Cruise Details

Name:	Grand European Cruise - Eastbound
Reference:	TAUCKRXE202704072027
Operator:	Tauck
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	MS Esprit
Regions:	Rhine and Danube
Departs On:	04 Jul 27
Departs From:	Amsterdam
Arrives On:	28 Jul 27
Arrives At:	Bucharest
Cruise Nights:	24
Total Vacation Days:	25

Itinerary

Day 1: Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Tour begins: 6:00 PM, Amsterdam, Netherlands.A transfer is included from Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport or Central Station directly to your Tauck riverboat. Tonight join us for a welcome reception and a leisurely dinner as you settle into your floating hotel for a memorable two-week cruise on the Main, Rhine and Danube rivers.

Arrives On: 04 Jul 27

Day 2: Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Amsterdam... the name itself conjures up images of the Dutch capital's myriad cultural treasures, from gabled houses, markets and cafés to awe-inspiring museums housing a treasure trove of world-famous art – and it's all yours to enjoy today. Your guided tour of the famed Rijksmuseum is really inspiring – a firsthand look at Rembrandt's masterpiece The Night Watch is like meeting the artist himself, and you'll love seeing acclaimed works by other well-known "Old Dutch Masters."

Once an exclusive royal privilege, a private sightseeing cruise by canal boat on the city's network of concentric, tree-lined 17th-century canals provides a unique view of Amsterdam's blend of architectural styles – they date all the way back to medieval times – and a unique taste of daily life in this easygoing city. Enjoy an evening at leisure aboard your riverboat as we chart a course to Germany.

Arrives On: 05 Jul 27

Day 3: Cologne (Germany)

After a morning of cruising and lunch aboard the riverboat, your explorations continue in Köln (Cologne), the oldest city in Germany. A guided walking tour of city sights includes a visit to twin-spired Kölner Dom (Cologne Cathedral), boasting one of the world's largest church façades; it is one of Europe's most beloved Gothic cathedrals (this walking tour can be done at either a more leisurely or faster pace, you'll have the option to choose your activity level on tour). You'll have some free time to wander through Cathedral Square and the Hohe Strasse pedestrian area in the afternoon. Your day concludes with the Chef's signature dinner onboard in the Compass Rose followed by an onboard performance by local musicians.

Arrives On: 06 Jul 27

Day 4: Rüdesheim (Germany)

The perfect Rhine cruise... glide along the river until early afternoon, and relax as your Tauck Director shares a tale or two during the cruise through the scenic – and literally legendary – Lorelei Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Arrive in Rüdesheim, where an entertaining lunch in a local German restaurant with an old-world ambiance precedes a visit to Siegfrieds Mechanisches Musikkabinett, an eclectic collection of mechanical musical instruments housed in a 15th-century castle in Rüdesheim, followed by free time; walk back to the ship or ride the mini train. Alternatively, you can choose to join us on a bicycling excursion along the Rhine today (guests choosing this option will not participate in the visit to Siegfrieds Mechanisches Musikkabinett). Back aboard the riverboat this evening, enjoy dinner while cruising the Rhine followed by a game night led by your Tauck Director.

Arrives On: 07 Jul 27

Day 5: Miltenberg (Germany)

Enjoy the views as your Rhine cruise continues into the Main River, for a full day of cruising through scenic valleys studded with castles, cathedrals, and fortified towns. Join us for a Bavarian-themed dinner aboard the riverboat tonight followed by a crew show or an evening of music and dancing.

Arrives On: 08 Jul 27

Day 6: Würzburg (Germany)

Spend the morning cruising and have brunch aboard the riverboat before arriving in Würzburg. Upon arrival, you'll have two choices of sightseeing: visit the town's 18th-century Residenz – a lavish Baroque palace where the town's prince bishops once lived, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site – followed by a short guided walk into the Old Town and free time. Alternatively, depart on an excursion to the nearby town of Rothenburg; nestled on Germany's "Romantic Road," it lives up to its reputation as Europe's "most perfect fairy-tale town." View its Gothic cathedral, towered walls and gabled houses on a walking tour, followed by time at leisure. Spend the evening aboard the riverboat following an early evening departure.

