

# Grand Circle Cruise Line®

THE LEADER IN VALUE AND WORLDWIDE DISCOVERY SINCE 1958

## Your Grand Circle Travel Planning Guide



Romance on the Danube: Vienna to Prague  
2026

# Grand Circle Cruise Line®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with Grand Circle Cruise Line. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you cruise with us, you can expect an award-winning experience aboard our privately owned river ship. In addition to the convenience of unpacking just once, you will also enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, coupled with camaraderie of your fellow American travelers.

In addition, up to four **expert, local Program Directors** will accompany you from the beginning of your trip to the end. Assigned to a group of 38 travelers on average, these passionate leaders are ready and eager to share their homeland and insights as only a local can. Whether it is recommending their favorite restaurant, connecting travelers with people and culture, or providing the best ways to enhance your leisure time, your Program Director will be available to take care of all the details and ensure that you have a fun and carefree travel experience. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Throughout your journey, you will experience Exclusive Discovery Series events designed to connect you with local people and culture. From sharing traditional fare and lively conversation during Home-Hosted Visits, to discussing Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, you will gain an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-2610**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Grand Circle Cruise Line

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M/S River Adagio, Wachau Valley, Austria

## New! Romance on the Danube: Vienna to Prague

**Austria:** Vienna, Krems, Linz | **Czech Republic:** Prague

**10 days starting from \$3,795**

including airfare

Single Supplement: **Low-Cost**

For departure dates & prices, visit  
[www.gct.com/evp2026pricing](http://www.gct.com/evp2026pricing)

Join us and sail for **5 nights aboard the privately-owned, 162-passenger M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio and 3 nights in a Prague hotel** on a journey along the Danube. Taste the local flavors of Vienna's famed Naschmarkt, and stroll along the fairytale streets of Old World Prague. Let the Danube carry you through a world of grand music halls, glowing sunsets, and old-world charm—where romance lingers long after each evening fades.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- **Accommodations** for 5 nights aboard a private river ship with wireless Internet access in all common areas and cabins, and 3 nights in the Grandior Hotel Prague or similar
- **17 meals:** 8 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners
- **All-inclusive drinks** while onboard ship: Enjoy onboard spirits, beer, wine, and soft drinks at no additional cost
- **Onboard wireless Internet**
- **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- **11 included tours** with personal headsets
- **Local Program Directors, a Grand Circle Cruise Line exclusive:** Our dedicated experts are with you and your group of 38-45 travelers from beginning to end to provide an insider's knowledge and perspective
- **Baggage handling** for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- **5% Frequent Traveler Credit** toward your next trip
- **All port charges**

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

**Romance on the Danube: Vienna to Prague**



## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

### Group Size

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers (with approximately 3-4 groups onboard) each with a local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

### Pacing

- 10 days, with 5 nights aboard our privately owned **162-Passenger** M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio, and one 3 three-night hotel stay
- Return flights often require departing in early morning hours
- Air travel time will be 9-18 hours and will have at least one connection

### Physical Requirements

- Included features on your trip may consist of 3-4 hours of physical activity each day. Travelers should be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted within a time frame of 1-2 hours, and walk on uneven surfaces, including steep and unpaved paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slick in wet or colder conditions

- Optional activities and elective walks may be offered in addition to the activity levels above
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

### Terrain & Transportation

- Diverse terrain and uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones
- Travel by 162-passenger river ship and 49-seat coach
- Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary

### Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 40-73°F during cruising season
- June-August are the warmest months

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

1 • Depart U.S.

2-3 • Vienna

Port Vienna

4 • Dürnstein

Port Dürnstein

5 • Melk

Disembark ship

Port Linz

6-7 • Linz

8-9 • Prague

10 • Return to U.S.

## CUSTOMIZE YOUR VACATION

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

all with FREE Single Supplements

Highlights of Poland: Warsaw & Krakow

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,495**

# Romance on the Danube: Vienna to Prague

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

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### Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today for Vienna, Austria.

### Day 2 Vienna, Austria • Embark ship

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio

**Afternoon:** Land in Vienna, where you'll be met at the airport by a Grand Circle representative and transferred to your ship. After you've settled in, a short shuttle ride brings you into the Innere Stadt (Old City), giving you your first glimpse of the Austrian capital. Back onboard, your Program Director leads a welcome and safety briefing before you gather for the Captain's Welcome Drink, meet the crew, and learn about the days ahead during a Port Talk.

**Dinner:** Enjoy a welcome dinner onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** Your journey begins with festive onboard music.

### Day 3 Explore Vienna

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio

**Activity Note:** This morning's combined bus and walking tour will be approximately 3.5 hours long. The walking portion will include

cobblestones, uneven surfaces, and narrow streets with no options to sit down during the tour.

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Meet your Program Director for a brief welcome and orientation before setting out along the *Ringstrasse*—Vienna's grand main boulevard—one of the many achievements of the Emperor Franz Joseph. In 1857, the Emperor ordered the demolition of the ancient city walls, which were no longer needed as fortifications and were impeding the growth of the city. In their place was constructed an elegant 2.5 mile-long boulevard, encircling the city center. The buildings that line the *Ringstrasse* bring together all the greatest architectural styles in an exuberant celebration of all that seemed possible during the Industrial Revolution. Continue on along the city sidewalks, passing by the well-known Imperial Palace, home to many generations of the Habsburg family, and the renowned Spanish Riding School.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. You may want to head to the old Jewish Quarter to see the only Viennese synagogue to have survived the 1938 *Kristallnacht*. Or perhaps explore Austria's capital aboard a *fiaker*. These horse-drawn carriages have been in business since the 17th century, and drivers are happy to show you the sights and delight you with Viennese anecdotes. You'll also find out for

yourself whether or not it's true that drivers whistle strains of Mozart's beloved *Magic Flute* as they conduct passengers through the city.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

#### **Day 4 Visit Dürnstein • Optional Marillen Farm tour**

- Destination: Dürnstein
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*

**Activity Note:** Due to port availability, the ship might dock in Krems instead of Dürnstein on some departures.

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Discover Dürnstein, a charming town set at the confluence of the Danube and Krems rivers, on a morning walking tour. Dürnstein is known for its wine production due to its position perched along the Wachau Valley.

The historic town is sprinkled with bustling cafés and shops, perfect for taking a leisurely stroll of sightseeing and people-watching, which you'll have the chance to do at your own pace.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** Take a shuttle bus to Krems for free time. Or, set off on an optional tour to Marillen Farm—a local family-run apricot farm. Here, you'll sample the fresh produce in its many forms, from marmalade to wine, and explore the gardens during a guided tour.

Then, return to the ship for an evening Port Talk before dinner.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

#### **Day 5 Dürnstein • Wachau Valley • Melk Abbey**

- Destination: Melk
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Cruise along one of the most beautiful parts of the Danube—the Wachau Valley—taking in the stunning landscape of sculpted hills and medieval towns built along the river that comprise this UNESCO World Heritage Site. As you sail, your Program Director will lead a discussion on life in the region.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** Transfer to Melk Abbey, which sits high upon a rocky outcrop overlooking the Danube River and the Wachau Valley. Originally built in the 1700s, this Benedictine abbey now contains the tomb of Saint Coloman of Stockerau and members of the House of Babenberg. Following your tour, you'll have free time to make your own discoveries.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

## Day 6 Explore Linz • Mauthausen • Captain's Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Linz
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio

**Activity Note:** Today's walking tour of Mauthausen includes stairs, uneven terrain, limited shade, and no opportunities to sit during the tour.

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Begin a day of explorations in Linz and Mauthausen. Half of the group will depart for Linz, the capital of Upper Austria (one of the country's nine states) that bestrides the Danube. Enjoy an included walking tour followed by free time to explore the city independently.

The other half of the group will take part in a sobering visit to the Mauthausen concentration camp with a local guide. This complex was one of the Nazis' first large-scale concentration camps—and the last to be liberated.

High-profile Jewish prisoners and captive Russian soldiers were brought to the camp to work as free labor for the local stone quarry, harvesting and hauling granite slabs.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** You'll set off on a tour of either Linz or Mauthausen—whichever destination your group did not explore this morning.

**Dinner:** Gather with your fellow travelers for a Farewell Drink and Port Talk, followed by the Captain's Farewell Dinner.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

## Day 7 Linz • Disembark ship • Visit Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic • Prague

- Destination: Linz
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Grandior Hotel Prague or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's walking tour of Cesky Krumlov will include cobblestones, uneven surfaces, and narrow streets with no options to sit down during the tour.

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Disembark in Linz and begin your transfer to Prague in the Czech Republic. Along the way, you'll stop in the medieval town of Cesky Krumlov, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in southern Bohemia. Here, you will embark on a walking tour of the city.

**Lunch:** On your own in Cesky Krumlov—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Arrive in Prague in the late afternoon and check into your hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 8 Explore Prague

- Destination: Prague
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Grandior Hotel Prague or similar

**Activity Note:** This morning's tour of Prague will be a longer walk, with cobblestones, uneven surfaces, narrow streets, and no options to sit down during the tour.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Set out to explore Prague. During the reign of Charles IV, King of Bohemia and Moravia, Prague was the seat of the Holy Roman Empire. Later, it was the vital center of the Habsburgs. While other European capitals were leveled during World War II, Prague survived virtually intact.

Visit *Stare Mesto*, the Old Town, with its many wonderful Gothic and Baroque buildings, and see the famous 15th-century Astronomical Clock at the Old Town Hall. Every hour, crowds assemble below to watch Christ and the twelve Apostles appear at two little windows above the clock face, followed by the skeleton of Death tolling the bell.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Perhaps you'll stroll across the city's famed Charles Bridge, a 15th-century structure spanning the Vltava River that functions as a makeshift performance and gallery space for musicians, artists, dancers, and more.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 9 Prague • Optional Jewish Prague tour • Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Prague
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grandior Hotel Prague or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** The day is yours to explore this beautiful city. As it was during the zenith of the Bohemian kingdom, Prague still ranks as the thriving center of the country, with an artistic community reminiscent of Paris in the 1920s. It boasts one of Europe's most notable Jewish quarters, world-class museums and cathedrals, architectural masterpieces that span a thousand years—and mighty Prague Castle. Perched regally over the Vltava River and offering stunning views of the city, Prague Castle is more than 1,000 years old and features residential quarters, chapels, galleries, gardens, and the bustling Castle District surrounding it.

Or you may choose to join an optional *Jewish Prague* tour during which you'll learn about the city's 1,000 years of Jewish cultural history.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

**Dinner:** Gather with your fellow travelers for a Farewell Dinner at the hotel.

**Evening:** Spend some time at leisure and enjoy your last night in Prague. Perhaps you'll take a stroll in the area around the hotel or finish up packing.

