

CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS TRAVEL PLANNERS

Share the Journey



9 EASTERN
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
YOU HAVE TO VISIT

FOUNDER'S LETTER

Howdy! Aloha! Ohayōgozaimasu!

Thank you so much for requesting my free guide to river cruising Eastern Europe. I put this itinerary together because everyone wants inspiration for that next big vacation, right? You want to experience something life-changing! Stunning landscapes and historical sites, decadent cuisine and unforgettable connections can be yours.

This guide is for you if you long to step outside your daily routines and dive deep into what truly fuels you – breathtaking experiences and extraordinary destinations, while connecting with the people you share them with. Let's get these destinations crossed off your bucket list!

Share the Journey!

Erin

Erin Smith

Founder, Cultivating Connections Travel Planners



Cultivating Connections' 9 Eastern European Countries You Have to Visit

Have you longed to follow in the footsteps of royalty, crusaders and conquerors?

I invite you to imagine the path down the Danube River, where you can experience a journey through eight of the top European destinations.

Some highlights of this magnificent itinerary include The Iron Gates, the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo, and Bran Castle, home of the legendary Vlad the Impaler.

Immerse yourself in these fascinating capitals and smaller towns full of vibrant folktales. Delight in all the wonders of the Danube.



COUNTRY #1

Prague, Czech Republic



ARRIVAL AND HOTEL CHECK-IN

Have you ever wanted to experience the Golden City of a Hundred Spires, or attend a Czech beer tasting? Then you NEED to see Prague.

THE CITY

After the 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989, Prague became an international metropolis with all the usual trappings, but it has also managed to successfully retain its unspoiled local character. The Czech capital is small and compact, with hospody (beer-houses) that offer the world's best beers stationed on every street corner. The most important areas are the central districts of the city: Staré Město (Old Town), Josefov, Nové Město (New Town), and Malá Strana (Lesser Town). These are best explored on foot. In recent years, the district of Vinohrady (Vineyards) has established itself as the district favoured by Pražani (the Prague inhabitants), and the restaurants and cafes lie closely packed.

When you visit Prague, it is worth remembering that not only does the city boast an impressive history, which stretches back many hundreds of years, but it has also fostered prominent architects, artists, and designers of the 20th century. Prague was once the centre of Central European modernism, a fact which today, after a long period of dictatorship, has almost faded into oblivion. During recent years, modernist Czech architecture and interior design have experienced a recovery, and there is nearly always a good exhibition to see.

COUNTRY #2

Nuremberg, Germany



EMBARKATION

Are you a World War II enthusiast or a medieval history buff? Does the taste of Franconia interest you? Learn more about this northern Bavarian city.

THE CITY

Nuremberg's wealth of sights, delights and highlights means there's always something for residents and visitors of all ages to discover. One of these is the Christkindlesmarkt, the city's most famous event. Year after year, 2.3 million visitors visit one of the world's most beautiful Christmas markets to experience its quaint atmosphere, taste the range of delicacies and listen to the Christmas Angel's opening prologue.

The Sigena Urkunde, a deed published in 1050 by Emperor Henry III, contains the first documented reference to Nuremberg. The Kaiserburg, which was designed as a political and military hub and was one of the key imperial palaces of the Middle Ages, is still the city's main landmark. Nuremberg's appointment as an Imperial City put it under direct control of the Emperor and it enjoyed a number of privileges as a result. But the city also became known for its many scholars and artists, such as the painter Albrecht Dürer, one of the city's most famous residents.

Nuremberg's unusual affinity with the crafts eventually made it one of the key trading towns in the Middle Ages. In more recent times, Nuremberg gained a less favourable reputation for itself during the National Socialist era. Even today, parts of the city are still home to gigantic ruins representing the Nazi regime's deluded notion of grandeur. After the city was virtually razed to the ground in the Second World War, the decision was made to start rebuilding the historical Old Town to reflect its original glory.

COUNTRY #3

Vienna, Austria



Known for its imperial palaces, St. Stephen's Cathedral and residents Mozart, Beethoven and Sigmund Freud. The Spanish Riding School is a sight to behold with it's Lipizzaner horses.

THE CITY

Vienna is the capital of Austria as well as its smallest state. The city is located on the Danube in the center of Europe, near the north-eastern extension of the Alps, and a large part of it is surrounded by the Vienna Woods.

There are many excellent reasons to travel to Vienna: The city is world-famous for its magnificent imperial heritage, for Schönbrunn Palace, the Belvedere and the Imperial Palace. The city is appreciated around the world for its top-notch music and cultural offerings in concert halls, in museums and on stage – from the large Musikverein Hall to the prestigious Museum of Fine Arts to the Vienna State Opera.

And let's not forget that Vienna is considered the "World's Most Liveable City."

In the 2017 Mercer Study, employees of international companies abroad (expatriates) awarded this distinction to the city on the Danube for the eighth time in a row. Vienna is world-famous as a metropolis for bon vivants and art lovers. The city offers its guests an abundance of unique attractions at any time of the year, which you can incorporate into delightful packages.

