Cruise Details

Name:	Istanbul & Enchantment of Eastern Europe & Budapest Escape
Reference:	EMERALDECBI021027-2
Operator:	Emerald Cruises
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	Emerald Astra
Regions:	Danube
Departs On:	02 Oct 27
Departs From:	Istanbul
Arrives On:	15 Oct 27
Arrives At:	Budapest
Cruise Nights:	13
Total Vacation Days:	14

Itinerary

Day 1: Istanbul (Turkey)

Fly from the UK for the start of your cruise. Welcome to Turkey and Istanbul, one of the most important and inspiringly beautiful cities in world history. Upon arrival, you'll be met at the airport and transferred to your centrally located hotel for your three-night included stay. This evening, enjoy meeting your fellow guests and tour director for a convivial welcome drink.

Arrives On: 02 Oct 27

Day 2: Istanbul (Turkey)

Today, you'll have time to explore incredible Istanbul at leisure. Your tour director will be more than happy to help you plan your explorations in this iconic Turkish city during your stay. Included Excursion
Guided tour of Istanbul
This morning, join this fascinating guided tour to explore some of Istanbul's highlights, such as

the famed Hippodrome Square, which was once the sporting and social centre of Constantinople that hosted the chariot races until the Middle Ages. You will get to see the Blue Mosque, probably one of the most famed masterpieces of Ottoman religious architecture. Standing in great prestige with its six minarets and perfectly proportioned dome, the Blue Mosque is named after its turquoise-coloured tiles made of quartz minerals. Ottoman Sultans preferred to pray in this timeless shrine due to its incomparable beauty until the empire collapsed after World War I. Afterwards, you'll continue on to the Basilica of Saint Sophia, one of the largest Christian shrines ever constructed. DiscoverMORE
Topkapi Palace and Harem section (extra expense)
Visit the magnificent Topkapi Palace, residence of the Sultans for almost three centuries. This is located on the promontory jutting out between the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn and provides a magnificent view. The construction of the Topkapi Palace was completed between 1465 and 1478. Just inside the palace, the Harem offers a revealing look into how the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire lived. These private apartments were carefully situated so as not to be seen from the state apartments or courtyards where public affairs were conducted.

Next, you'll visit and descend underground into the Basilica Cistern, constructed in 532 AD by Justinian to hold the water supply for the Great Palace. The Cistern is 70 metres (164 feet) wide and 140 metres (459 feet) long, with a capacity of 80,000m³ of water. Here, you'll find an atmospheric forest of 336 beautiful columns: don't miss the two columns featuring the head of Medusa on their bases, providing a memorable highlight.
Activity Level: Moderate, Duration: 4 hours DiscoverMORE
Whirling Dervishes Ceremony (extra expense)
In the early evening, you'll attend a spectacular Whirling Dervishes Ceremony at Hocapasha Cultural Centre. Founded in the 13th century, the order of Whirling Dervishes introduced cohesion and understanding of various faiths and exalted the idea of dissolving them within the pot of love of God. Before you attend the performance, your expert guide will give you the inner meaning of this special experience with all the metaphors hidden in the traditions of whirling.

Arrives On: 03 Oct 27

Day 3: Istanbul (Turkey)

Continue exploring Istanbul at leisure today. Included Excursion
Guided tour of Istanbul with Bosphorus Cruise
On today's wonderful guided excursion, begin with a tour of the Underground Cistern, known by the locals as the Sunken Cistern. From here, you'll continue your explorations with the bustling atmosphere of the Spice Market, dating back to the 17th century, but still the most popular bazaar. This iconic market is frequented by locals to shop for fresh ingredients to spice up the dishes prepared in the kitchens of Istanbul. Afterwards, you'll experience a unique aspect of the city by boarding a private boat for an unforgettable cruise on the waters of the Bosphorus. During your cruise on this famed strait running between the two continents, your guide will share with you all the legends and myths about the Bosphorus and its impressive mansions and palaces. As well as the scenery of the