## Day 10 Prague • Return to U.S.

- Destination: Prague
- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or, continue your discoveries with our *Highlights of Poland: Warsaw & Krakow* post-trip extension.

## END YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

### 5 nights in *Highlights of Poland: Warsaw & Krakow*

**Day 1** Prague, Czech Republic •  
Krakow, Poland

**Day 2** Explore Krakow • Optional  
Wieliczka Salt Mines tour

**Day 3** Krakow • Auschwitz

**Day 4** Krakow • Visit Czestochowa •  
Warsaw • Optional Chopin Piano Recital  
with Dinner

**Day 5** Explore Warsaw

**Day 6** Warsaw • Return to U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with us. We will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form and swiping your credit card at the ship's front desk. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2-3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2-3 months following your return.

***Please note:*** *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

### **Marillen Farm**

(Day 4 \$115 per person)

Immerse yourself in the culture of Wachau Valley and get a glimpse at local life during a visit to Marillen Farm. You'll get a guided tour of this family-run apricot farm and enjoy a tasting of the fresh produce in its many forms—from marmalade to wine. This is the perfect chance to speak with your guides about agriculture in Austria and what it's like to run a business in the Wachau Valley.

*Apricot farm operations are highly dependent on the season; certain months are more active while others are quieter, and travelers should not expect apricot picking in March.*

Europe's oldest), as well as the Jewish Museum, displaying some 40,000 cultural artifacts. You'll also explore the Old Jewish Cemetery, where observant Czech Jews have been buried for six centuries.

*Please note: If this optional tour falls on a Saturday or holiday, it will be offered one day earlier.*

### **Jewish Prague**

(Day 9 \$90 per person)

Prague boasts 1,000 years of Jewish cultural history—including a period in the 18th century when more Jews lived here than anywhere else in the world. During this tour, you'll visit several of the city's synagogues (among them

## POST-TRIP

# Highlights of Poland: Warsaw & Krakow

### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » **Accommodations** for 3 nights in Krakow and 2 nights in Warsaw
- » **7 meals:** 5 breakfasts and 2 lunches
- » **4 guided tours** with personal headsets: Krakow • Auschwitz • Czestochowa • Warsaw
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Explore the history and charm of Warsaw's Old Town on an included city tour, discover Krakow's rich architecture and culture with your expert Program Director at your side, and with your fellow travelers, pay a memorable—and moving—visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Auschwitz.*

#### Day 1 Prague, Czech Republic • Krakow, Poland

- Destination: Krakow
- Included Meals: Lunch
- Accommodations: Novotel Krakow Centrum or similar

**Morning:** Transfer by motorcoach to Krakow.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Olomouc en route to Krakow.

**Afternoon:** Check in to your hotel and then explore the area with your Program Director.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

#### Day 2 Explore Krakow • Optional Wieliczka Salt Mines tour

- Destination: Krakow
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Novotel Krakow Centrum or similar

**Activity Note:** The salt mine tour involves extensive walking inside caves that are not brightly lit. You'll descend approximately 800 stairs into the caves that may be slippery and return to ground level via elevator.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Krakow is a showcase of seven centuries of architecture, as you'll see during an included tour that spotlights the Wawel Royal Castle Hill, site of the cathedral where the former Cardinal Wojtyla (the late Pope John Paul II) once preached.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Or join this afternoon's optional tour, which descends 250 feet underground to visit the eleventh-century Wieliczka Salt Mines.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations. Travelers on our optional tour will enjoy an included dinner after departing the salt mines.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### **Day 3 Krakow • Auschwitz**

- Destination: Auschwitz
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Novotel Krakow Centrum or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today's tour may be an emotional one, as you visit Oswiecim, better known to Americans by its German name of Auschwitz. This is the location of the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, set on the site of the largest of the World War II concentration camps as a memorial to the millions of Jews, Roma, and "enemies" of the Nazi regime who were killed here. Grand Circle Foundation has donated to assist in the expansion of this educational center.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

### **Day 4 Krakow • Visit Czestochowa • Warsaw • Optional Chopin Piano Recital with Dinner**

- Destination: Krakow
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Mercure Warszawa Grand or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** You'll ride to Warsaw via Czestochowa, stopping for an included tour of the 14th-century Jasna Gora Monastery, home of the famous Black Madonna shrine.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries in Warsaw—ask your Program Director for recommendations. You may choose to visit one of the city's many museums including the Copernicus Science Centre or the beautiful Lazienki Palace.

Or, take in an optional piano recital, featuring the works of the famous Polish composer Frederic Chopin, followed by an included dinner.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations. Dinner is included if you choose to join the optional tour.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 5 Explore Warsaw

- Destination: Warsaw
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Mercure Warszawa Grand or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Explore the capital of Poland on today's included city tour. Visit the reconstructed Old Town and the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in the Muranow quarter.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Following your independent explorations, join your fellow travelers for a Farewell Drink.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

## Day 6 Warsaw • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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### Wieliczka Salt Mines

(Day 2 \$140 per person)

Join an afternoon optional tour to the Wieliczka Salt Mines—working mines that have been in operation for more than seven centuries, producing about 700 tons of pure salt per day. These fascinating mines are considered one of Europe's great wonders and are protected by UNESCO as a historic monument. Here are more than 2,000 caverns of underground beauty on nine main levels—breathtaking chambers, galleries, and salt lakes. After exploring the mines, end the day with a typical Polish dinner in a local restaurant, accompanied by a sample of Zubrowka, the famous Polish vodka. The cost of this optional tour includes dinner.

*The salt mine tour involves extensive walking inside caves that are not brightly lit. You'll descend into the caves by stairs that may be slippery and return to ground level via elevator.*

### Chopin Piano Recital with Dinner

(Day 4 \$120 per person)

In the early evening, you can attend an optional Chopin piano recital, enjoying the music of Poland's best-known and most beloved musician. Finish up the evening with an included dinner following the performance.

# YOUR RHINE, MOSEL, MAIN, AND DANUBE RIVER SHIPS

## Sail aboard our privately owned 140- to 162-passenger vessels

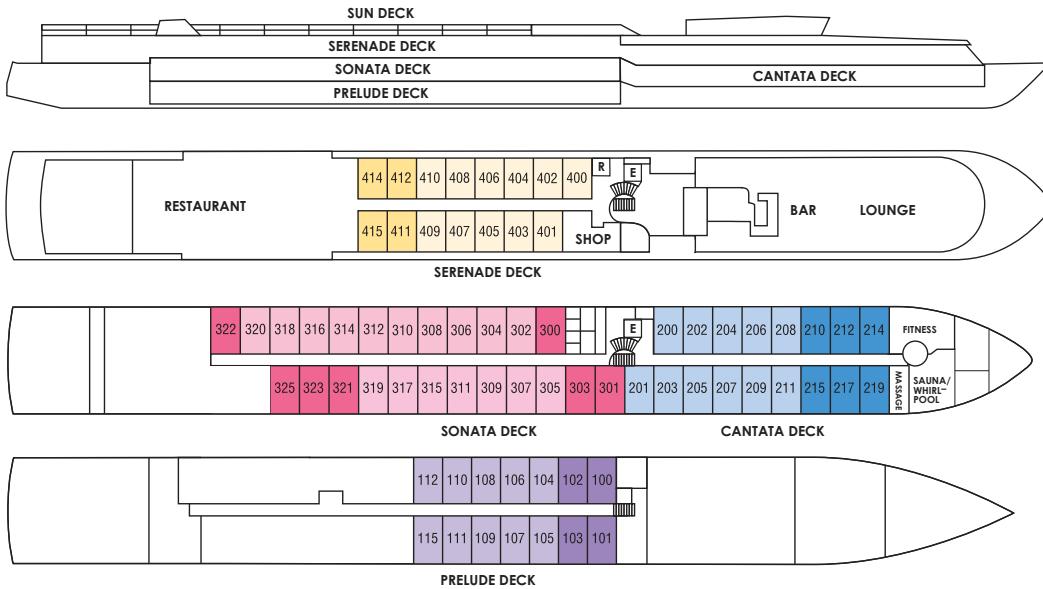
Grand Circle Cruise Line's Rhine, Mosel, Main, and Danube ships were designed specifically to create an unforgettable European river cruise experience for American travelers. Explore storybook landscapes with up to four groups of no more than 38-45 travelers, each with one of our dedicated, local Grand Circle Program Directors, and enjoy the attentive onboard service of our top-notch English-speaking ship crew.



## SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Dining room with single, open seating:** Enjoy regionally-inspired cuisine in your ship's dining room.
- **Bar & lounge:** Relax with friends old and new.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and house wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Complimentary wireless Internet access:** Connect online in cabins and common areas. **Please note:** Wireless Internet access may be limited at certain points throughout your River Cruise.
- **Sun Deck:** Sit outside and enjoy the view as your ship glides past the European countryside.
- **English-speaking crew:** Our staff is dedicated to your comfort, and all shipboard announcements are made in English.
- **Smoking/non-smoking:** Smoking is not permitted indoors, but is permitted on the Sun Deck.
- **Shipboard security:** State-of-the-art shipboard radar ensures safe navigation at night and in low visibility; safe docking space; onboard security staff; state-of-the-art fire safety system; and secured entryway doors.

## M/S RIVER HARMONY



**Registry:** Malta

**Width:** 38 ft.

**Length:** 366 ft.

**Passenger capacity:** 140

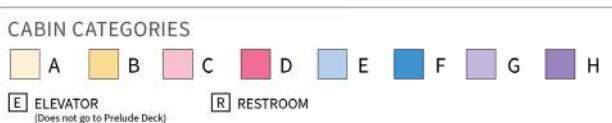
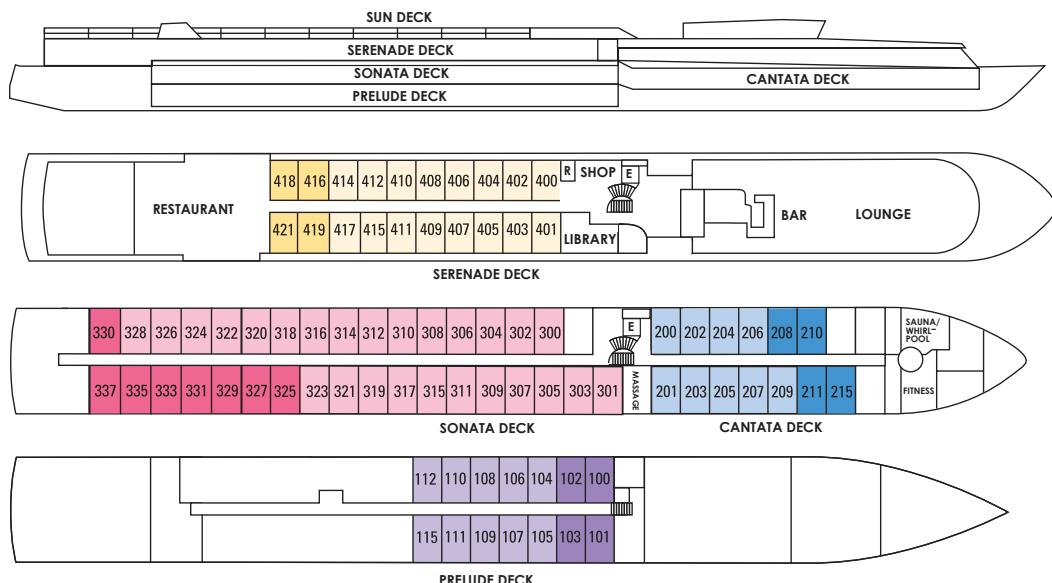
**International crew:** 34

**Decks:** 4

**Number of cabins:** 70—all outside

**Elevator:** Yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

## M/S RIVER ARIA & M/S RIVER ADAGIO



**Registry:** Malta

**Width:** 38 ft.

**Length:** 418 ft.

**Passenger capacity:** 162

**International crew:** 38

**Decks:** 4

**Number of cabins:** 82—all outside

**Elevator:** Yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 3 blank passport pages.
- **Pre- and/or post-trip extension:** No additional blank pages are needed for any of the extensions.

