Cruise Details

Name:	The Black Sea to Budapest - Westbound
Reference:	TAUCKRLW202727052027
Operator:	Tauck
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	MS Esprit
Regions:	Danube
Departs On:	27 May 27
Departs From:	Constanta
Arrives On:	08 Jun 27
Arrives At:	Budapest
Cruise Nights:	12
Total Vacation Days:	13

Itinerary

Day 1: Constanta (Romania)

Tour begins: 6:00 PM, InterContinental Athénée Palace Bucharest. A transfer is included from Bucharest Henri Coanda International Airport to InterContinental Athéné Palace Bucharest in the heart of the city. Join us this evening for 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); attend a special welcome reception at the palace, complete with musical entertainment.

Arrives On: 27 May 27

Day 2: 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 and visit 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, where the remainder of the day is free.

Arrives On: 28 May 27

Day 3: Bucharest (Romania)

Discover more of Romania's capital with a choice of enriching morning experiences: visit the Ceausescu Villa, the former private residence of Romania's longtime Communist leader, or explore the National Museum of Art of Romania and its impressive collections. If the National Museum of Art is closed, visit the Village Museum, an open-air showcase of traditional Romanian life and architecture. The rest of the day and evening are yours to spend pursuing what interests you most in this fascinating city.

Arrives On: 29 May 27

Day 4: Constanta (Romania)

Before embarking your riverboat today, drive to Romania's popular Black Sea coast – first to the popular resort town of Mamaia for lunch and some "beach time," then on to the port city of Constanta. Here, in what was originally the ancient Greek colony of Tomis, you'll view numerous Greek and Roman antiquities, an Art-Nouveau casino, and a monument to the Roman poet Ovid, who spent years in exile here, then board your riverboat in Constanta to launch your unforgettable Danube cruise. Meet the captain and crew at a welcome reception, followed by dinner onboard at your leisure.

Arrives On: 30 May 27

Day 5: Ruse (Bulgaria)

Your cruise continues in Bulgaria; largely offlimits during four centuries of Ottoman rule and decades behind the IronCurtain, the country's rich natural beauty and history is yours todiscover today. Disembark in Ruse – often referred to as"Little Vienna" for its Art-Nouveau homes, Austro-Hungarian architectureand lively cafés – for a choice of sightseeing today. 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: 31 May 27

Day 6: Vidin (Bulgaria)

There's something special about just "kicking back" during a leisurely morning cruising the Danube, enjoying picture-perfect views of the passing landscapes. Onboard activities throughout your cruise, such as special lectures and presentations, cooking demonstrations or music and dance performances, are an important part of the Tauck river cruising experience. Today, after the riverboat arrives in Vidin, Bulgaria, join us for a walking tour of Vidin's cobblestone streets, including a visit to Baba Vida fortress. Back aboard the riverboat this evening, enjoy a Chef's Signature dinner in the Compass Rose.

Arrives On: 01 Jun 27

Day 7: Iron Gates (Romania)

Spend today aboard your riverboat as you sail along the Serbian / Romanian border, enjoying great views of the Transylvanian Alps. As you cruise, keep an eye out for a kingly face carved into the Danube's rocky bank on the Romanian side; it's a monument to the 2nd-century Dacian King Decebalus, who defended his kingdom from the invading Romans – and it's the tallest rock sculpture in Europe. Glide through Romania's Kazan Narrows and the Iron Gate of the Danube, a spectacular two-mile-long series of gorges between the Carpathian and Balkan Mountains, en route to Serbia; the ship arrives in Belgrade overnight.

Arrives On: 02 Jun 27

Day 8: Belgrade (Serbia)

Wake up today 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, 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: 03 Jun 27

Day 9: Vukovar (Croatia)

Your riverboat crosses the border from Serbia to Croatia and arrives in historic Vukovar today. Preceded by an onboard lecture on Croatia's turbulent history by a local expert, your tour of this venerable 10th-century city – once showcasing opulent 18th-century Baroque mansions, but now a mix of old and new – poignantly symbolizes the effects of the 1990s war. Visit with a local family who have recently returned to resume their lives in the city after the conflict, as they share homemade refreshments with you in their private home. You'll have some time at leisure in Vukovar before the riverboat continues on to Hungary tonight.

Arrives On: 04 Jun 27

Day 10: Pécs (Hungary)

Arrive in Mohacs, Hungary, this morning for an excursion to Pécs and a tour of its 11th-century cathedral. Here you'll also 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 an optional 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. Tonight, attend the ship's farewell cocktail reception and dinner as your Danube cruise draws to a close.

Arrives On: 05 Jun 27

Day 11: Budapest (Hungary)

Bid your Danube cruise – along with your captain and crew – farewell as you disembark the riverboat in Budapest. Your exploration of the Hungarian capital, once the independent cities of Buda and Pest, begins in Pest with a visit to St. Stephen's Basilica, the city's neo-Renaissance cathedral, and continues with views of Heroes' Square, bounded by some of the finest architectural works in Hungary, and such Budapest treasures as City Park and tree-lined Andrassy Avenue. When possible, visit the Parliament building, a neo-Gothic architectural masterpiece. Have lunch at your hotel, then the rest of the day and evening is at your leisure in Budapest.

Arrives On: 06 Jun 27

Day 12: Budapest (Hungary)

Today, you can choose to spend the morning touring Budapest by bicycle with a local guide (you'll need to be comfortable riding a bicycle in a city environment). Or you can do some Buda sightseeing in Castle Hill, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where a guided walking tour introduces architectural landmarks such as well-known Fisherman's Bastion. Revisit Budapest's World War II and Cold War days at the Sziklakórház ("Hospital in the Rock"), a re-creation of underground

military medical and facilities in a former secret bunker and hospital hidden below Buda Castle. After time to explore this fascinating city as you please (or, if you wish, visit Dohany Synagogue with a Tauck Director), we invite you to join us at this evening's farewell reception and dinner.

Arrives On: 07 Jun 27

Day 13: Budapest (Hungary)

Tour ends: Budapest, Hungary. Fly home anytime; a transfer is included from Al Habtoor Palace Budapest to Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport and Budapest-Keleti Station. Allow 3 hours for departure flight check-in.

Arrives On: 08 Jun 27

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