historical edifices, you'll be mesmerised by the iconic skyline of Istanbul, ornamented with domes and minarets of Byzantine and Ottoman cultures. DiscoverMORE
Street Food tour (extra expense)
Begin with a stroll across the low-lying Galata Bridge, where, for generations, fishermen have been hauling in their daily catch. Stalls selling everything from jewellery to simits (Turkish bagels) line the bridge. On the other side in the Beyoglu district, you'll encounter Karakoy Gulluoglu, a shop that makes the best baklava in Istanbul. Indulge in this sweet delight, a traditional Turkish pastry made of several layers of phyllo dough filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with honey. Walk off your sweet treat by hiking up the hill to Galatasaray, a neighbourhood that is home to Galatasaray S.K., one of Turkey's most famous football teams. Jump on the tram at Istiklal Caddesi, the city's grand bustling boulevard lined with shops and restaurants. Hop off and explore this street as your guide explains the area's history and points out landmarks and famous buildings.
Activity Level: Easy, Duration: 4 hours

Arrives On: 04 Oct 27

Day 4: Istanbul (Turkey)

This morning, after breakfast, you'll depart Istanbul and be transferred to the airport for your onward flight to Romania and its fascinating capital, Bucharest. Upon arrival, you'll be transferred to your centrally located hotel in Bucharest for a one-night included stay before commencing your exciting river cruise along the legendary Danube.

Arrives On: 05 Oct 27

Day 4: Bucharest (Romania)

Arrives On: 05 Oct 27

Day 5: Bucharest (Romania)

Explore Bucharest this morning. After your insightful tour, you’ll be transferred from Bucharest to Giurgiu, on the banks of the Danube, where a warm welcome from your captain and crew awaits on board your Emerald Star-Ship.

Arrives On: 06 Oct 27

Day 5: Giurgiu (Romania)

Arrives On: 06 Oct 27

Day 6: Ruse (Bulgaria)

Today, your Emerald Star-Ship will cruise into Rousse, Bulgaria’s most elegant city. This important port on the Danube is often called ‘Little Vienna’ thanks to its elegant Belle Epoque and Neo Baroque architecture, leafy squares and wide boulevards. Included Excursion
Walking tour of Rousse
Be immersed in history as you wander through Bulgari’s ‘Little Vienna’. Admire the Court House, City Hall, Opera Building, the main shopping street Alexandrovska and St. Trinity Church, then enjoy coffee and cake at a local restaurant. EmeraldACTIVE
Guided hike to Ivanovo Church
Transfer to the River Lom Nature Park for an active hike to the World Heritage-listed Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo. Dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, these remarkable structures are lined with exquisite frescoes representing biblical scenes. DiscoverMORE
Full day Tour of Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanasi extra expense)
Visit Veliko Tarnovo and learn about its rich history as the former capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire. This medieval city was built atop three hills, and its fortifications and cobbled streets will delight history lovers. Nearby, Arbanasi sits on a high plateau overlooking the Yantra. Each street in the area is lined with traditional houses, and old churches offer centuries of exploration.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration: 8.5 hours

Arrives On: 07 Oct 27

Day 7: Vidin (Bulgaria)