## Visa Required

**We'll be sending you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we're providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Austria, Czech Republic, Poland):** U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

## Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or [www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org).

## Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

## Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

## Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

## Requirements for the Czech Republic

**You will need to bring additional documentation for the Czech Republic, so please read carefully.**

According to the U.S. State Department and Czech Embassy, all foreign tourists must be able to provide proof of medical coverage, if asked. ***Not all travelers will be asked—in fact, most travelers won't—and even some local officials are unaware of this rule.*** But occasionally, travelers are asked at passport control or by medical personnel. And if that happens to you, we want you to be prepared.

Specifically, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

- Be for a minimum of 30,000 Euros (about \$37,000 US dollars at the time of writing).
- Cover possible medical expenses and hospitalization charges while traveling.

- Be valid in Schengen countries like the Czech Republic. Schengen countries are the European Union countries that have signed the Schengen Agreement—for example, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, etc.
- Include evacuation or repatriation coverage—it must cover the cost of getting you back home if you need to return for medical reasons.

The good news is that our Travel Protection Plan DOES meet these requirements. So what type of documentation you should bring depends on if you purchased Travel Protection with us or not.

**If you purchased our Travel Protection Plan:** All you'll need to bring is a copy of the coverage from our plan provider. You can download and print a copy of your coverage for this purpose. Go online to [www.gct.com/tpp](http://www.gct.com/tpp) or [oattravel.com/tpp](http://oattravel.com/tpp), and follow the links to the plan provider's website. This will redirect you to where you can print a copy of your coverage. *TIP: In our experience, the page from Part B with the schedule of benefits is usually enough to satisfy local officials.*

**If you did not purchase Travel Protection with us:** You will need to bring some other form of proof of coverage. If your own health insurance meets the requirements above, contact your insurer for a letter stating that you are covered. A certificate of coverage or proof of purchase from a private insurer or another Travel Protection Plan will also suffice, as long as the requirements listed above are met. *However, Medicare cards are not acceptable, since Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad.*

# RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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## Keep Your Abilities in Mind

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this vacation.** We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations or behavior are impacting the group's experience.

### GROUP SIZE

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers (with approximately 3-4 groups onboard) each with a local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

### PACING

- 10 days, with 5 nights aboard our privately owned **162-Passenger** M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*, and one 3 three-night hotel stay
- Return flights often require departing in early morning hours
- Air travel time will be 9-18 hours and will have at least one connection

### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Included features on your trip may consist of 3-4 hours of physical activity each day. Travelers should be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted within a time frame of 1-2 hours, and walk on uneven surfaces, including steep and unpaved paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slick in wet or colder conditions
- Optional activities and elective walks may be offered in addition to the activity levels above
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Diverse terrain and uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones
- Travel by 162-passenger river ship and 49-seat coach
- Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary

### CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 40-73°F during cruising season

- June–August are the warmest months

## Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential to fully enjoy your trip abroad. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

## Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) (Select “Find International Travel Information” then select “Country Information”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Your Health Abroad” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.

- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

## Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## Water

- Tap water aboard ship and in the countries you'll visit is perfectly safe for drinking, although it may not taste the same as at home.
- If you prefer bottled water it is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.
- Another alternative is to bring a reusable water bottle from home, which you can fill up on the ship or in your hotel before you set out for the day.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.**
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip.**

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Euro Countries:** European Euro (€)

**Czech Republic:** Czech Koruna (CZK pr Kr.)

Some establishments will accept euros, but the exchange rates are usually not favorable, and any change will be in Czech crowns. If possible, use local currency or credit/debit cards.

**Poland:** Polish Zloty (zł)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2016) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. One exception is in the Czech Republic, where it is more economical to try a bank first. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world.. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

### Using Your Credit Card in Europe

Most of us are used to credit cards with the embedded computer chip (the ones you insert instead of swiping). In Europe—where they've had this type of card longer than us—these credit cards usually require a PIN (personal identification number) to make a purchase. And in contrast, most U.S. credit cards either do not require a PIN or don't have one. So what do you do if you want make a purchase with your credit card in Europe?

**Don't worry.** 90% of the time you won't need to do anything special. You'll insert your card and the purchase will go through as normal. Often you won't even be asked to sign anything.

**But bring more than one form of payment with you.** For those rare cases when your credit card doesn't work, the best plan is to already have a backup form of payment with you. Debit cards are a good alternative as they have a PIN. And there's always cash.

**Consider asking your credit card company.** You can try contacting your credit card company before you leave to see if they will issue you a PIN. Many won't—but at least you'll know. You could also try looking at their website to see if they have guidance about getting a PIN.

### Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## Onboard Ship

### Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.) and is calculated in Euros. The bill is payable at the ship's front desk; we accept cash or credit/debit card only. For cash we accept Euros. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, American Express, and Discover Card are not accepted for this bill.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. The bill is paid at the ship's front desk (they will have you fill out a form) by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.

**Please note:** Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

### Exchange Services: Policy Update

Due to international banking laws, we are not able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the “How to Exchange Money” section for helpful tips and information.

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. For those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. All tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (this is usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars. Do not use personal or traveler's check for tips.

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Grand Circle Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7-\$10 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$10–\$12 U.S. per traveler, per day. You'll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire cruise staff. *Policy Update: Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

### Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it's useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** In many cities the tip is included in the fare, and will be announced on a sign inside the cab; otherwise a 10% tip is appropriate.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** A service charge is usually included in restaurant and bar bills. If not, it is customary to leave a tip of around 10% of the bill for your waiter or bartender.
- **Public restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually 2 zlotys in Poland, 10 crowns in the Czech Republic or half a euro elsewhere—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. In this case, the fee is set and no tip is needed. U.S. dollars are usually not accepted for this fee, so bring small change in the local currency with you to the restroom just in case.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early (select trips only):** If you chose to Arrive Early and purchased air through Grand Circle, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose to Arrive Early, but did not purchase air through Grand Circle, accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose to Arrive Early and purchased air through Grand Circle but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.gct.com/myplanner](http://www.gct.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations".

#### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Overseas Arrival:** Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. Important note on porters: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

## Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as GCCL travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

## Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

### What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved onsite can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.) We do not take Amex, cash, or checks for optional tours.
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- We will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.gct.com/myplanner](http://www.gct.com/myplanner)).

# Communicating with Home from Abroad

## Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone is “unlocked”, meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is “unlocked” then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with “Pay as You Go” cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

## Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Program Director while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

## Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

## Internet Access and Email

Internet cafés are available in many of the cities you visit on your Cruise Tour; however the prices for use may vary. While sailing Internet access may be unavailable, depending on locks, bridges, and regional remoteness. Internet access will be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities.

## Receiving Calls from Home

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one is to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Austria:** +43

**Poland:** +48

**Czech Republic:** +420

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
<b>Pieces per person</b>	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
<b>Weight restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
<b>Size Restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
<b>Luggage Type</b>	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

## Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it’s completely up to you.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.
- **Day excursions:** On days that include full or half-day bus excursions, please remember to bring drinking water and any needed medications with you.

## What to Bring

We have included suggestions from former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

**Your cabin already has:** Shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer, soap, body lotion, shower cap, and towels. **And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

### Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Sleepwear
- Socks and undergarments
- A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

### Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Travel money bag or money belt

- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- Light folding umbrella
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards

### Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

### Optional Gear

- Travel alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Washcloth
- Travel-size tissues
- Basic sewing kit

- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer and plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” section.
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad
- Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- Addresses for postcards
- Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- Insect repellent
- For hotel stays: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version. Hair dryers are provided on your ship.

## **Electricity**

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### **Voltage**

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with 220-volt outlets. In your bathroom you will find a 110-volt outlet; this outlet is only for low-voltage appliances, like electric shavers. (Your bathroom also comes equipped with a hair dryer).

Electricity in the Czech Republic, Austria, and Poland is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

## Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B; standard European plugs are Type C, E, and F. **Of the three, a Type C adapter is the most useful as it fits into Type E and F sockets.** Type C is usually what is sold in stores as a European adapter.

Aboard ship, the plugs in your cabin bedroom are Type F. The 110V socket in your cabin bathroom takes U.S. plugs, but not polarized ones (where one prong is bigger than the other). *Previous travelers have mentioned this because some small appliances, like Waterpiks, have polarized plugs.*

Note that even though you'll only need the European plug adapter on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

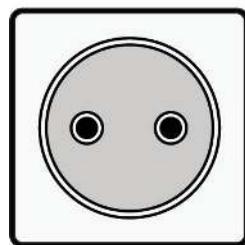
For your reference, here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

**Austria:** C and/or F

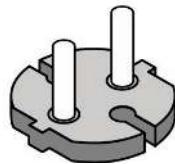
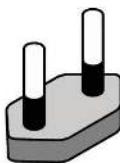
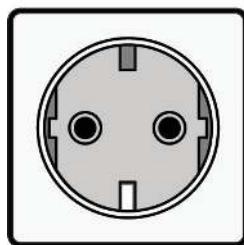
**Czech Republic:** C

**Poland:** C and E

**Type C**



**Type F**



## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Vienna, Austria:** Austria has a central European climate: variable weather reigns, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Spring weather is moderate, with intermittent sun and showers; afternoons in early spring average about 60° F and about 70° later in the season. Summers are typically sunny and warm, though you should be prepared for a few cloudy and wet days. Evenings, too, can get quite chilly. Autumn weather with some drizzle comes early to this region of the world, so by November it can be on the brisk side, with daytime temperatures in the mid to high 40s, and evenings that dip into the 30s.

