Cruise Details

Name:	Budapest to the Black Sea - Eastbound
Reference:	TAUCKRLE202721052027
Operator:	Tauck
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	MS Esprit
Regions:	Danube
Departs On:	21 May 27
Departs From:	Budapest
Arrives On:	02 Jun 27
Arrives At:	Bucharest
Cruise Nights:	12
Total Vacation Days:	13

Itinerary

Day 1: Budapest (Hungary)

Tour begins: 6:00 PM, Al Habtoor Palace Budapest. A transfer is included from Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport and Budapest-Keleti Station to Al Habtoor Palace Budapest in the heart of the city. Meet your fellow travelers and Tauck Directors tonight at the welcome cocktail reception and dinner. For guests who arrive early, an optional walk to Dohany Synagogue will be led and offered by your Tauck Director.

Arrives On: 21 May 27

Day 2: Budapest (Hungary)

Once independent cities located on opposite sides of the Danube, Buda and Pest joined together when they were linked by the Chain Bridge in the mid-19th century to become Hungary's cosmopolitan capital, Budapest. You have a choice of Budapest discoveries this morning. You can choose to join Tauck's local guides for sightseeing in Pest starting with a visit to St. Stephen's

Basilica, Budapest's neo-Renaissance cathedral completed in 1905; continuing with Pest's impressive mix of architectural masterpieces and historic monuments, including City Park, patriotic Heroes' Square with its statues of Hungarian leaders through the ages, the Gothic-Revival Parliament building and tree-lined Andrassy Avenue; and time spent wandering through bustling Central Market Hall, a veritable showcase of Hungarian life from food to gifts and cafés. Or you can choose to spend the morning touring the Pest side of the city by bicycle with a local guide (you'll need to be comfortable riding a bicycle in a city environment). The rest of the day and evening are yours to enjoy the city as you like.

Arrives On: 22 May 27

Day 3: Budapest (Hungary)

Today's exploration of Buda begins with a visit the Hungarian Parliament building, rich with history; it is nothing short of an architectural masterpiece. Next, travel to Castle Hill, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where a guided walking tour introduces architectural landmarks such as well-known Fisherman's Bastion. Go back to the days of World War II and the Cold War at the Sziklakórház ("Hospital in the Rock"), a museum recreating underground military medical and civil defense facilities in a former secret nuclear bunker hidden beneath Buda Castle. Following lunch at a local restaurant, enjoy some time to explore more of Budapest as you please, then board your riverboat to begin your cruise. Join us tonight for a welcome toast followed by dinner onboard.

Arrives On: 23 May 27

Day 4: Pécs (Hungary)

Arrive in Mohacs this morning and travel to Pécs for a walking tour. Here you'll explore the fascinating Christian Necropolis, a complex dating back to the 4th century that includes underground burial chambers and chapels adorned with early Christian art and frescoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site. In the 19th century, Pécs was famous worldwide for the exquisite Zsolnay porcelain manufactured here, and your visit includes a stop at the Zsolnay Museum for a look at its stunning examples of Art Nouveau stoneware, tiles and pottery. Visit a winery in Villány for lunch (this region is renowned for its red wines) then return to Mohacs for dinner aboard ship.

Arrives On: 24 May 27

Day 5: Vukovar (Croatia)

Your riverboat exploration of the lower Danube cruises into Croatia; an onboard lecture by a local expert provides insights into the country's culture and history. Dock in the Baroque city of Vukovar, once showcasing opulent 18th-century mansions, but now poignantly symbolizing the effects of the 1990s war as it rebuilds; visit the home of a Vukovar family who have recently returned to resume their lives in the city after the conflict, who will share homemade refreshments with you.

Reboard your riverboat for lunch and cruise to Novi Sad, Serbia, enhanced by commentary by your Tauck Directors. You'll have a little free time this evening to explore Novi Sad before your cruise continues to Belgrade.