Viticulture is at the heart of the most western town in Bulgaria, where sweeping vineyards pepper the banks of the Danube and winemaking has prospered for generations. Vidin is one of Bulgaria’s oldest riverside towns, beginning life as a Thracian settlement more than 2,000 years ago, and is home to Baba Vida, a preserved medieval fortress in the country. Included Excursion
Visit to a local vineyard with wine tasting & a visit to Baba Vida Fortress
Get an introduction to the best of Vidin’s viticulture, as you stroll through a local vineyard and enjoy a tasting session of their local wines like gamza, the region’s signature pale red varietal. Later, visit Baba Vida, a medieval fortress whose name can be translated to mean ‘Granny Vida’. EmeraldACTIVE
Guided hike to Belogradchik Fortress
Transfer to Belogradchick Rock Fortress Park for a guided hike to its ancient mountaintop fortress. First built when the region was part of the Roman Empire, it has been used and extended in the 14th century and by the Ottomans in the 19th century, right up until the Serbo-Bulgarian War in 1885. DiscoverMORE
Traditional Bulgarian pastry making (extra expense)
Watch your host prepare a traditional Bulgarian banitsa pastry, before joining a demonstration and learning to make your own. Banitsa is a very popular Bulgarian dish, consisting of dough sheets with various fillings, the most popular being white cheese and eggs. Afterwards, enjoy a tasting, served with a bowl of the famous Lactobacillus Bulgaricus yoghurt.
Activity level: Easy, Duration: 3 hours 15

minutes

Arrives On: 08 Oct 27

Day 8: Donji Milanovac (Serbia)

Relax on board as you cruise through the Iron Gates, a picturesque narrow gorge that meanders between the Carpathian Mountains and the European Alps. Look out for the huge rock carving of Decebalus, the last King of Dacia.

Later, cross into Serbia and dock in the town of Donji Milanovac, set on the right bank of the Danube. Surrounded by spectacular landscapes and with a rich heritage, it's the gateway to one of Europe's most important archaeological sites. Included Excursion
Visit to Lepenski Vir archaeological site and museum
Visit the Palaeolithic site of Lepenski Vir, the oldest urban settlement in Europe. Enjoy learning about the significance of this archaeological site, which changed modern understandings of the early Stone Age, and its illustrious history, spanning over eight millennia. DiscoverMORE
Golubac Castle Visit (extra expense)
Take a walking tour of the medieval Golubac Fortress. The castle was built at the entrance to the Iron Gates, at the point where the Danube is the widest and then runs into the gorge of the Carpathian Mountains. An exceptional strategic point, it enabled easy control of all the land and waterways that connected the East and the West, whereas the steep and inaccessible cliffs on which the fortress was built offered natural protection.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration: 2 hours

Arrives On: 09 Oct 27

Day 8: Golubac (Serbia)

Arrives On: 09 Oct 27

Day 9: Belgrade (Serbia)

The Serbian capital Belgrade is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in Europe and has lived a multitude of lives over the last 2,000 years. It has been shaped by conflict and still bears the scars of bombings from World War II through to the 1990s. At the same time, this gritty centre is filled with beautiful architecture, engaging street art and a legendary cafe culture that can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire.

This evening, you will be invited to the Horizon Lounge, where a traditional Serbian folklore show will provide spectacular entertainment. Included Excursion
Highlights of Belgrade
This city tour introduces you to the highlights of one of Europe's oldest cities. Relax as your coach takes you through the centre of this peaceful city to see the symmetrical façade of the Church of Saint Sava, one of the world's largest church buildings, the Parliament Building, Republic Square, City Hall and more. Finish with a drive through Belgrade's

wealthiest neighbourhoods and past Tito’s
Mausoleum. EmeraldPLUS
Serbian folklore evening show on board
Watch local musicians and dancers perform traditional dances from around Serbia while wearing authentic, colourful
costumes. EmeraldACTIVE
Guided e-bike tour in Belgrade
Cycle through Belgrade with a local guide to experience the city’s landmarks and natural beauty along the Danube. Learn about the diversity of the local area as well as the history of the city and its people, including the former country of Yugoslavia. Highlights include the Belgrade Waterfront, Staro Sajmiste (former concentration camp), and
Ada Island. DiscoverMORE
Routes of Nikola Tesla (extra expense)
Learn the story of Serbian-American Nikola Tesla at the intriguing museum dedicated to the life and work of one of the world's most famous inventors. You’ll see magnificent working models of Tesla's machines, his various personal items and his visions of the future.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration: 2.5 hours

