military barracks museum where the trial and execution of Romania's Communist leader, Ceausescu, took place.
- Return to Bucharest for free time and dinner as you please.

Braun Castle



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Braun Castle



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Outside Grounds Peles Castle



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Peles Castle outside



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Entrance Stairway Peles Castle



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Arms Room Peles Castle



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Dining Room Peles Castle



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Peles Castle



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Day 3 Discovering More of Bucharest

- Discover more of Romania's capital on a morning sightseeing tour with our local guides, seeing such sights as Revolution Square and the Triumphal Arch, and ending in Bucharest's Old Town.
- Afterwards, a choice of museums is yours. One option is a visit to the National Museum of Art of Romania and the other is a visit to the Village Museum, an open-air ethnographic museum located in the King Michael I Park and showcases traditional Romanian village life.
- The rest of the day and evening are yours to spend pursuing what interests you most in this fascinating city.

Vlad Tepes in the Lipsicani district—Dracula! Bucharest, Romania



Ruins of the Old Courtyard, Lipscani district Bucharest



National Museum of Art Bucharest, Romania

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Open Air Museum—Rustic homes reassembled, Bucharest, Romania



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Open Air Museum



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Open Air Museum



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Open Air Museum



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Day 4 The Black Sea Coast Before Boarding

- Before embarking your riverboat today, drive to Romania's popular Black Sea coast – first to the popular resort town of Mamaia for lunch and some "beach time," then on to the port city of Constanta.
- Here, in what was originally the ancient Greek colony of Tomis, you'll view numerous Greek and Roman antiquities, an Art-Nouveau casino, and a monument to the Roman poet Ovid, who spent years in exile here,
- then board your riverboat in Constanta to launch your unforgettable Danube cruise.
- Meet the captain and crew at a welcome reception, followed by dinner onboard at your leisure.

Day 5 Bulgarian Art in Ruse or Ivanovo

- Your cruise continues in Bulgaria; largely off limits during four centuries of Ottoman rule and decades behind the Iron Curtain, the country's rich natural beauty and history is yours to discover today.
- Disembark in Ruse – often referred to as "Little Vienna" for its Art-Nouveau homes, Austro-Hungarian architecture and lively cafés – for a choice of sightseeing today.
- You may join us for a guided walking tour of Ruse, or a lovely hike to the celebrated Rock Churches in the village of Ivanovo, whose stony chambers carved into steep, cliffside caves reveal stunning medieval frescoes inside; a visit is richly rewarding.
- Return to the riverboat for dinner this evening.

Day 6 Cruising and an Afternoon in Bulgaria

- There's something special about just "kicking back" during a leisurely morning cruising the Danube, enjoying picture-perfect views of the passing landscapes.
- Onboard activities throughout your cruise, such as special lectures and presentations, cooking demonstrations or music and dance performances, are an important part of the Tauck river cruising experience.
- Today, after the riverboat arrives in Vidin, Bulgaria, join us for a walking tour of Vidin's cobblestone streets, including a visit to Baba Vida fortress.
- Back aboard the riverboat this evening, enjoy musical entertainment by a local classical ensemble, followed by the Chef's Signature Dinner in the Compass Rose.

Baba Vida Castle, Vidin, Bulgaria



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Baba Vida Castle, Vidin Bulgaria



More of Baba Vida Castle

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One of the keep towers of Baba Vida Castle



Statue of Baba Vida outside the castle



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Play about the history of the Baba Vida Castle



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Day 7 King Decebalus & the Iron Gate

- Spend today aboard your riverboat as you sail along the Serbian / Romanian border, enjoying great views of the Transylvanian Alps.
- As you cruise, keep an eye out for a kingly face carved into the Danube's rocky bank on the Romanian side; it's a monument to the 2nd-century Dacian King Decebalus, who defended his kingdom from the invading Romans – and it's the tallest rock sculpture in Europe.
- Glide through Romania's Kazan Narrows and the Iron Gate of the Danube, a spectacular two-mile-long series of gorges between the Carpathian and Balkan Mountains, en route to Serbia;
- the ship arrives in Belgrade overnight.

Stunning River Scenes The Iron Gates



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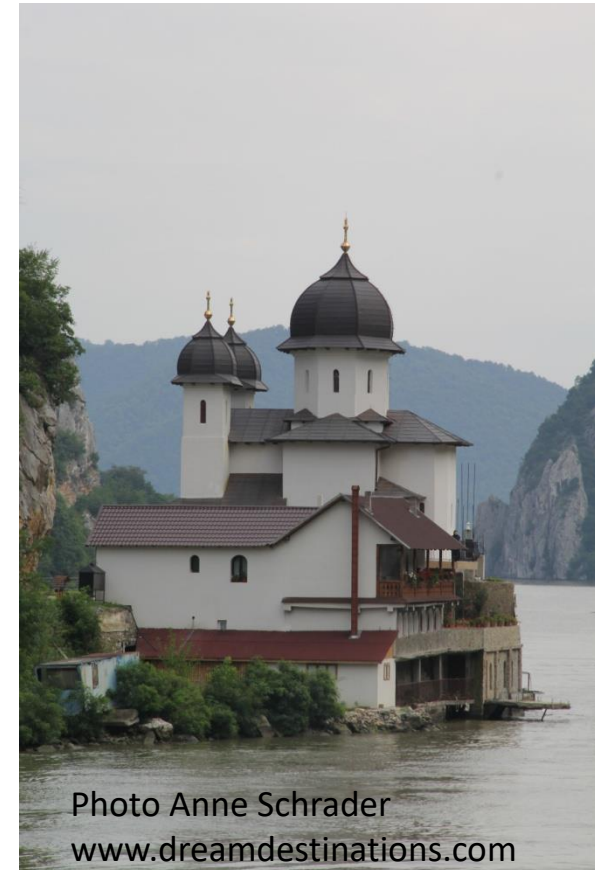