**Czech Republic:** In spring, variable weather reigns: some years it's warm, in others it's cool. Summer days are typically very warm, though there may still be some brisk days. Temperatures start to fall in early autumn, and winter weather begins settling in by early November. In general, you can expect average spring temperatures in the low 60s, summer in the 70s, and fall in the 50s. **However, if you're traveling in July or August,** be prepared for heat waves that can spike the temperatures up past the average and into the 90s.

### Traveling in Summer? Expect Heat Waves

We'd like to call out that the last few summers in this region have been extremely hot, with average temperatures in the mid-80s and prolonged heat waves in the 90-100 degree range. If you are traveling in the summer, know that we may need to adjust our daily activities to avoid the hottest parts of day and that many shops, restaurants, etc. do not have air conditioning.

### Weather Conditions and River Depths

Throughout the river cruise season, weather conditions affect river depths, and water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary. When river depths rise or fall during your River Cruise, we will be required to adjust your itinerary for your safety and to adhere to the current governmental and nautical requirements. Though we strive to adhere to our planned itinerary, we may not always be able to follow it exactly as planned. Therefore the sequence of ports visited and the days on which included features and optional tours occur may vary.

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	VIENNA, AUSTRIA			PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
<b>JAN</b>	39 to 31	84 to 75	1	37 to 29	91 to 84	15
<b>FEB</b>	43 to 33	82 to 68	2	41 to 30	92 to 76	12
<b>MAR</b>	52 to 38	81 to 62	4	50 to 36	89 to 63	16
<b>APR</b>	63 to 46	76 to 54	2	62 to 44	83 to 51	16
<b>MAY</b>	73 to 55	76 to 54	7	67 to 50	79 to 53	17
<b>JUN</b>	79 to 59	76 to 57	4	75 to 57	85 to 55	17
<b>JUL</b>	84 to 63	76 to 54	7	79 to 60	85 to 54	18
<b>AUG</b>	88 to 64	78 to 54	5	78 to 59	88 to 53	16
<b>SEP</b>	75 to 57	84 to 61	5	68 to 51	90 to 60	15
<b>OCT</b>	63 to 48	86 to 65	2	56 to 43	91 to 68	16
<b>NOV</b>	50 to 39	86 to 75	3	47 to 38	91 to 83	17
<b>DEC</b>	40 to 33	85 to 78	2	40 to 38	90 to 85	14

MONTH	WARSAW, POLAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
<b>JAN</b>	33 to 24	88 to 84	15
<b>FEB</b>	34 to 24	89 to 79	13
<b>MAR</b>	44 to 31	88 to 67	15
<b>APR</b>	54 to 37	83 to 58	15
<b>MAY</b>	65 to 47	79 to 56	15
<b>JUN</b>	70 to 52	80 to 60	16
<b>JUL</b>	73 to 55	83 to 60	15
<b>AUG</b>	73 to 54	86 to 58	13
<b>SEP</b>	64 to 47	91 to 66	14
<b>OCT</b>	54 to 40	92 to 75	15
<b>NOV</b>	42 to 33	91 to 85	16
<b>DEC</b>	36 to 27	90 to 87	15

## ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

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### Our River Ships

Our private fleet of custom-built river ships—with designs incorporating suggestions from Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers—offers a host of amenities to make you feel right at home. Each ship is designed to carry a moderate number of travelers, ensuring an intimate shipboard atmosphere, plus the ease of maneuverability that's so important when entering small river ports. Amenities on each ship include a restaurant with panoramic windows and wraparound promenade, sun deck with lounge chairs, a whirlpool, library, sauna, bar, lounge, dance floor, and small souvenir shop.

By owning our ships, we can assure that you'll be sharing this unique travel experience with only like-minded Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers. You'll find your ship to be an intimate haven that's especially conducive to camaraderie. We'll all be together for the joint celebrations, such as the Welcome Cocktail Party, where you'll experience the gala ambiance of a larger group. At other times, such as when we venture ashore, we'll break into smaller groups with individual Program Directors to allow for more intimate and personal discoveries.

#### **Included features of all Grand Circle Cruise Line European river ship cabins:**

- A layout of at least 150 square feet
- All outside cabins
- Individual climate control (heat and air conditioning)
- Twin beds that ship staff convert into a daytime couch
- Storage space under beds of 57 inches x 22.8 inches x 11.8 inches (length + width + height)
- Sufficient closet and dresser space
- Color TV, including CNN programming and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Direct-dial international telephone
- Hair dryer
- Desk
- Private bath with shower

Cabins on the Serenade deck have small balconies with sliding doors; those on the Sonata deck have large picture windows; cabins on the Cantata deck have two picture windows, and Prelude Deck cabins have a square window, placed high in the cabin. For safety reasons, cabin windows do not open.

**An important word:** While our fleet features larger-than-usual riverboat cabins, please keep in mind that these ships are river vessels, not large ocean cruise ships. Riverboat cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

## Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Planner at [www.gct.com/myplanner](http://www.gct.com/myplanner). However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

## Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Complimentary house wine, draft beer, and a selection of soft drinks are included with both lunch and dinner. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20–35 per bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available at meals and from the machine in the reception area.

**Open-table, single seating for all meals:** Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating.

**Dining times:** Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

- Early bird breakfast: 6:00–7:00 am
- Breakfast: 7:00–9:00 am
- Lunch: 1:00–2:00 pm
- Dinner: 7:00–9:00 pm

**Celebrations:** Recognition of an anniversary or birthday can be accommodated. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure.

**Dress code:** The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

## **Electricity**

Cabin bathrooms are equipped with a 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with Type C/F “Europlug” outlets. See the electricity section of the packing chapter for more details.

## **Embarkation/Disembarkation**

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available at around noon. The restaurant will open at 12:30 pm and serve a light lunch. On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after 8:00am. You may sit in the ship’s lounge or on the sun deck until disembarkation.

## **Dock and Landing Etiquette**

River waterways are simply not big enough to support large landing docks such as those built on ocean shorelines. It is common for river ships to tie up alongside each other at some piers—particularly in ports where docking area is restricted. While we try to arrange the most convenient mooring available in each port of call, other boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore. On some rivers influenced by the tide, the ship might get below the level of the shore. It might be more difficult to see the ship from the riverbank, and the view from the cabins might be obstructed by the docking wall.

## **Docking Accessibility**

For certain cities along your trip, your ship may be docked up to 1 hour outside the city center. Transportation to and from the city proper will be done via motorcoach.

## **Headsets**

During your trip, complimentary headsets, or *Whispers* receivers, are provided on our guided tours through the cities we visit. These receivers and headsets allow you to hear your Program Director and our local guides better. If you use a hearing aid or have strong preferences for headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headsets/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by iPods, computer jacks, etc.

## **Wireless Internet Access**

Limited Wireless Internet service is available for free in the cabins and common areas on board your Grand Circle Cruise Line ship. If you want to use the WiFi connection you’ll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. To use the WiFi, please visit Reception after you board for access information. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship’s Internet connection demands a strong 3G cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration.

## **Laundry and Linen Service**

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Bed linens are changed at the start of your cruise and then once a week (i.e. twice during a 14-night cruise); towels are changed daily.

## **Medical Care**

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. In addition to an emergency call button in all cabins, ships also feature fully staffed reception desks, 24 hours a day.

## **Onboard Activities**

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, organized discussions, group activities that relate to the region (may include a language lesson), and talks on upcoming ports of call.

## **Recreational Facilities**

These include a fitness center, sun deck with lounge, library, and lounge with bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines). Prices are in Euros. The fitness center has an exercise bike and walking/running treadmill. A massage therapist is available as well (prices listed on board).

## **Bicycles**

We're pleased to offer complimentary bicycle rentals onboard your ship for use during free time, including all of the necessary safety gear, such as a helmet, brightly-colored safety vest, and a lock. Because there is a limited supply of bicycles available, they will be offered on a first-come first-served basis. For more information or if you are interested in using one of the bicycles, please speak to the Front Desk staff or Hotel Manager onboard your ship.

## **Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy**

Smoking is not allowed anywhere inside our Grand Circle Cruise Line European River Ships, including in individual cabins or balconies. The only area on the ship where smoking is permitted is outside on the sun deck.

## **Elevator/Chairlift**

Each ship has an elevator and chairlift service to the sun deck from the deck below (or you can use the staircase to the sun deck, which has one flight of ten to twelve steps). The elevator does not provide service to or from the Prelude Deck. The staircase to/from the Prelude Deck features about six stairs, with a banister to hold on to. The chairlift is a single-seat transport that slides up the staircase banister.

## Passport Procedures

For your convenience, your passport will be held by the hotel manager after embarkation and returned to you on disembarkation day. This is standard ship's procedure, and is designed to speed up border crossings and to ensure the crew has all the necessary documents on hand during potential controls in our ports of call.

## Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

## Ship Specifications

### *M/S River Adagio*

- **History:** Built in 2003
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 38 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

### *M/S River Aria*

- **History:** Built in 2001
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 40 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

### *M/S River Harmony*

- **History:** Built in 1999
- **Size:** 361x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 140 passengers, 32 crew members
- **Layout:** 70 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### Your Program Director

Grand Circle Cruise Line is committed to showing you a destination through the perspective of those who live, work, and play there. How better to do that than to have a resident with you every step of the way? We are proud to be the only cruise line to provide you the dedicated services of an expert Program Director, a resident or native of the country who is delighted to share their in-depth knowledge of local history, culture, and hidden gems.

Fluent in English and skilled in fostering camaraderie among travelers, our Program Directors are constantly cited by our travelers as the main reason they continue to travel with us. During your cruise, you'll enjoy multiple Program Directors aboard your ship, who will each be with you and your group of 25-47 travelers throughout your journey—both on ship and on land. And with personal headsets on every included and optional tour, you'll be able to enjoy their perspective and enthusiasm as you explore at a level deeper than most Americans go.

### Central European Culture

The two countries visited on your main itinerary—Austria and the Czech Republic—have very rich and very distinct cultures. But they also have significant overlap, which makes sense when you consider that up until this century, many Central European countries did not even exist in their current sovereign states but were variously part of each other. Much of this had to do with the Hapsburg dynasty who controlled most of Central Europe (and beyond) from late medieval times till the 20th century. On a cultural level, that meant that Germanic culture was held as the ideal. This is often expressed as an appreciation for cooperation, for precision and accuracy, and a certain level of formality.

In the Czech Republic and Austria, this comes through in the way people appreciate good manners and well-behaved children. You are expected say “good day” to everyone you meet, and to be polite. If you are not, don’t be surprised if local grandmas cluck their tongues at you.

At the same time, Czechs have a dark sense of humor and they love to poke fun at themselves and especially, the government. But one thing they do thank the government for is its traditional support for the arts. During the Soviet era (and still today), the Czechoslovakian government subsidized many programs for artists as well as theaters and concert halls, so attending plays and musical performances is a regular and affordable pleasure for all members of society.