COUNTRY #4

Bratislava, Slovakia



Bratislava, is set along the Danube River by the border with Austria and Hungary.

THE CITY

The Capital of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, also referred to as the Beauty on the Danube, can not only boast interesting history but it is also the centre of the most dynamically developing region of central Europe at present.

Bratislava is situated in the south-west of Slovakia and stretches on both banks of the Danube and in the foothills of the Little Carpathian Mountains. Slovakia's borders with Hungary, to the south, and Austria, to the west, make it the only capital city to border two neighbouring countries. In addition, the Czech Republic is only 62 kilometres away. The Austrian capital Vienna is only 60 kilometres distant, making them among the world's closest capital cities. Thanks to this favourable position it was always a commercial centre. Today the historic places are witness to the rapid development of the young Slovak Republic.

In spite of its exciting history, Bratislava is one of the youngest capitals in the world and its population is also very young. The modern metropolis is open to Europe and to the world as proved by the increasing number of foreign visitors from many diverse countries. They are attracted to the cosiness of the rather small city that nevertheless possesses a throbbing social life and historic charms combined with the most recent trends. Palaces, modern shopping, works of art by Slovak chefs and brewers, friendly people and various international cultural or sport events, exhibitions, and business opportunities are the reasons why it is worth of visit.

COUNTRY #5

Budapest, Hungary



See the Hungarian Parliament Building, best viewed from the Danube, The Gellert Bath and Spa Center is one of the grandest in the city - massages and spa treatments are also available. Faust Wine Cellars are located under Buda Castle, with wines from the 22 Hungarian wine regions.

THE CITY

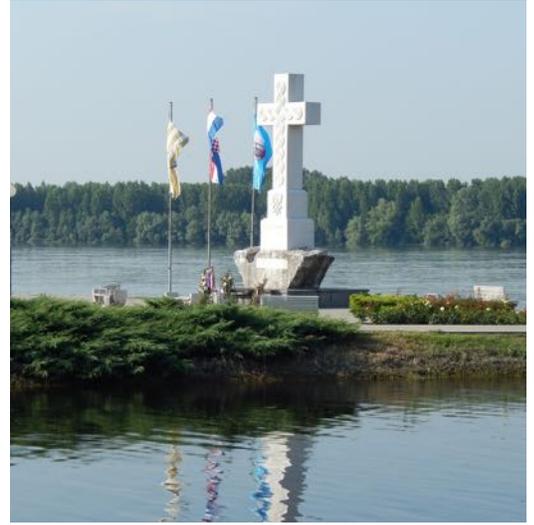
The early history of Budapest dates back to the Roman ages, as many important settlements of the Empire were located in what we call Hungary today. Present-day Budapest was born in 1873 with the unification of Buda, Óbuda, and Pest, and this was also the period that saw several large-scale construction works, having largely contributed to the postcard-perfect outlook the Paris of the East has today.

It was, however, a long way to come: the country was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for over 200 years, and has a history heavily intertwined with the Hapsburg dynasty. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was dissolved with the outbreak of WWI, and even though the outcome of the second war brought relief to a Hungary with a populous Jewish community, years of Soviet suppression followed.

In the 1990s, the change of regime opened up a world of possibilities for a war-torn country, but the past will never be forgotten. Today, turbulent history is remembered in finely preserved landmarks scattered across the city, coexisting with vibrant young venues celebrating a whole new era.

COUNTRY #6

Vukovar, Croatia



Visit Castle Eltz for a whirlwind Slavonian history tour, including mammoth fossils, or visit Vukovar Hospital and learn of the tragic 1991 siege. Looking for culinary delights? Stari Toranj, Vrške and Dunavska Golubica top the list.

THE CITY

The Hero Town. Although the city has a long cultural history, today it is most noted for its fate during the war in the early 1990's in the former Yugoslavia and often called "The Hero Town". It is the only town in Europe completely devastated since WWII. The Siege of Vukovar is famous amongst military analysts as 2000 self organized Croatian civilians, and volunteers from all around the Croatia defended the town for 3 months against 40 000 heavy armed Serbian soldiers and 110 tanks, resulting in a pyrrhic Serbian victory. City was defended up to the last street and therefore it was a modern model of a Stalingrad battle.

The city has long had a highly mixed population of different ethnicities, including large numbers of ethnic Croats and Serbs. As a result it suffered greatly during the war between the Croats and the Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army in the early 1990's. The three-month siege of the city in 1991 and the subsequent occupation by Serbia, destroyed or damaged much of the city's infrastructure and resulted in a massacre of Croatian population. As a result, it is difficult to find employment, and much of the population has left; around 30,000 still remain. Those who remain in the city live together nonviolently, although there is still animosity between ethnic groups. Today, it's a living war and massacre monument.

The town is best explored on foot. All the main areas of interest are within a short walk of each other.

Courtesy of <https://wikitravel.org/en/Vukovar>

COUNTRY #7

Belgrade, Serbia



Visit the Nikola Tesla Museum, honoring the life and work of Serbia's famous inventor, or perhaps The Museum of Yugoslavia and former president Josip Broz Tito's grave.