Arrives On: 25 May 27

Day 6: Belgrade (Serbia)

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

Arrives On: 26 May 27

Day 7: Iron Gates (Romania)

Continuing your Budapest river cruise, relax on a day's sail past the fields and vineyards of Eastern Europe. Pass into Romania and through the Kazan Narrows and the Iron Gate of the Danube, a two-mile-long series of narrow gorges between the Carpathian and Balkan mountain ranges. As you glide along the Bulgarian / Serbian border, look for the massive monument of the 2nd-century Dacian King, Decebalus, the last king of Dacia who fought to preserve the independence of his country (now known as Romania). Completed in 2004, it's Europe's tallest rock sculpture, carved into the riverbank on the Romanian side. Savor views of the Transylvanian Alps as you cruise to Bulgaria.

Arrives On: 27 May 27

Day 8: Ruse (Bulgaria)

Your Budapest river cruise along the Danube takes you to Bulgaria today; largely off limits during four centuries of Ottoman rule and decades behind the Iron Curtain, the country's rich natural beauty and history is yours to discover for yourself. Disembark after lunch in Ruse – often referred to as "Little Vienna" for its Art Nouveau homes, Austro-Hungarian architecture and lively cafés – for a choice of afternoon sightseeing. You may join us for a guided walking tour of the Basarabov rock

church, and its easily-accessible chapel, or alternatively, embark on a vigorous hike to the celebrated rock churches in the village of Ivanovo, whose stony chambers carved into steep, cliffside caves reveal stunning medieval frescoes inside; a visit is richly rewarding. Afterwards, both groups will convene in Ruse before returning to the riverboat.

Arrives On: 28 May 27

Day 9: Constanta (Romania)

Spend the morning cruising the Danube all the way to Constanta, Romania on the Black Sea coast. Upon your arrival in the early afternoon, take a guided tour of this historic port city, originally the ancient Greek colony of Tomis and home to numerous Greek and Roman antiquities; sights include an Art-Nouveau casino and a monument to the Roman poet Ovid, who was exiled here by the Emperor Augustus. Then it's on to Mamaia, the largest seaside resort on the Black Sea, for some time at leisure to enjoy the beach before returning to the riverboat, docked in Constanta, for your final night aboard your Budapest river cruise. Join us for the ship's farewell reception and dinner onboard this evening.

Arrives On: 29 May 27

Day 10: Bucharest (Romania)

Disembark your riverboat in Constanta and travel to Bucharest, capital of Romania and once regarded as the "Paris of the Balkans." A sightseeing tour of city landmarks includes Revolution Square. Lunch in the Old Town, the city's charming historic center; a former enclave of artisans and merchants in the 16th century, it's now a trendy district of old inns, antique shops, galleries, and cafes, riddled with winding networks of vaulted cellars, cobblestone streets and passageways. Settle in for the next three nights at your historic hotel in the heart of the city.

Arrives On: 30 May 27

Day 11: Bucharest (Romania)

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

Arrives On: 31 May 27

Day 12: Bucharest (Romania)

Discover more of Romania's capital on a choice of morning sightseeing, either visiting the open-air Village Museum or the Ceausescu Villa, before ending in Bucharest's Old Town. Following an afternoon spent pursuing what interests you most in the city, join us this evening as we travel to a Tauck Exclusive at the Bragadiru Palace (a.k.a the Palace of Culture). Named after founder Dumitru Marinescu Bragadiru, one of Romania's most important industrialists, the palace was originally used as a brewery and a performance hall before being confiscated in the 1940's (later returning to the descendants of Bragadiru in the early 2000's). Your tour concludes this evening with a special farewell reception and dinner.

Arrives On: 01 Jun 27

Day 13: Bucharest (Romania)

Tour ends: Bucharest. Fly home anytime. A transfer is included from InterContinental Athénée Palace Bucharest to Bucharest Henri Coanda International Airport and Bucuresti Gara de Nord; please allow 3 hours for flight check-in at the airport.

Arrives On: 02 Jun 27

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

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