While Austrians may not share the same love for poking fun at their government, they do love to keep things fun and highly value *gemütlichkeit* (warmth or happiness). In addition, Austrian society and the government make large efforts to instill an appreciation for the arts at a young age. Austrian children typically have required music and art classes, and it is not uncommon to find Austrians as members of bands, choir, or music groups.

## The Danube River

The Danube River is the second-longest river in Europe and the only major European river to flow from west to east. It rises in the Black Forest region of Germany and flows in a generally easterly direction for a distance of 1,766 miles before emptying, on the Romanian coast, into the Black Sea. This legendary river not only shaped the destinies of all the countries that line its banks, but influenced the whole continent as no other European river ever could.

The Danube river basin is more than 300,000 square miles and includes parts of Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldavia, and Ukraine. The river is ancient and full of history, passing through the cities of Ulm, Regensburg, and Passau in Germany; Linz and Vienna in Austria; Bratislava in Slovakia; Budapest in Hungary; Belgrade in Serbia; and Galatzi and Brăila in Romania. Canals link the Danube to the Main and Rhine, providing a commercial route between the Black and North Seas.

The strategic location of this great river was recognized centuries ago by Roman Emperors who sought to control it. Ruins from that period now perch on banks above the river, reminding you of the Danube's multi-faceted past. Even today, the Danube continues to be one of Europe's greatest assets, in part because it provides a water link between the four national capitals on its banks: Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, and Belgrade. Back in the heyday of river transport, other great cities grew up along the Danube's banks too, serving as ports for the various cargo being carried on the river, namely salt, wood, and ores. These same products now are transferred on the railroad and highways, which run alongside the Danube's course.

There is no question that few river voyages can match the romantic appeal of a journey down the Danube. Here is the heart of the lilting Strauss waltzes, of myth-laden castles, Old World villages, and rolling vineyards. As you sail along this twisting river, stopping at fascinating ports, you'll gain an understanding of the art, music, and culture of a fabled region with a history that stretches back more than 3,000 years.

## Austrian Cuisine

Austria has quite a bit of culinary overlap with neighboring Germany. But you have only to consider the scope of the Hapsburg Empire to understand the many influences that have also shaped the national cuisine: the empire once ruled over Switzerland, Holland, Alsace, Burgundy, Spain, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, and happily appropriated many of their ingredients and cooking techniques. This is to say nothing of the Turkish influence that wafted westwards across the Austro-Hungarian empire.

- One constant on Austrian menus is the national dish, **wiener schnitzel**, the classic Viennese veal cutlet which is pounded till thin, breaded, fried and served with wedges of lemon and greens. It can also be made with chicken or pork.

- **Tafelspitz:** A filet of beef (or veal) that is gently simmered with vegetables, and served with applesauce and horseradish. Late spring brings spargel, or asparagus, which are particularly tender and flavorful here. It'll appear as a special on many menus, often served with a delicate hollandaise or just butter, lemon, and toasted bread crumbs.
- **Kasspätzln:** A Tyrolean casserole of chewy, hand-made egg noodles that are mixed with sauteed onions, covered with *bergkäse*, a strong local cheese, and baked till browned. Before serving, it is topped with crispy fried onions and parsley.
- **Speckknödeln:** A bacon dumpling that is often served as an appetizer or in stews or clear soups. It is just one of the dozens of different dumplings that grace the Austrian table.
- **Frittatensuppe:** Or “pancake soup” is a Styrian specialty that is popular all over Austria. It’s a bowl of clear beef consommé with strips of cooked crepes or pancakes.
- **Würstelstände:** Or sausage booths. These street stalls are the go-tos for snackers on the go, and the sausage of choice will usually be a wiener sausage, which Austrians will only ever call a “*Frankfurter*.” You can also ask for a *bratwurst*, a *Käsekrainer* (which is studded with cheese), or a *Debreziner*, which is a lightly-smoked, reddish sausage spiced with paprika.
- **Sachertorte:** A classic chocolate sponge cake layered with apricot jam, and covered in chocolate ganache. It’s available all over, but for the quintessential Viennese experience, try it where it originated, at the Sacher Hotel, or at the famed Demel bakery.
- **Mozartkugel:** Small, round candies are balls of pistachio marzipan and nougat, covered with dark chocolate.

One thing Austria can thank the Turks for is coffee. Legend has it that when Hapsburg troops chased the Turks out in 1683, the retreating invaders left behind bags of coffee beans. Within two years the first Viennese coffee house opened, and the rest is history. In 2011, UNESCO designated Viennese coffee house culture as part of humanity’s intangible cultural heritage, saying that the coffee houses have a “very specific atmosphere” and are places “where time and space are consumed, but only the coffee is found on the bill.”

## Czech and Slovak Cuisine

Like their neighbors, the Czech Republic and Slovakia share a culinary heritage that emphasizes meat, potatoes, dumplings, and fermented vegetables (usually, sauerkraut). These are often served with heavy gravies or sauces, but the high-caloric impact is somewhat mitigated by the fact that most Czechs and Slovaks eat their heaviest meal at lunch, and have a lighter supper of just cold cuts and condiments. You’ll also find that in the major cities, young chefs are experimenting with lighter and healthier versions of the classic dishes they grew up with.

- **Vepro-knedlo-zelo:** Shorthand for *veprové s knedliky a kyselé zeli*, this dish consists of a succulent roast pork and dumplings concoction that is often seasoned with caraway, and served with sauerkraut. You will see it on just about every restaurant menu.

- **Houskové knedlíky:** Bread dumplings made with flour, yeast, egg yolks and milk, sometimes with bread cubes added to the mix. After the dough rises it gets boiled or steamed, then sliced.
- **Ovocné knedlíky:** Fruit-filled dumplings served with cottage cheese as a main course.
- **Bryndzové halušky:** Potato dumplings (similar to Italian *gnocchi*) topped with a creamy, soft, Slovakian sheep's milk cheese that has its own EU protected designation of origin status. It is then topped with crumbled bacon bits and a garnish like chopped chives, onions or dill. It is the national dish of Slovakia, but it's also popular in the Czech Republic, especially in Moravia.
- **Svicková na smetane:** A dish where beef is marinated in vinegar and herbs; then roasted with vegetables; then simmered till tender. The broth and vegetables are pureed with sour cream to make a sauce, and it all gets garnished with cranberries.
- **Párek v rohliku:** The quick meal where a small *parek* sausage is completely enclosed within the bun, like pigs in a blanket.
- **Laskonky:** A dessert of two crispy meringues filled with caramel or chocolate buttercream.
- **Trdelník:** A dessert made by wrapping dough around a metal or wooden stick, then roasting it over an open flame. The tubular treat is then dusted with sugar, and topped with nuts and cinnamon.
- **Veterník:** A profiterole made of puff pastry filled with vanilla and caramel cream. The whole pastry is then dipped in a shiny caramel icing for a belt-busting grand finale.

Pubs are an integral part of Czech and Slovak life, and the region brews some of the best beer in the world. In the Czech town of Plzen, brewing dates as far back as the founding of the town, in 1295. Plzen is internationally known for its award-winning *Pilsener Urquell*, and there are numerous other local beers that perfectly accompany the region's hearty food.

## Polish Cuisine

As with many European countries, Polish cuisine feels the influence of many cultures: Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Hungarian, German, etc., as well as a pinch of Russian, Italian, and Turkish. The focus is on meat, especially chicken and pork, and winter vegetables (such as cabbage) and spices, as well as different kinds of noodles. Traditionally, Poles take their festive meals seriously, and feast days — like Christmas Eve or Easter Breakfast — can involve days of preparation.

- **Barszcz:** The Polish variation to borscht, *barszcz* is a clear red borsht, made with meat and vegetable stock with mushroom broth and beets. It often includes smoked meats and the tart taste is enhanced with the inclusion of lemon juice, pickle brine, or dry red wine.
- **Pierogi:** A dumpling that can be filled with sweet or savory products, such as fruits, mushrooms, ground meat, cabbage, cheese, or mashed potatoes. The dumplings are cooked in boiling water and then pan fried.

- **Bigos:** Also called hunter's stew. A dish made with chopped meats stewed with cabbage and sauerkraut.
- **Oscypek:** A smoked cheese made from salted goat's milk, only cultivated in the Tatra Mountains. The cheese is often served pan fried with cranberry sauce.
- **Surówka:** A dish of shredded root vegetables with lemon and sugar (carrot, celeriac, beetroot) or fermented cabbage.
- **Makowiec:** A poppy seed dessert pastry.

## Prague in Brief

Prague, an ancient and historic city, is the capital of the Czech Republic (made up of Bohemia, Moravia, and part of Silesia). The city, located at the crossroads of Europe, is both ancient and modern and possesses a palpable energy. Getting around Prague can be a bit tricky—many of the streets are small, narrow cobblestone paths that seem to wind about endlessly. But the “city of 1,000 spires” is one of the most beautiful you will ever see.

Prague is really a series of five historic towns welded together to form one great city. The river Vltava slices through Prague, giving the city its distinctive bridges. Hradcany, the castle district, is on the river's west bank with Prague Castle and St. Vitus cathedral nearby. Below this section lies Mala Strana (the Lesser Quarter) with buildings dating back to the 13th century. Petrin Hill to the south offers wonderful views out over the city. On the east bank of the river is Stare Mesto (Old Town) with its large central square. Nearby is Josefov, the former Jewish ghetto. Nove Mesto (New Town, though parts of it go back to the 14th century) stretches around parts of Stare Mesto and historic Wenceslas Square. The Charles Bridge, a city landmark, stretches over the Vltava and links much of the city.

Ruzyne airport is in the western suburbs of the city. The Prague Information Service offers good information about Prague and is located in Old Town Square. The Tourist Office (Cedok) at Na Prikope is also a good place for information and maps.

Prague is a lovely city for walking so be sure to stroll the Royal Way, which takes you by some of the city's architectural treasures, including Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral. In Hradcany stop to see the Strahov Monastery and the Summer Palace. If you are a fan of classical music you'll want to stop in at the Smetana Hall in Obecni Dum. The Museum of the City of Prague in northern Nove Mesto is an impressive and interesting stop. Wenceslas Square in Old Town and Josefov in Stare Mesto both offer excellent walking and sightseeing opportunities.

## Local Transportation

**Subway:** Prague's modern subway system—the Metro—is easy to use and spotlessly clean. It provides the simplest and fastest means of transportation, and most new maps of Prague mark the routes. Subways run daily from 5 am to midnight with trains every two minutes during peak hours, slowing down to every ten to fifteen minutes by late in the evening. There are several lines,

each a different color, which intersect at various points in the city center and the route plans are easy to follow. Once inside the Metro, acquaint yourself with these words: vystup means exit, and prestup means connection.

