

BALKAN MOSAIC

Cultures, Kingdoms & Coastlines

16-Day Private Journey in
Romania, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia

A FEW DAYS BEFORE OR AFTER THE JOURNEY

It is possible that some of our guests on this journey may wish to spend more time in Europe, either by adding a few days in their favourite cities prior to joining the group or by stopping elsewhere in Europe after the Private Journey ends.

If this interests you, we can certainly help you explore possible options and arrange your international air, hotel reservations, tours and any additional domestic flights.

BUCHAREST AND OUR STARTING HOTEL

First mentioned in 1459 by Vlad III, Bucharest became the Wallachian capital in 1659. Nicknamed the "Paris of the East" for its Belle Époque architecture, the city grew as Romania's capital. Communist rule in the late 20th century reshaped its landscape, replacing historic districts with massive projects like the Palace of the Parliament.

Today, the city is a modern European capital, defined by its 1989 democratic revolution. It's a dynamic metropolis with wide, tree-lined boulevards and a population of approximately two million.

Our starting hotel is centrally located on Strada Episcopiei, overlooking Revolution Square and the Romanian Athenaeum. Originally opened in 1914 and recently fully renovated, the historic property features contemporary rooms, three restaurants, an indoor pool and a spa.

FULL JOURNEY ITINERARY

TUESDAY OCT 12, 2027 ARRIVALS - BUCHAREST, ROMANIA (D)

Today is the start day of the journey and is set aside for the arrival of our guests, so no tour activities have been planned for today.

Regardless of your time of arrival, you will be met at the airport by our local representative and transferred to the hotel. Our tour leader will then meet you in the lobby and will assist with the check-in process as required.

Please be aware that your room may not be ready until around 3 pm. If you arrive earlier, your luggage can be stored with the hotel staff in the interim.

For any guests that have arrived a day earlier and who are planning to go out to explore parts of the downtown today, our tour leader will hold an optional short **orientation session** at the hotel right after breakfast. This session will cover the layout of the city and the location of some of the local sites that are not included in tomorrow's tour.

In the late afternoon, please plan to join the tour leader for a complimentary happy-hour and a short **trip orientation**.

This will be followed by a welcome dinner together.

Overnight at the InterContinental Athenee Palace.

WEDNESDAY OCT 13 BUCHAREST, ROMANIA (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today, we will enjoy a combination of walking and driving, as we explore some of Bucharest's most interesting sites with our local guide.

Lunch will be included.

Free for dinner.

Overnight at the InterContinental Athenee Palace.

**THURSDAY
OCT 14** **BUCHAREST - SINAIA - BRASOV, ROMANIA (B, L, D)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we begin our drive northbound into the central-Romanian region of Transylvania, internationally known as the mysterious land of blood-thirsty vampires.

In spite of this, the UK's King Charles is a big fan. He first visited Transylvania in 1998 and has been a regular visitor ever since. He is involved in conservation of rural villages and has bought and restored a handful of farmhouses as well.

Our first stop today will be the resort town of Sinaia, described as the "Pearl of the Carpathians" and home to the "fairy-tale" Peles Castle.

The castle used to be the former summer residence of the Hohenzollern King's family in Romania, built in 1875 and the most beautiful in South-eastern Europe. It was originally used as the summer residence of the royal family.

Lunch on the way.

We then continue on to Bran, the site of the building known throughout the world as Dracula's Castle. The fortified Bran Castle was designed in the 14th century Gothic style and was used during the middle ages as a defense against the Ottoman raids. The Museum within the castle exhibits Romanian and foreign furniture and art objects from the 14th to the 19th centuries.

After completing our site visit, we make the final leg of our drive to the beautiful city of Brasov, where we check into our hotel for a two-night stay.

Tonight, we have dinner together.

Overnight at Radisson Blu Aurum Hotel.

**FRIDAY
OCT 15** **BRASOV – PREJMER – SFINTU GHEORGHE - BRASOV, ROMANIA (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

We begin our day with a tour of this beautiful and interesting city.

Once the richest and the most important city of Transylvania, it was the largest town in the principality by the 15th century and had commercial links with the Middle East. Brasov is a town of melancholy beauty with its rust-coloured roofs which make a wonderful contrast with the forested hills.

Its Piata Sfatului is a marvelous theatrical space which is often used for concerts and festivals. The Schei District is said to be the oldest part of Brasov and the Renaissance-styled Catherine Gate dates from the 16th century.

Today we will also visit the town of Prejmer, where we will see one of Eastern Europe's best preserved and fortified (UNESCO listed) churches. The villagers needed a place to hide when their village was under attack, so they built a wall around their church. This way they were protecting their religion's space and their own lives. They built almost 300 storage rooms on three or four levels into the interior side of the wall in order to keep supplies and provide security for times of siege. This fortress-church withstood fifty attacks throughout its history without being conquered. This is an amazing achievement considering it was the peasant's only defense system.