THE CITY

City of Culture, Inspiration, Sports and Festivals, Serbian capital is an exciting mixture of rich and diverse history, architecture and urban spirit. With some of the most attractive locations, Belgrade Fortress – the oldest cultural and historical monument, Skadarlija –bohemian quarter in the city center, Knez Mihailova Street; Old and New Palace, Federal Parliament, Temple of St. Sava, Zemun and many others, Belgrade makes the cultural center of South East Europe.

The Republic Square is literally the epicenter of the city, being surrounded by the National Theatre and National Museum, but it is best known for the statue of Prince Mihailo on the horse, which is the most popular meeting place of Belgradians. Knez Mihailova Street is the pedestrian area that unifies the beautiful architecture, and leads towards the Belgrade Fortress and Kalemegdan Park, while on the other way leads to Terazije, and famous Terazajska česma, drinking fountain in front of the Hotel Moskva, which is a great lookout point to the Sava river valley. The Belgrade Fortress and the Kalemegdan Park together represent a cultural monument of exceptional importance and an open-air museum of Belgrade history. The fortress overlooks the confluence of the Sava river into the Danube and that very spot, next to the statue Pobednik (The Victor), is probably the most beautiful lookout in Belgrade.

Belgrade is also the starting point for exploration of some of Serbia's beautiful monasteries, wineries, farmhouse restaurants, etno villages, spas, wildlife reserves, natural beauty, and archaeological sites.

COUNTRY #8

Rousse, Bulgaria



DISEMBARK AND HOTEL CHECK-IN

Ruse/Rousse is known as a “Little Vienna” because of its Baroque and neoclassical buildings. History lover? Visit the Sexaginta Prista Roman Fortress Ruins that date back to the 1st Century BC. Mehana Chiflika is the best traditional Bulgarian restaurant.

THE CITY

The city of Ruse/Rousse is situated on the highest right bank of the Danube river, and is one of the largest cities in the country – an important cultural, commercial and industrial center. The close proximity of the river Danube had always had a great significance for the development of the city from antiquity to the present day. The Roman military camp and fortress were established here in the 1st century AD. It had the name of Seksaginta Pristis –Port of the Sixty Boats. Since the 16th century the city had been known under its Ottoman name - Ruschuk. During the Ottoman dominion, Ruse was one of the main cities of the Ottoman Empire, which reflected on its economical and cultural development. Ruse was number one in many terms – the first railway station in Bulgaria was constructed here.

One of the most interesting landmarks of the city of Ruse is the remains of the fortress Seksaginta Prista. It is situated in the north-west part of the city, on a small hill near the bank of the Danube river. The only National Museum of Transport in Bulgaria is situated in Ruse. The remains of the medieval town of Cherven – one of the largest military, economic and cultural centers of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185 – 1393), are among them. The Ivanovski Rock Churches are also situated here – a site included in the List of Global Cultural Inheritance of UNESCO. Another religious center in close proximity to Ruse is the monastery St. Dimitar Basarbovski – the only active rock monastery in Bulgaria.

Courtesy of <http://bulgariatravel.org/en/object/88/ruse>

COUNTRY #9

Bucharest, Romania



A day trip to Brasov (in the Transylvania region of Romania) might be on your mind, perhaps to visit “Dracula’s Castle”?

Visit the communist-era Palatul Parlamentului government building, which has 1,100 rooms, or the 15th-century Curtea Veche Palace, where Prince Vlad III (“The Impaler”) once ruled.

THE CITY

Romanian legend tells that Bucharest was founded on the banks of the Dambovita River by a shepherd named Bucur, whose name means “joy”. By playing the flute he amazed the people, and his wine from nearby vineyards was very popular among the local traders, who gave his name to the place.

As one of Europe’s most up-and-coming destinations, Bucharest has had to react quickly to its newfound status. As a result, there are a bevy of recently opened venues to eat, drink, shop, club and sleep. Not only this, but standards are high and local residents have come to expect only the best.

From Piața Universitatii, most sights of interest are easily accessible. The nearby Calea Victoriei is a great starting point for shopping. These two landmarks constitute the central Bucharest area where many of the most well-known restaurants and bars are situated. Walking in this part of the city is the best way to see Bucharest, but do not be afraid to venture further north, east and west to discover many more treasures.

RETURN FLIGHT HOME

Your Itinerary, Your Way

Perhaps you would prefer an abbreviated version of this itinerary... Of course, those are always available.

Maybe the allure of Europe's iconic Christmas Markets is more your speed? There are many grand cities along the Danube illuminated with twinkling lights and overflowing with handcrafted souvenirs. Imagine your family strolling through these festive stalls, sipping hot mulled wine and savoring the aroma of fresh gingerbread and roasting chestnuts.

The MAGIC of the season awaits you!



READY TO DIVE
HEART-FIRST
INTO YOUR OWN
PASSION-FUELED
JOURNEY?