**Tram/Bus:** You'll probably stick to the Metro, but a bus ride can be a good way to see some of the city, especially if you want to venture farther out. You need to buy a new ticket every time you change vehicles.

**Taxi:** These are not recommended, as some drivers try to take advantage of tourists and inflate the price, possibly by driving miles out of the way. If you must take a taxi, it is best to use the hotel's taxi service—it is a little more expensive than taxis found at taxi stands but it is more reliable. Another choice is to ask the hotel to contact AAA Taxi for you (or call them at 233 113 311)—AAA Taxi is also dependable and they speak English. If you choose instead to use a taxi at a taxi stand or one you hail on the street, definitely agree on a price beforehand!

**Punch your ticket on the Metro, trams, and buses:** For the Metro, punch the ticket in the station before getting on the escalators; for buses and trams, punch the ticket inside the vehicle.

## Vienna in Brief

Vienna's "Ring," once the location of the city walls and today a broad boulevard in the inner zone (the oldest part of the city), encircles most main sights. In the center is Stephansplatz, site of the city's famous St. Stephen's Cathedral. Just a short walk away is the Hofburg (the Habsburgs' official residence), the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Art History Museum), and the Staatsoper. The pedestrian thoroughfare, Kaernter Strasse, is the city's major shopping venue; it runs from Stephansplatz past the Staatsoper to Karlsplatz. The "Ring" itself is two and one half miles long and 187 feet wide. Constructed in the mid 19th century to protect Vienna from outside threats, the Ring encircles the Old City. All sites inside the Ring are part of the First Bezirk (or 1st precinct, designated by the #1010 in addresses). The remainder of the city is also sectioned into precincts.

## Local Transportation

Vienna is divided into 23 numbered districts. Most sights are concentrated in the city center, the 1st District, which is largely a pedestrian zone and easily reached by public transportation. Many 1st District attractions are within walking distance of one another. You can walk from one end of the Old City to the other in about 30 minutes. Even the walk from the Ring to either train station is only a half hour or so. Beyond this central hub, districts proceed from the 2nd on up to the 23rd.

Vienna's transit network consists of five U-Bahn (subway) lines, trams, buses, and several rapid transit and commuter trains. Ask your Program Director or hotel concierge for more information about the best options available for obtaining tickets to your desired destination.

**Note on Ticket Validation:** You must validate all tickets yourself by inserting them into machines at the entryway of S-Bahn and U-Bahn platforms or on buses and trams. When entering streetcars, look for a blue box with a white "E," which is for validating tickets.

## Viennese Specialties

Like the rest of Austria, Viennese cuisine is the culmination of various ethnic influences, including Bohemian, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovenian, German, and Italian. But the city as a few local specialties you may wish to try:

- **Soups:** *Griessnockerlsuppe* (clear soup with semolina dumplings), *rindsuppe* (beef broth), and *gulaschsuppe* (Hungarian-style goulash soup).
- **Main courses:** Familiar dishes are *bauernschmaus* (a combination of many varied sausages and pork items with sauerkraut and dumplings), *tafelspitz* (boiled beef with vegetables), *wiener schnitzel* (breaded veal or pork cutlet), *schweinebraten* (roast pork), *backhendl* (fried and breaded chicken), and *gulasch* (stew). *Nockerl* are little dumplings, usually served with sauce.
- **Desserts:** Vienna's *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel) is probably the best in the world. *Palatschinken* are light, sugared pancakes; *klaiserschmarren* is a diced omelet, served with jam and sprinkled with sugar. And of course, don't miss the famous *sachertorte* (chocolate cake with layers of apricot jam)!
- **Coffee:** Austrian coffee, of which there are at least 20 varieties, is delicious and not to be missed. Introduced 300 years ago by the Turks during their unsuccessful attempt to conquer Vienna, coffee has become an art form, served in veritable institutions known as the Viennese coffeehouses. Among the many kinds of coffee are *kleiner schwarzer*, a small cup without milk; the *melange*, a large cup with foamy milk; *mokka*, strong black Viennese coffee; *kapuziner*, which is the same as *melange* but topped with whipped cream; and *tuerkischer*, Turkish coffee boiled in a small copper pot and served in tiny cups.

## Warsaw in Brief

Bisected by the Vistula River Warsaw – the modern capital of Poland – is a very different animal from Krakow. World War II dealt Warsaw a particularly devastating hand – only 15% of the city emerged still standing after being razed by the German occupiers and nearly 60% of the population was either dead or missing. The Postwar years saw Soviet-style city planners, with a blank slate, design and build to their Socialist-Realist palette

## Local Transportation

Warsaw is quite large, so you can expect to become familiar with the public transportation system. It's complex, and you should probably seek destination specifics before you set out. Trams are most convenient for distance travel, and they run from early morning to around 11:00 pm, though it's best to avoid the trams at rush hour. Buses and taxis are economical, efficient, and simple to use and though more expensive than the trams, are relatively economical.

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

### Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

### Crafts & Souvenirs

#### Austria

Popular buys include glassware, crystal, porcelain, petit point, musical instruments and scores, fur hats, ski wear, and, of course, lederhosen (leather pants), loden-cloth coats, and sachertorte (chocolate cake). But be forewarned: the quality of Austrian wares is exceptionally high, and so are the prices!

**Value Added Tax:** In Austria, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 10% to 30%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

#### Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic many stores sell a wide range of crafts and tourist goods, such as Bohemian glass, porcelain, crystal, peasant pottery, wooden toys, jewelry, and folk carvings. Modern artwork and crafts are sold at private art galleries.

#### Poland

Polish folk objects make good mementos and are an excellent value. Some interesting possibilities include embroidery, lace, dolls in folk costumes, prints and engravings, amber, pottery, and woodcarvings. The wide range of chain stores specializing in different local wares makes shopping in Poland relatively easy. Desa stores carry tapestries, painting, sculptures, and porcelain.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

# DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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## Austria

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 32,382 square miles
- **Capital:** Vienna
- **Languages:** German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
- **Location:** Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
- **Population:** 8,665,550 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 73.8%, Protestant 4.9%, Muslim 4.2%, Orthodox 2.2%, other 0.8%, none 12%, unspecified 2%
- **Time Zone:** Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

### National Holidays: Austria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Austria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/26 National Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

### Austria: A Brief History

Austria has been populated since Neanderthal times, but its most significant early culture was the Hallstatt, which arose around 400 BC when Celtic people settled along the shores of the Hallstatter See. The Celts formed a confederation called Noricum, established a prosperous salt trade, and forged iron implements. When Romans arrived in 15 BC, they made the area a province. In exchange for their excellent Noric steel (which the Romans used for swords), the Celts received protection—and they needed it, as Germanic Teutons and other tribes invaded.

When Charlemagne arrived in the 8th century and created a zone in the Danube Valley called the East March. In 976, the Babenburg dynasty became the margraves of this “eastern realm” or Österreich, German for “Austria.” The Babenburgs extended the territory and made Vienna their capital. When they died, Rudolf I took over in 1278, ushering in the dynastic powerhouse that dominated Europe for 500 years. Consolidating power through strategic marriages, they built a network from Spain to the Netherlands to Germany. The Hapsburgs were all prince-electors of the Holy Roman Empire, and from 1452 they elected their kinsmen as its Emperors. But holding power was not easy. In 1618 Europe erupted into a Thirty Years War that caused nearly eight million deaths. It was largely a contest between Bourbon and Austro-Spanish Hapsburgs. Things further destabilized when the Turks advanced to Vienna. They remained a threat until 1699.

Austria bloomed during the Enlightenment reigns of Maria Theresa and her son, Joseph II. They instituted reforms, and were patrons of the arts (with Mozart as their court composer). Decades later, a result of the Napoleonic wars was that the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806. But the Hapsburgs survived, creating a German Alliance of hundreds of small states. In 1867, Austria and Hungary united as a dual monarchy—and reveled in the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s cultural flowering. Vienna, newly magnificent after a flurry of building, was its epicenter. The Empire prospered until Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, sparking World War I. The 1919 defeat of the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey, and Bulgaria) ended the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which split into several nations per the Treaty of Versailles.

Austria became a republic, but suffered inflation, unemployment, and the loss of a national identity. Political tensions erupted into violent street fights, and in 1934, a Conservative government took legislative powers from the parliament, making Austria a fascist country. Though the Treaty of Versailles had expressly forbidden the reunification of Germany and Austria, Hitler (himself an Austrian) had other ideas about this Anschluss. When the Nazis goose-stepped into Austria in 1938, they were welcomed by cheering crowds. Austria’s military, economy, and political infrastructure were integrated into Germany’s war efforts; the execution of Jews and resistors stepped up; and many Austrians participated in the Nazi’s crimes.

Austria was liberated by Allied and Soviet troops in 1945, a second republic was established, and Austria remained under occupation. In 1955, Russia demanded that Austria declare its neutrality as a condition for ending Soviet occupation. This status enabled Austria to be a bridge between East and West during the Cold War. But the nation never came to terms with its war history. That started in 1986, when former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim ran for president. He won and served until 1992, and investigations into his wartime activities were inconclusive.

Austria joined the EU in 1995, adopted the euro in 1999, and is one of Europe’s most prosperous nations. It is considered a liberal democracy, and consistently ranks high for its quality of life.

## Czech Republic

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 30,451 square miles
- **Capital:** Prague

- **Languages:** Czech is the official language.
- **Ethnicities:** Czech 64.3%, Moravian 5%, Slovak 1.4%, other 29.3%
- **Location:** The Czech Republic is bordered by Austria, Slovakia, Poland, and Germany.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic comprises the ancient provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, with a mountainous rim on the German border to the west.
- **Population:** 10,644,842 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 10.4%, Protestant 1.1%, other or unspecified 54%, none 34.5%
- **Time Zone:** The Czech Republic on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Prague.

## National Holidays: Czech Republic

In addition to the holidays listed below, the Czech Republic celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/08 Victory in Europe Day

07/05 Saints Cyril and Methodius

07/06 Jan Hus Day

09/28 St. Wenceslas Day

10/28 Independent Czechoslovak State Day

11/17 Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

## The Czech Republic: A Brief History

Though the Czech Republic is less than 50 years old, its culture dates to the 5th century BC, when groups of Celts calling themselves “Boii” settled in Bohemia, which means “home of the Boii.” By the 6th century, the Celts were replaced by Germanic and Slavic tribes. Around 631 AD, Samo, a Frankish merchant living in the area, formed a coalition of Slavic tribes, became their king, and won victories against the Avars and the Franks. His short-lived kingdom was the first Slavic state.

A unified Slavic state continued with the formation of Great Moravia, an empire that included the Duchy of Bohemia. The region soon fell under the influence of German dukes, and in 950 became part of the Holy Roman Empire. Fast-forward to the 14th century, the Czech golden age. Under the enlightened reign of Charles IV, who was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1355, Bohemia was a center of power, culture and prestige.