We'll have lunch at an appropriate time today.

Later, we will enter the Szekler Land of Transylvania, where the majority of the population is Hungarian. In Sfintu Gheorghe, we will meet a traditional brandy producer, try some of his brandy and learn how this special drink, plum brandy (most famous drink in Transylvania) is made.

Afterwards, we'll return to Brasov. Free for dinner.

Overnight at Radisson Blu Aurum Hotel.

**SATURDAY
OCT 16** **BRASOV – SIBIU - TIMISOARA, ROMANIA (B, L, D)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

We then depart Brasov and head toward the town of Sibiu.

Sibiu's historic center largely escaped the heavy damage and Soviet-era redevelopment that affected many other Romanian cities, so its medieval architecture is remarkably intact:

cobblestone squares, pastel townhouses, defensive towers, and the famous "eyes" (dormer windows) peeking out from rooftops.

With its blend of Transylvanian Saxon, Hungarian, and Romanian influences, Sibiu has a different feel than Brasov or Bucharest — quieter, more refined, and less touristy.

Here, we enjoy a guided walking tour through Sibiu's beautifully preserved old town. We'll wander cobblestone streets lined with pastel-colored houses and take in landmarks like the Council Tower and the Bridge of Lies. Sibiu holds the distinction of being Romania's first European Capital of Culture.

We enjoy lunch at a charming restaurant before continuing our journey.

After lunch, we continue our scenic drive west toward Timisoara, arriving in the late afternoon.

Known as "Little Vienna" for its elegant Secessionist and Baroque architecture, Timisoara is a city of grand squares, pastel façades and tree-lined boulevards along the Bega Canal.

It also holds a special place in Romanian history as the birthplace of the 1989 revolution that ended communist rule.

We take some time to settle in before sitting down to dinner, where we unwind and sample authentic Romanian flavors after a full day of travel and discovery.

Overnight at Atlas Boutique Hotel.

**SUNDAY
OCT 17** **TIMISOARA, ROMANIA (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

After breakfast, we set out on a relaxed-paced walking tour of Timisoara.

Admire the grand Piata Unirii and Piata Victoriei, surrounded by Baroque, Habsburg-era buildings in soft pastel hues that give the city its "Little Vienna" charm.

We stop for lunch at a restaurant in the city center.

In the afternoon, weather and schedule permitting, we enjoy a leisurely boat trip along the Bega River.

The evening is free for dinner, giving you the chance to explore Timisoara's lively restaurant scene independently.

Overnight at the Atlas Boutique Hotel.

**MONDAY
OCT 18** **TIMISOARA, ROMANIA – BELGRADE, SERBIA (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

After breakfast, we depart Timisoara and head toward Belgrade, crossing into Serbia.

Along the way, we stop for a memorable lunch around noon at a charming fish restaurant in Pancevo. Part of the fun is the journey itself: ring a bell and a small boat ferries you across the Tamiš River to reach the restaurant, perched right on the water's edge.

We then continue on to Belgrade, checking into our hotel in the afternoon.

Belgrade is a city of layered history and irrepressible energy — a place where Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and socialist-era influences collide against a backdrop of style.

The city rewards curiosity. It's unpolished in the best way, full of warmth, grit and a nightlife that rivals any European capital.

Free for dinner. Belgrade has so many excellent restaurants and the tour leader will have many suggestions for you.

Overnight at the Courtyard by Marriott.

**TUESDAY
OCT 19** **BELGRADE, SERBIA (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

After breakfast, we'll begin a walking tour of Belgrade with our guide.

We plan to visit the Belgrade fortress "Kalemegdan", built in 535 BCE, with a view of the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. This includes the Pobednik Monument and the Serbian Orthodox Church of the Holy Mother of God (Crkva Ruzica).

We also plan to visit the “Knez Mihaylova” pedestrian street, the Republic square and the National Assembly. Our guide may also cover other interesting sites along the way and may describe recent war events.

We will enjoy a local lunch together and, on our way back to the hotel we'll visit the beautiful St. Sava Cathedral.

The remainder of this afternoon and evening is free.

Overnight at the Courtyard by Marriott hotel.

**WEDNESDAY
OCT 20**

BELGRADE, SERBIA (B)

Breakfast at the hotel.

With the city's iconic landmarks already behind you, today is free to explore Belgrade at your own pace.

You may wish to head to Skadarlija, the city's bohemian quarter, where cobblestone streets are lined with traditional taverns, street musicians, and artisan shops — a wonderful spot for a leisurely coffee or an early lunch.

For a different side of the city, cross into Savamala, Belgrade's creative district, known for its converted warehouses, street art, riverside bars and design studios housed in once-industrial buildings.

History lovers might enjoy the Museum of Yugoslavia or the Nikola Tesla Museum, both offering deeper insight into Serbia's 20th-century story.