Arrives On: 09 Jul 27

Day 7: Bamberg (Germany)

Your riverboat cruises along the Main to the Bavarian town of Bamberg, a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated atop seven hills. Discover the town's lovely gardens, medieval architecture and 13th-century Gothic cathedral with its four imposing towers on a guided walking tour of Old Town, or choose a bicycling excursion around Bamberg, suitable for fit and experienced cyclists. Enjoy dinner back aboard the riverboat this evening.

Arrives On: 10 Jul 27

Day 8: Nuremberg (Germany)

From the center of the German Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries to the site of National Socialist Germans Workers' Party conventions leading into World War II, Nuremberg has had a storied history since it was first documented in 1050. Today, Nuremberg is a hub for tourism and continues to be important industrial center. Your exploration of this historic city today offers two options; one brings you on a visit Nuremberg's Old Town, including an introductory walking tour through the Medieval fortification walls via Castle terrace to Old Town, passing by Albrecht Dürer House (guests may visit independently after the walking tour), continuing to St. Sebald Church (inside visit if available) and passing by the old City Hall before finishing at the Hauptmarkt; the other, offers a look into Nuremberg, both past and present, viewing sites such as the train terminal, the City Wall, the Opera House, The German National Museum, Courtroom 600, St. Johns Cemetary and the Imperial Castle, each option will finish with a walk through the main market square. This afternoon, your riverboat negotiates the Main-Danube Canal today, which ultimately links the North Sea with the Black Sea – and which you'll learn all about from a local expert during your transit. The idea goes back as far as Charlemagne, but wasn't realized until this canal was completed in the 1990s; pass through 16 locks as the waterway traverses the mountains. Have dinner aboard the riverboat this evening.

Arrives On: 11 Jul 27

Day 9: Regensburg (Germany)

With its roots as a Roman encampment on the Danube, the quintessential Bavarian town of Regensburg is home to more than 1,400 original historic buildings. Walking here is a delight and is the only way to view the sights up-close. A local guide will lead the way as you see the town's 12th-century Steinerne Brücke (Germany's oldest surviving stone bridge), the 15th-century Altes Rathaus (Town Hall), the towering Dom St. Peter, and the remains of the Roman wall. Visit the princely house of Thurn und Taxis (also known as St. Emmeram Palace) on a guided tour, followed by free time. Enjoy an onboard musical performance by a local quartet before your ship sets off for Passau.

Arrives On: 12 Jul 27

Day 10: Passau (Germany)

The riverboat docks in the port city of Passau, dating way back to Roman times. Today, you have the choice of a walking tour revealing the Baroque treasures of this lovely riverside town, known for its stained glass and its many churches – including St. Stephan's Cathedral, home to the largest pipe organ outside of the U.S., and the biggest cathedral organ in the world (inside cathedral visit may not be available on all departures); a cycling excursion around Passau, suitable for more experienced riders; or a full-day excursion to the lovely Austrian city of Salzburg, birthplace of W.A. Mozart (and setting of The Sound of Music). Back aboard the riverboat this afternoon and evening, listen to commentary from your Tauck Director as you continue your cruise, bound for Melk, Austria. Tonight, enjoy a musical performance by classical trio, Donau 3Klang.

Arrives On: 13 Jul 27

Day 11: Melk (Austria)

Your next destination is the town of Melk, Austria, where you'll step back in time on a guided tour of its 900-year-old Benedictine Abbey, perched on a rocky outcrop above the river. Inside this Baroque masterpiece are fine frescoes, early manuscripts, and a high altar. Back aboard the riverboat, enjoy views of castles, vineyards, small towns, monasteries and medieval ruins while cruising through the Wachau Valley toward the magnificent Austrian capital city of Vienna. Tonight, a Tauck Exclusive – a private, gala evening Palais Pallavicini, featuring a sumptuous dinner and live entertainment – just might sweep you off your feet (the evening of the event is subject to change).