Arrives On: 10 Oct 27

Day 10: Novi Sad (Serbia)

The second-largest city in Serbia, Novi Sad, has a relaxed atmosphere and lively spirit that sets it apart from other major cities in the region. You’ll find the locals relaxing in leafy parks, swimming in the river and sharing drinks in busy laneway bars. It’s compact and easily walkable, dotted with grand public buildings, excellent museums and the
striking Petrovaradin Fortress. Included Excursion
Guided tour of Novi Sad
Set out on an easy walking tour of the city with a local guide. See the market, Orthodox Cathedral, City Hall, Catholic Cathedral, and enjoy a visit to the Synagogue. EmeraldPLUS
Home-hosted lunch with a Serbian family
Visit the home of a local Serbian family and join them for a traditional lunch. During the meal, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss Serbian traditions and the daily life of the people. EmeraldACTIVE
Guided e-bike tour in Novi Sad
Discover Novi Sad on two wheels with this guided e-bike tour. Ride along the Danube promenade and pass iconic landmarks. Learn about the city’s history, culture and local life from your guide while enjoying a leisurely cycling pace.

Arrives On: 11 Oct 27

Day 11: Ordas (Hungary)

This afternoon, dock in Ordas. This tiny village on the left bank of the Danube is in one of Hungary’s most fertile agricultural regions, which is famous for its paprika.

This evening, enjoy an authentic Hungarian folklore show and dinner on board as you cruise towards Budapest. EmeraldPLUS
Puszta Equestrian Heritage
Travel to the Puszta, or Great Hungarian Plain, for a traditional performance showcasing the exceptional equestrian skills of the Magyar cowboys. Relax as you watch their spectacular horse parade and witness their exercise drills, most of which were practised in preparation for wartime. EmeraldPLUS
Traditional Hungarian folklore show on board
Enjoy a traditional Hungarian dinner, then a Hungarian folk dancing and music performance on board.

Arrives On: 12 Oct 27

Day 11: Budapest (Hungary)

Arrives On: 12 Oct 27

Day 12: Budapest (Hungary)

Today you'll be transferred to your centrally located accommodation in Budapest, where a two-night stay in the historic Hungarian capital is certain to delight. Included Excursion
Guided tour of Budapest
This morning, embark on a guided coach tour through the historic capital of Hungary. Admire the 19th-century Chain Bridge that spans the mighty Danube River, connecting the ancient Buda districts of Buda and Pest and among other impressive landmarks, glimpse Budapest's impressive Parliament building.

Arrives On: 13 Oct 27

Day 13: Budapest (Hungary)

Enjoy your time in the delightful Hungarian capital, where Eastern European heritage seamlessly blends with vibrant modernity, along the legendary Danube. Your tour director will be more than happy to help you plan your Budapest explorations during your stay. Perhaps crossing the Chain Bridge to experience how the city differs in Buda and Pest, or sampling some delicious Hungarian treats. In the evening, join your fellow guests and tour director for a convivial farewell drink. DiscoverMORE
Tastes of Hungary (extra expense)
Embark on a flavourful journey through Budapest's vibrant culinary scene, where tradition meets indulgence. This morning's tasting tour invites you to sample iconic Hungarian dishes, such as rich goulash, crispy lángos topped with sour cream and cheese and sweet chimney cake fresh from the oven. Sip on the fiery fruit brandy pálinka as you explore bustling markets and hidden eateries, guided by a local expert who brings Hungary's food heritage to life with every bite and step.
Activity Level: Easy, Duration: 1.5 hours

Arrives On: 14 Oct 27

Day 14: Budapest (Hungary)

This morning, after breakfast, it’s time to say farewell to your fellow guests as you leave your accommodation and Budapest for your transfer for your return flight to the UK taking with you treasured memories of a home-hosted Croatian experience, Danube delights and storied folklore of Hungary.

Arrives On: 15 Oct 27

For more information on this cruise, please call +44 (0)1202 767926.

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