

2020 - Gems of Southeast Europe (Wine Cruise)

7-NIGHT CRUISE

From Budapest to Bucharest, and countless treasures in between, touch history in Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, as you sail along the exotic lower Danube. Celtic fortifications, medieval towns and grand cities, along with the natural beauty of pastoral landscapes and the Danube's famed Iron Gate, showcase the best of eastern Europe. Folklore followers will relish the opportunity to go to Transylvania, a place deeply rooted in myth and history to the 14th-century Bran Castle, home of Prince Vlad Tepes who inspired Bram Stoker's Dracula; as well as Sighișoara, birthplace of Dracula; and to Bulgaria's natural wonders, Belogradchik, a fairytale stone world of fantastic shapes associated with interesting legends. Wine connoisseurs will have a chance to taste history from the centuries-old wine-growing hills dating back to the Romans in Ilok, a royal and vinous town. And the active adventurers will appreciate hiking to the UNESCO-designated Ivanovo Rock Hewn Churches and biking through Belgrade's Kalemegdan Park and Vidin's Baba Vida castle. Be treated to the flavors, sights, sounds and cultures of this diverse swath of the continent.

OVERVIEW:

<u>DAY</u>	<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES</u>
1	BUDAPEST	EMBARKATION
2	BUDAPEST	Scenic cruising Pécs excursion OR Szekszárd wine tasting Mohács bike tour
3	VUKOVAR	City tour and Eltz Castle OR Croatian wine tasting "The Athens of Serbia" walking tour OR Novi Sad bike tour Fruska Gora National Park hike Evening Petrovaradin Fortress visit
4	BELGRADE	"The City by Two Rivers" tour Royal Palace and Tito's Memorial tour OR Podrum Panjotovic wine tasting OR Belgrade bike tour OR Belgrade Fortress hike
5	IRON GATES	Full-day scenic cruising
6	VIDIN	Baba Vida Fortress and Belogradchik with choice to hike OR Banitsa pastry and yogurt tasting OR Vidin bike tour OR Dos Alamos wine tasting
7	ROUSSE	Veliko Tarnovo excursion OR Rousse walking tour and Rock-hewn Churches tour OR Veliko Tarnovo & Wine Tasting excursion Bucharest Excursion OR Leventa wine tasting
8	GIURGIU	DISEMBARKATION

ITINERARY DETAILS:

Day 1, BUDAPEST. Embark upon your river cruise ship, docked in the city center. This evening, meet your fellow passengers on board. (D)

Day 2, BUDAPEST - MOHACS. Enjoy a scenic morning cruise to Mohács. You'll then visit Pécs, founded more than 2,000 years ago by the Romans. Visit the UNESCO-designated Christian Necropolis; St. Peter's Basilica, the city's main Catholic cathedral along with its catacombs; and Széchenyi Square, the heart of Old Town Pécs. You will also see the Mosque of Pasha Qasim the Victorious, one of the symbols of the city. Or for wine connoisseurs, you'll want to go to the Szekszárd wine region, one of the oldest red-wine-growing areas in Hungary, established more than 2,000 years ago. You may also take an exhilarating guided bike tour around Mohács. (B,L,D)

Day 3, VUKOVAR - ILOK - NOVI SAD. Vukovar is a Croatian symbol of resistance, which you'll better understand on your city tour showcasing the Ovčara Memorial and Eltz Castle. Alternatively, choose a wine tasting in Ilok, a center of wine production since Roman times, where you'll sample its famous Grasevina, Traminac and Frankovka wines. Back on board, cruise to Novi Sad, sometimes called the "Serbian Athens." Discover Novi Sad on a walking tour to Dunavski Park and through Stari Grad, the Old Town center. If you prefer a more active exploration, join a guided biking tour or hike through Fruska Gora National Park. During the evening, visit Petrovaradin Fortress, a mighty stronghold no enemy has ever breached. (B,L,D)

Day 4, BELGRADE. Explore Serbia's capital, Belgrade, on a city tour, which includes the Kalemegdan Fortress and the Serbian Orthodox Temple of St. Sava. Later, choose from three intriguing excursions. Visit the Royal Palace, the official residence of the Serbian Royal Family; and then tour the House of Flowers, the mausoleum of Marshal Tito, who became the first President of Yugoslavia. Or enjoy a taste of the region by sampling Serbian plum brandy, Šljivovitz, and delicious local delights at the Quburich Distillery. For those wishing a more active adventure, join a guided bike tour. (B,L,D)

Day 5, IRON GATES. The Iron Gates is one of Europe's most awe-inspiring natural wonders. The Danube narrows as it winds through a series of magnificent gorges between the Carpathian and Balkan mountains, forming a natural border between Serbia and Romania. The ancient King Decebalus, the last king of Dacia, is proudly carved into the mountainside and always captivates travelers. (B,L,D)

Day 6, VIDIN. Explore Vidin, one of Bulgaria's oldest cities, and surrounding areas with a choice of excursions. Discover Baba Vida Fortress, the largest preserved medieval castle in Bulgaria. Continue on to Belogradchik, one of Bulgaria's natural wonders, where you can hike around its most spectacular rock formations. Alternatively, visit a local home for a demonstration of traditional Bulgarian yogurt and Banitsa, a pastry you will also get to make. You also have the choice to bike through Vidin and to the castle. Or enjoy a wine tasting at a local winery, situated just outside of Vidin in the village of Negovanovtsi. (B,L,D)

Day 7, ROUSSE. Visit Bulgaria's ancient capital, Veliko Tarnovo, with its medieval fortress and multiple orthodox temples. You can opt instead to go to Rousse, known for its 19th- and 20th-century Neo-Baroque and Neo-Rococo architecture, and then afterwards visit the UNESCO-designated Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo with frescos revealing exceptional artistry of 14th-century paintings. Later in the day, travel through the Romanian countryside to the capital of Bucharest, known as the "Little Paris of the East." Enjoy a panoramic tour of the historic city center and its elegant architecture, followed by a visit to the Palace of the Parliament, the second largest administrative building in the world. Or journey to a Rousse Wine House and the Leventia complex set in a unique fortification structure dating back almost 200 years and be treated to a tasting of three wines while learning about the wine making process of this winery. (B,L,D)

Day 8, GIURGIU. Disembark the ship in Giurgiu. (B)