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Day 8 Belgrade & a Private Palace Evening

- Wake up today in Belgrade, Serbia's eclectic, cosmopolitan capital at the juncture of the Danube and Sava rivers.
- You can choose to spend the morning touring the "New Belgrade" section of the city by bicycle with a local guide (you'll need to be comfortable riding a bicycle in a city environment);
- or join our local guides for a city tour that includes visits to Tito's Memorial and the formidable Kalemegdan Fortress, and views of busy Slavija Square (now one of the city's major squares, but once a large pool where residents hunted wild ducks!), Parliament, Republic Square and City Hall.
- After lunch onboard, you have the afternoon free to spend as you please.
- Following onboard entertainment by Serbian performers during cocktail hour, you'll return to shore for this evening's sparkling Tauck Exclusive – dinner at the Royal White Palace of the Serbian Royal Family in Belgrade, built in the 1930s for members of the Yugoslavian royal family and set within the same complex as the Royal Palace of Dedinje, today home to HRH Crown Prince Alexander II of Serbia and his family.

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Belgrade, Serbia

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St, Sava
Cathedral
Belgrade,
Serbia

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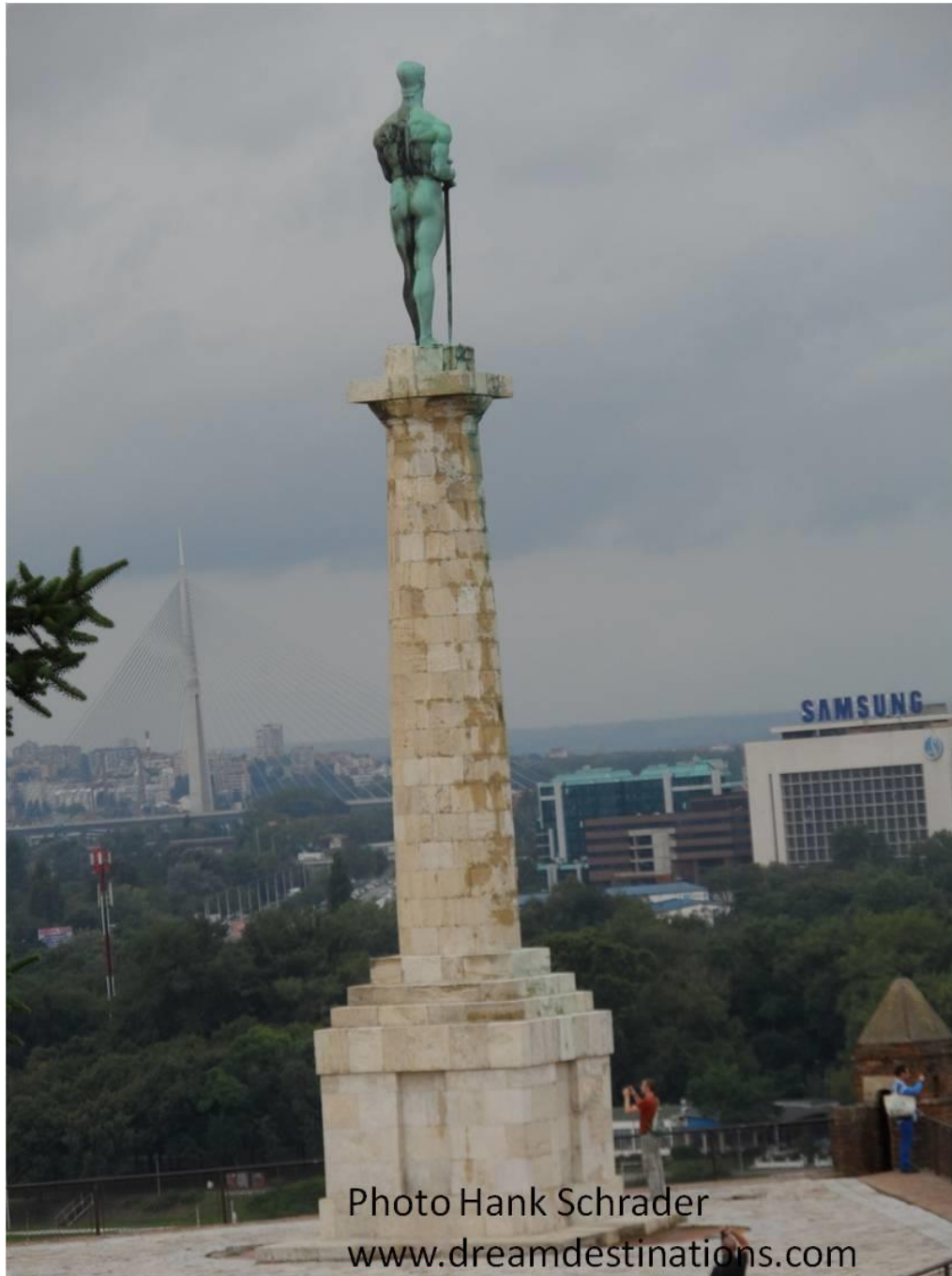
St. Sava Statue Belgrade, Serbia