Arrives On: 14 Jul 27

Day 12: Vienna (Austria)

Get an overview of Vienna, Austria's capital and one of Europe's greatest cities, with a morning sightseeing tour of this historic former capital of the Habsburg Empire. Take your choice of a tour of Schönbrunn Palace, built to rival Versailles, or a guided visit to the Sisi Museum and the amazing

Imperial Apartments inside the Hofburg, the Habsburgs' former Imperial palace that today is the official residence of Austria's president. Explore the city as you wish this afternoon, or return to the riverboat; dinner is aboard ship tonight.

Arrives On: 15 Jul 27

Day 13: Bratislava (Slovakia)

Depart Vienna after breakfast, and spend the morning cruising to Slovakia. Arrive early afternoon in Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, where 17 centuries of history are chronicled on a walking tour led by a local guide. Highlights include Baroque palaces from the Habsburg era, along with St. Martin's Cathedral, the Opera House, Slovak Philharmonic Hall, and a visit to Old Town Hall. This evening, enjoy a taste of Slovakia with a Slovak dinner followed by entertainment aboard the riverboat; set off for Budapest tonight.

Arrives On: 16 Jul 27

Day 14: Budapest (Hungary)

Your remarkable riverboat voyage from the North Sea to the Black Sea cruises into Budapest, Hungary's capital, today – themid-point of your grand European river cruise. Standing on opposite banks of the Danube, Budapest's two distinct sections – Buda and Pest – were once independent cities. Explore the Pest section on a day of sightseeing that includes views of patriotic Heroes' Square, dominated by statues of great leaders from Hungarian history; City Park; and Central Market Hall. The afternoon is free to explore.

Arrives On: 17 Jul 27

Day 15: Budapest (Hungary)

Sightseeing in the city's Buda section today includes the Hungarian Parliament building, a 19th-century neo-Gothic masterpiece on the Danube (when open); and Fisherman's Bastion, standing watch like a sentinel over the river. After spending some time exploring as you please, board your Tauck riverboat mid-afternoon to continue your cruise along the lower Danube River.

Arrives On: 18 Jul 27

Day 16: Pécs (Hungary)

Arrive in Mohacs this morning and travel to Pécs for a walking tour. 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 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: 19 Jul 27

Day 17: 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: 20 Jul 27

Day 18: 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 touring the "New Belgrade" section of 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: 21 Jul 27

Day 19: Iron Gates (Romania)

Relax on a day's cruise past the fields and vineyards of Eastern Europe; shipboard activities which may be offered throughout your cruise range from cooking demonstrations to folkloric, music and dance performances. 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 to the 2nd-century Dacian King Decebalus – Europe's tallest rock sculpture, completed in 2004, carved

into the riverbank on the Romanian side – as well as spectacular views of the Transylvanian Alps.

Arrives On: 22 Jul 27

Day 20: Ruse (Bulgaria)

Your journey along the lower Danube cruises to Bulgaria; 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 today. 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: 23 Jul 27

Day 21: Constanta (Romania)

Depart the riverboat in the key Black Sea port city of Constanta, Romania, for a tour of what originally was 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 lunch and time at leisure to enjoy the beach before returning to the riverboat for the last night of your cruise. Join us for the ship's farewell reception and dinner this evening as the riverboat spends the night in Constanta.

Arrives On: 24 Jul 27

Day 22: 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 and the Triumphal Arch; erected to commemorate Romania's reunification and those who fell in World War I, it is a smaller but otherwise exact copy of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. 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: 25 Jul 27

Day 23: 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 for free time. If you wish, have dinner at the hotel tonight, or enjoy lunch or dinner at the hotel at another time during your stay.

Arrives On: 26 Jul 27

Day 24: Bucharest (Romania)

Discover more of Romania's capital on a morning sightseeing tour, and choose whether you wish to see the National Village Museum or visit Ceausescu Villa. 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 at the palace, complete with musical entertainment.

Arrives On: 27 Jul 27

Day 25: Bucharest (Romania)

Tour ends: Bucharest, Romania. 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: 28 Jul 27

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