By the 14th century, Jan Hus, a rector at Charles University in Prague, advocated for church reform and against corruption. He gained a huge Czech following two centuries before the Protestant Reformation. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, and in 1419 his followers stormed

Prague's Town Hall and tossed Catholic councilors out the window in what is called the "Defenestration of Prague." Bohemia and Moravia remained Protestant strongholds, but as the Hapsburgs consolidated power, they confiscated Protestant lands. The Hapsburgs dominated for 300 years, leaving an ambiguous legacy. Though they suppressed dissent and imposed Austrian culture, they also provided stability. Under Empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph, serfdom was abolished, public education was provided, and the region's Jews gained rights. An industrial middle class emerged. And there was a renewal of Czech language and culture.

World War I brought the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the establishment of the first independent Czechoslovakia—a joint state between ethnic Bohemians, Moravians, and Slovaks. Czechoslovakia thrived until Hitler annexed the country in 1939. Bohemia and Moravia became a protectorate of the Reich, and Slovakia became a puppet state. Prague was spared significant physical damage, but the resistance was destroyed and two-thirds of the nation's Jews were murdered. In 1945, the Nazis withdrew; Czechoslovakia was reconstituted; and in 1947 2.5 million resident ethnic Germans were expelled to Germany and Austria.

The Soviets took power in 1948, sending thousands of Czechs to prison. Resistance emerged in the 1960s with the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Alexander Dubcek, who espoused "socialism with a human face." It smiled upon the world during the Prague Spring of 1968, when there was an outpouring of democratic sentiment. Dubcek loosened restrictions on the press, speech and travel. But in August, 1968, the Soviets invaded with Warsaw Pact troops, replaced Dubcek with a hardliner, and began reprisals against protest leaders (including activist-playwright, Václav Havel).

As Communism fell across Europe in 1989, the most striking revolt was in Czechoslovakia. When Prague police brutally attacked a peaceful student demonstration, dissidents led by Václav Havel negotiated the government's resignation on December 3, and Havel was elected president. Forty years of Soviet domination were swept aside in what has been called "the Velvet Revolution." Soon after independence, differences between the Czechs and Slovaks became irreconcilable. So on January 1, 1993, they agreed to a "Velvet Divorce" and split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, and the EU in 2004. Today, the Czech Republic is a pluralist multi-party parliamentary democracy. The country has held numerous free elections without incident, and the economy has remained relatively robust.

## Poland

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 120,728 square miles
- **Capital:** Warsaw
- **Government:** Republic
- **Language:** Polish is the official language. It is a Slavonic language. It uses the familiar Roman alphabet, but with many additional accents. German, English, and French are spoken by most members of the travel industry and in hotels.

- **Location:** Situated in the heart of Europe, Poland's low-lying plains extend from the Baltic shore in the north to the Tatra Mountains on its southern border with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To the east of the Polish border are Lithuania, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine; to the west is Germany.
- **Population:** 38,562,189 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Catholic 87.2%, Eastern Orthodox 1.3%, Protestant 0.4%, other 0.4%, and unspecified 10.8%
- **Time zone:** The time in Poland is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 6 pm in Warsaw and Krakow.

## National Holidays: Poland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Poland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/03 Constitution Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Independence Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

## Poland: A Brief History

Poland's sovereignty has never been easy or taken for granted. From its earliest incarnation as an independent state in 966, Poland has been occupied by foreign powers, sandwiched between hostile neighbors and even wiped off the world map for 123 years. But through it all, there have been remarkable leaders and a commitment to cultural preservation that continues to inspire.

The first nation builders were the Slavs. Their most prominent clan, the Polanie ("people of the open country") gave the nation its name, and the Piast dynasty. The most important Piast ruler was Duke Mieszko. In 966, he consolidated power by being baptized a Catholic and marrying Doubravka, a Bohemian princess. Mieszko's son Boleslaw expanded his dominion to an area roughly equivalent to Poland's current borders. He became Poland's first legitimate king in 1025.

Kazimierz III the Great presided over a period of prosperity and expansion from 1333–70. He was a visionary who promoted legal, educational, and civil reforms. Among them was a law providing privileges for Jews, which set the stage for Poland as a haven for a group that made significant cultural contributions for 600 years. He built universities and founded so many new towns it gave rise to a saying that Kazimierz "found Poland built of wood, but left it in stone."

When Kazimierz died without heir, the Polish Princess Jadwiga married the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Jogaila. Their two states became the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. It had a central parliament and local assemblies, and an elected king. But a fatal loophole was that in the absence of a serious Polish contender, nobles could elect a foreigner. This opened the door for rampant bribery and a series of kings whose allegiances were not with Poland.

By the beginning of the 17th century, foreign invaders carved up the kingdom. Most devastating was the Swedish invasion of 1655–70, called “The Deluge.” Next came the Ottomans, but Poland had a bright moment when King Jan III Sobieski defeated the Turks at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, preventing their further spread into Europe. He was unable to prevent Poland’s collapse: In 1772, the Commonwealth was partitioned by Prussia, Austria, and Russia. It was divided two more times, despite a revolt led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko, hero of the American Revolution.

In 1795, Poland ceased to exist as a nation, its borders erased for 123 years. But its spirit was kept alive by nationalist societies, and by romantic artists like the composer Frederic Chopin. It wasn’t until after World War I in 1918 that an independent Polish state came back into existence. The Second Republic only lasted 20 years before the Nazi occupation of World War II. The Germans first targeted Gdansk, then Warsaw, and met fierce resistance. But the Poles were outnumbered and underarmed. The Nazis intended to make Poland their living room by evicting its inhabitants. A million Poles were murdered in camps; nearly all of the nation’s three million Jews were exterminated; and when the Soviets came in 1944, they continued the genocide. By the end of the war, 20% of the Polish population had died, and Poland became a Soviet satellite.

The postwar years saw various protests, but it wasn’t until the Gdansk shipyard strikes of 1980 that change happened. The workers’ main issue was the right to unionize, but in their “21 Demands” they sought far-reaching changes in areas from food supplies to free speech to maternity leave and more. The Solidarity Strike was joined by workers in mines, factories, and more. Through the leadership of Lech Walesa, the protests remained non-violent, but the struggle lasted till the end of the decade. When the Iron Curtain fell, Walesa was elected President, and Third Polish Republic was born. Poland joined NATO in 1999, the EU in 2004, and the Schengen Area in 2007.

Poland is currently run by President Andrzej Duda, a member of the Law and Order party, a right-wing populist and national-conservative political party, who won re-election in 2020.

# RESOURCES

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## Suggested Reading

### General

***The Improbable Voyage*** by Tristan Jones (Travel Account) In 1985, former Royal Navy skipper Tristan Jones embarked on a 2,307-mile voyage across Europe, traveling from the North Sea to the Black Sea via the Rhine and Danube rivers. Battling ice and cold, life-threatening rapids and narrow gorges, German bureaucrats and Romanian frontier police, Jones made his way through eight countries and emerged triumphant, albeit penniless, at the Black Sea. His spirited account of his adventures gives readers a vivid glimpse of the quality of life along Europe's oldest water routes—and of life on the Danube toward the end of the Cold War era.

***Danube*** by Claudio Magris (Travel Account) This widely regarded descriptive travel book follows the river as it flows from its source in Germany to its mouth in the Black Sea, with wonderful descriptions of the scenery en route.

***Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*** by Lonnie R. Johnson (History) A panoramic history of Central Europe that provides a comparative analysis of the key events that have shaped Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia. The author abandons the Cold War convention of defining Central Europe in the bipolar terms of East and West, and emphasizes the underlying continuities in the region's history.

### Austria

***The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty*** by Benjamin Curtis (2013, History) Discover how this Austrian family gained power—and held it—for more than 500 years, shaping all the nations featured on this adventure.

***When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel of Obsession*** by Irvin D. Yalom (2013, Fiction) Set in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Vienna, this novel is built upon a clever conceit: the psychoanalytic sessions between the impoverished and suicidal philosopher, Frederic Nietzsche; and distinguished physician Josef Breuer, who is undergoing his own existential crisis. The twist is that Nietzsche, too proud to seek help, does not know that he is Breuer's "patient." As the two meet in Vienna's salons and coffeehouses, we encounter the personalities of the day, including Sigmund Freud, and gain a sense of the healing power of connection.

***The Age of Insight*** by Eric Kandel (2012, Art) This book takes us to Vienna in 1900, where leaders in science, medicine, and art began a revolution that changed forever how we think about the human mind—our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions—and how mind and brain relate to art. Kandel traces the ideas and advances of Vienna, in rich and rewarding detail, and their enduring influence today.

**The Painted Kiss** by Elizabeth Hickey (2005, Historical Fiction) The author, an art historian, imagines the relationship between the artist Gustav Klimt, and his younger model-mistress, the couturier Emilie Flöge. She was the inspiration for his famous work, *The Kiss*, and it was her name that he uttered as his dying words.

**The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey** by Gordon Brook-Shepard (1996, History) A noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Hapsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

### Czech Republic

**Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937–1948** by Madeleine Albright (2012, Biography) Former Secretary of State Albright describes her early life in Czechoslovakia during the Nazi occupation and World War II. Albright spent much of her childhood in exile in London, and was too young to understand the forces at work in her birth country. For that, she relies here on historical research but also the letters, journals, and articles of her remarkable family and their friends. A stellar example of how the personal becomes the political.

**Me, Myself & Prague: An Unreliable Guide to Bohemia** by Rachael Weiss (2008. Travel Narrative) When the author uproots herself and moves from Australia to Prague she hopes to reinvent herself in a specific way—as a worldly and chic novelist—but ends up discovering more about who she was all along.

**The Garden Party and Other Plays** by Václav Havel (1994, Plays) Written by the famed playwright who went on to become the first president of post-communist Czechoslovakia. These absurdist plays blend politics with typical wry Czech humor to capture the mood of a country on the brink of great change.

**Love and Garbage** by Ivan Klíma (1986, Fiction) When Klíma wrote this book in 1986, it was banned by the Communist regime. Three years later, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, it became a sensation. It follows the ups and downs of a dissident artist forced to be a garbage man in Communist Prague. He collects far more than trash.

**The Unbearable Lightness of Being** by Milan Kundera (1984, Fiction) Passion, politics, and philosophy; loyalty and lies; these are just some of the themes explored in this novel, which follows a young woman in love with a philandering surgeon in Prague of the 1960s.

### Poland

**Lilac Girls** by Martha Hall Kelly (2016, Historical fiction) Loosely based on the true story of an American who campaigned for a group of concentration camp survivors known as “the Rabbits”, this novel follows the intersecting lives of three very different women—a New York socialite, a Polish teenager, and a German doctor.