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Belgrade, Serbia



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Monument to
the Victor, the
protector of
Belgrade, Serbia

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Kalemegdan Fortress Belgrade, Serbia



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Kalemegdan Fortress, Belgrade Serbia

Day 9 Understanding Croatia's History in Vukovar

- Your riverboat crosses the border from Serbia to Croatia and arrives in historic Vukovar today.
- Preceded by an onboard lecture on Croatia's turbulent history by a local expert, your tour of this venerable 10th-century city – once showcasing opulent 18th-century Baroque mansions, but now a mix of old and new – poignantly symbolizes the effects of the 1990s war.
- Visit with a local family who have recently returned to resume their lives in the city after the conflict, as they share homemade refreshments with you in their private home.
- You'll have some time at leisure in Vukovar before the riverboat continues on to Hungary tonight.

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Memorial statue in the Vukovar Cemetery. The statue has a symbolic flame at its center, and the stones present the image of the Christian cross facing outward in all directions.



Cross on the Danube—a tribute to all who gave their lives for a free and independent Croatia



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Eltz Manor Museum

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Catholic Church St. Roch, Vukovar



Day 10 Antiquities and more in Hungary

- Arrive in Mohacs, Hungary, this morning for an excursion to Pécs and a tour of its 11th-century cathedral.
- Here you'll also explore the fascinating Christian Necropolis, a complex dating back to the 4th century that includes underground burial chambers and chapels adorned with early Christian art and frescoes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- In the 19th century, Pécs was famous worldwide for the exquisite Zsolnay porcelain manufactured here, and your visit includes a stop at the Zsolnay Museum for a look at its stunning examples of Art Nouveau stoneware, tiles and pottery.
- Visit a winery in Villány for lunch (this region is renowned for its red wines) then return to Mohacs.
- Tonight, attend the ship's farewell cocktail reception and dinner as your Danube cruise draws to a close.

The Barbican a gate tower of the old castle, Pecs, Hungary

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Some of the remaining city walls in Pecs



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Early Christian Cemetery, Pecs

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Cella Septichora Visitors Center



Burial Chamber Mosaics

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Another view of the Burial Chamber Mosaic



Pecs Country House

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Szechenyi Square in the Background

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Zsolnay Fountain Pecs, Hungary



Close up of the fountain



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Pecs Cathedral

Photo Hank Schrader
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Fresco inside Pecs Cathedral



Trinity Statue

In the background,
Pasha Kasim Mosque

Photo Hank Schrader

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Day 11 Disembark & Discover Budapest

- Bid your Danube cruise – along with your captain and crew – farewell as you disembark the riverboat in Budapest.
- Your exploration of the Hungarian capital, once the independent cities of Buda and Pest, begins in Pest with a visit to St. Stephen's Basilica, the city's neo-Renaissance cathedral, and continues with views of Heroes' Square, bounded by some of the finest architectural works in Hungary, and such Budapest treasures as City Park and tree-lined Andrassy Avenue.
- When possible, visit the Parliament building, a neo-Gothic architectural masterpiece.
- The rest of the day and evening is at your leisure in Budapest.

St. Stephen's Basilica



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Day 12 Budapest Sights & a Special Farewell

- Today, you can choose to spend the morning touring Budapest by bicycle with a local guide (you'll need to be comfortable riding a bicycle in a city environment).
- Or you can do some Buda sightseeing in Castle Hill, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where a guided walking tour introduces architectural landmarks such as well-known Fisherman's Bastion.
- Revisit Budapest's World War II and Cold War days at the Sziklakórház ("Hospital in the Rock"), a re-creation of underground military medical and facilities in a former secret bunker and hospital hidden below Buda Castle.
- After time to explore this fascinating city as you please (or, if you wish, visit Dohany Synagogue with a Tauck Director),
- we invite you to join us at this evening's farewell reception and dinner at the Festetics Palace in Budapest.

Chain Bridge with Buda Castle in the Background Budapest, Hungary

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Buda Castle

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Fisherman's Bastion

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Gothic Matthias Church



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Gothic Matthias Church

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Day 13 Homeward Bound

- **Tour ends: Budapest, Hungary.**
- Fly home anytime; a transfer is included from The Ritz-Carlton Budapest to Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport and Budapest-Keleti Station.
- Allow 3 hours for departure flight check-in.

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