**God's Playground: A History of Poland** by Norman Davies (2005, History) Critics regard this work as the best and most exciting history of Poland, covering 1,000 years in two volumes. The author also offers a condensed version—*Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*.

**Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories** by Isaac Bashevis Singer (1957, Fiction) From the master of Yiddish literature (and Nobel Laureate), this collection vividly depicts Jewish life in a rural shtetl, while mixing magic and reality.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### Austria

**The Woman in Gold** (2015, Drama) Helen Mirren stars as Maria Altmann, an Austrian-Jewish Holocaust refugee who successfully sued the Austrian government for the return of a major artwork that was stolen from her family by the Nazis: Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bauer-Bloch*, who was her aunt. Based on a true story.

**Museum Hours** (2012, Drama) A lonely guard at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Art Museum befriends an enigmatic American visitor, who has been called here due to a family emergency. Through conversations sparked by the art they both admire, the two begin sharing their lives, and the life of Vienna.

**Before Sunrise** (1995, Comedy/Drama) Two strangers meet on a train and decide to get off in Vienna for just one evening. As they explore some of the city's most evocative landmarks, their conversations go from wryly philosophical to deeply personal, before they must decide to go their separate ways. Stars Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke collaborated on writing the sparkling dialogue.

**Amadeus** (1984, Drama) The pious Italian composer Antonio Salieri is obsessed with his rival, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whom God has favored with divine talent and worldly success—despite Mozart's immaturity and vulgarity. The Oscar winner for Best Picture, this epic from director Milos Forman is gorgeously filmed, and lifted by its pitch-perfect performances by F. Murray Abraham (as Salieri) and Tom Hulce (as Mozart.)

### Middle Europe

**The Grand Budapest Hotel** (2014, Comedy/Mystery) This film was shot primarily in Saxony (Germany) and it takes place in the fictional Republic of Zubrowka, but it beautifully conjures a rich Mitteleuropa nostalgia and has an uproarious story-within-a-story format—plus a killer cast. Ralph Fiennes is the debonair concierge of a grand hotel who deftly contends with his quirky staff, wealthy guests, fascist agents, and the theft of a priceless artwork. Directed by Wes Anderson at his light-hearted (but always precise) best.

### Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Czechoslovakia

**Anthropoid** (2017, Drama) Based on the true story of Operation Anthropoid, an attempt by World War II Czech and Slovak partisans to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, architect of the Final Solution and the so-called "Butcher of Prague."

**Ice Mother** (2017, Comedy/Drama) Hana, a recent widow, has her spirit nearly crushed by her dysfunctional family, with whom she gathers every Saturday for the traditional dinner. Things get disrupted when she meets Brona, who welcomes her into his quirky club of cold-water swimmers, but warms things up in other ways.

**Kolya** (1996, Comedy/Drama) An Oscar winner for Best foreign Language Film. Kolya is an aging ladies man and professional cellist, after being flippant with Russian officials, he loses his orchestra position. To make money, he marries a Russian woman for pay so she can get her papers. But when the cellist is left with 5-year old son, he changes his tune.

**Kafka** (1991, Drama) Directed by Steven Soderbergh and starring Jeremy Irons as the legendary Czech writer Franz Kafka, this unconventional biopic blends events of the author's life with fantasy scenes from his fiction. Segments of striking black-and-white cinematography add to the moody allure of 1920s Prague.

**The Shop on Main Street** (1965, Drama). The Oscar for Best Foreign Film of 1965 went to this story about a disillusioned carpenter, Tono, who is appointed the "Aryan controller" of a button shop owned by an old Jewish woman. By Nazi decree, Tono is the shop's new owner, but the kind Mrs. Lautmann is so senile, she thinks he is just a nice helper. The two end up forging a delicate bond, but when a roundup of Jews begins, Tono must make a terrible moral choice.

**Fireman's Ball** (1967, Comedy) Made just before the Prague Spring, this is the last film that the renowned Miloš Forman directed before going into exile in the US. A masterpiece of the Czech New Wave, this veiled critique of Soviet bureaucracy is wrapped in a comic tale about a retirement fete being hosted by some small town firemen. None of the actors were professionals— they were the actual firemen of Vrchlabí, a Czech village.

## Poland

**The Pianist** (2002, Drama) Three Oscar wins for this unforgettable, harrowing and true story of Wadyslaw Szpilman, an up and coming classical pianist who hid and survived for five years in the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto after his entire family was deported to Treblinka.

**Man of Iron** (1981, Drama) A dissolute journalist is sent to report on the Solidarity movement in the Gdansk shipyards, knowing that his information is being funneled to state police. But as he becomes involved in the lives of shipyard workers, activists, and their leader Lech Walesa, things change. From one of Poland's premier *auteurs*, Andrzej Wadja.

## Useful Websites

**Grand Circle Forum** (tips from previous travelers)  
[www.gct.com/forum](http://www.gct.com/forum)

**Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions**  
[www.gct.com/faq](http://www.gct.com/faq)

**International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**  
[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**Electricity & Plugs**  
[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

**Foreign Exchange Rates**  
[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

**ATM Locators**  
[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

**World Weather**  
[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

**Basic Travel Phrases** (80 languages)  
[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Packing Tips**  
[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection**  
[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

**Transportation Security Administration (TSA)**  
[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

**National Passport Information Center**  
[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

**Holidays Worldwide**  
[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

# Useful Apps

## Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

## LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

## Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

## GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

## Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

## Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

## Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

## Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

## Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

### ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

## TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

## What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

## Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

## Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

## XE

Currency conversions

## SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

## Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

## Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

## Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

## Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

## Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

## Travello

Find travel friends on the road

## TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

## GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

## Tourlina

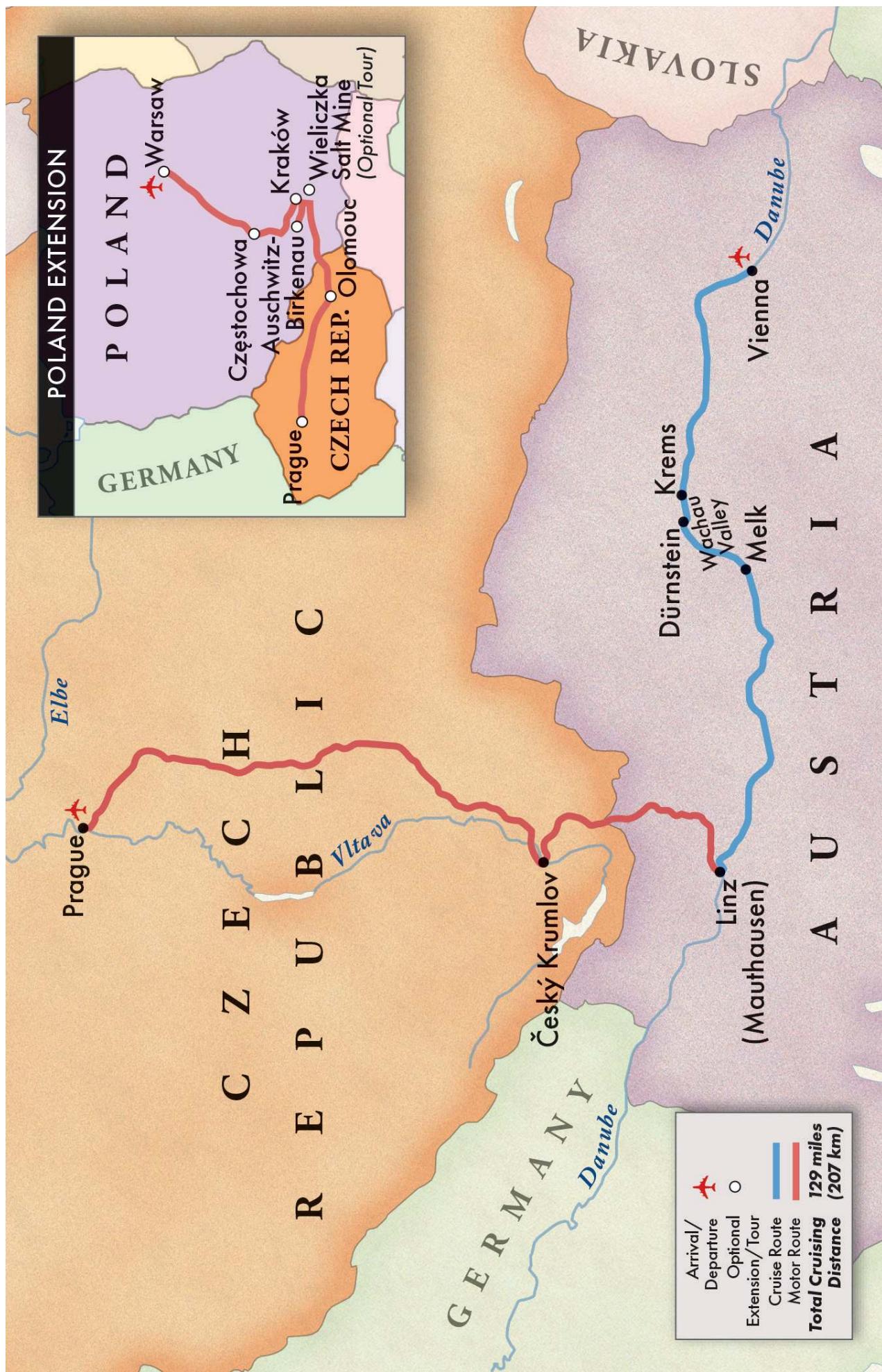
For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

## ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

## Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



# SHARE YOUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

We invite you to share your videos, slideshows, and photos of your past Grand Circle vacations to help inspire your fellow travelers. Go to [www.gct.com/myplanner](http://www.gct.com/myplanner) to upload your photos or video of at least 7 minutes in length and they may be featured on our website.

## Most Popular Videos, Slideshows & Photos from our Grand Circle Vacations Created by our Travelers



Submitted by Fran Geisler, 8-time traveler from Edisto Island, SC



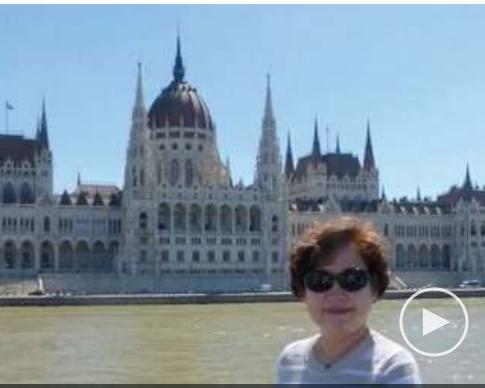
Submitted by Milly Champeau, 6-time traveler from Clinton, TN



Submitted by Elinor Graham, first-time traveler from Ocala, FL



Created by Sarah Brown, first-time traveler from Providence, RI



Created by Joseph Jiang, 3-time traveler from San Francisco, CA



Created by Sheila Knox, 20-time traveler from Modesto, CA



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