Shoppers can browse Belgrade Waterfront's modern promenade along the Sava, a striking contrast to the city's older quarters. As evening approaches, consider a splav — one of the floating river clubs and restaurants moored along the Danube and Sava — for a drink or dinner with a view, a quintessential Belgrade experience.

Whether you spend the day wandering markets, relaxing in a park like Ušće, or simply people-watching from a café terrace, today offers the freedom to discover the city's more personal, unscripted side.

Overnight at the Courtyard by Marriott hotel.

**THURSDAY
OCT 21**

BELGRADE, SERBIA TO SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA (B, L, D)

Breakfast at the hotel.

After breakfast, we begin our cross-border drive into Bosnia and Herzegovina and carry on to Sarajevo.

Lunch along the way.

After arriving in Sarajevo late this afternoon, we will check in to our hotel for a two-night stay. The hotel is extremely well-located in the centre of the downtown area.

Tonight, we'll enjoy dinner together at a local restaurant.

Overnight at the Apeiro City Avant hotel.

**FRIDAY
OCT 22**

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA (B, L)

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, we begin our tour of the city's most interesting landmarks.

Today's visits will include the abandoned Bobsleigh Track, built in 1984 for the Winter Olympic games in what was formerly known as Yugoslavia. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina opened its doors to the international community to celebrate sport.

However, during the long Sarajevo siege from 5 April 1992 to 29 February 1996, the bobsleigh track was used as a base for artillery.

Between March and June 1993, during the siege, the Sarajevo Tunnel, also known as the Tunnel of Hope, was constructed and we will visit this tunnel today and learn more about what went on during this time.

We'll break for lunch today at a convenient restaurant which may include one of the viewpoints enroute, such as Vidicovac, Park Princeva or similar.

We then transfer back to the old city center and continue with a walking tour. Here, we visit the Bascarsija (the historical Turkish market), Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque (an Ottoman mosque from

16th century), the Latin Bridge (the Ottoman-era stone bridge at the site of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's 1914 assassination), the Sebilj Monument (a famous 18th century wooden fountain), the "Sacred Heart" Cathedral (a Gothic cathedral from the 19th century) and the Sarajevo city hall.

Free for dinner tonight.

Overnight at the Apeiro City Avant hotel.

SATURDAY SARAJEVO – MOSTAR – DUBROVNIK, CROATIA (B, L, D)

OCT 23

Breakfast at the hotel.

After breakfast, we begin our drive south.

Upon arrival in Mostar, we take a walking city tour in the old part of the town with a local guide. We visit the Stari Most, originally a 16th-century Ottoman bridge that crosses the river Neretva and connects the two parts of the city. The Old Bridge stood for 427 years, until it was destroyed on 9 November 1993 by Croat military forces during the Croat–Bosniak War.

Luckily, it was rebuilt in July 2004.

We then stroll through Kujundziluk, Mostar's charming old Turkish bazaar lined with copper and silverwork stalls, we explore the cobbled lanes of the Old Turkish Quarter and visit a small 17th-century mosque steeped in Ottoman history.

Lunch at a local restaurant on the river looking back at the bridge.

After lunch we continue driving south and cross into Croatia.

Upon arrival in Dubrovnik, we will check in for a four-night stay.

Dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight at Rixos Premium Dubrovnik (or similar).

SUNDAY DUBROVNIK OLD TOWN (B, L)

OCT 24

Breakfast at the hotel.

Known as the "Pearl of the Adriatic," Dubrovnik's blend of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture makes it one of the best-preserved medieval cities in Europe.

Today, we spend the morning exploring its magnificent ancient walled city on a guided walking tour. We'll wander within the massive stone walls that have guarded the city for centuries, admire the Rector's Palace, Sponza Palace and the Franciscan Monastery. We also stroll down the Stradun, the polished limestone main street lined with shops and cafés.

We will enjoy lunch together at one of the many cafes inside the walls.

This afternoon and evening are free to walk the streets and walls of the Old Town, or to swim in the Adriatic or simply soak up the atmosphere of Dubrovnik at your own pace.

Overnight at Rixos Premium Dubrovnik (or similar).

MONDAY BOAT TO ELAPHITI ISLANDS (B, L, D)

OCT 25

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we board our boat for a full-day excursion to the nearby Elaphiti Islands where time moves at a slower, more forgiving pace.

With crystal clear waters and nonexistent crowds, we can enjoy the time on and off the boat with opportunities to swim, snorkel, explore palm-framed harbours and sleepy village squares and perhaps enjoy some local wine as well.

Along the way, we'll enjoy lunch today at a hand-picked island restaurant.

Later in the afternoon we will make our way back to Dubrovnik.

Tonight, we will enjoy our "Farewell Dinner" together.

Overnight at Rixos Premium Dubrovnik (or similar).

TUESDAY FULL DAY OF WINE AND SEAFOOD (B, L)

OCT 26

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today, we escape the city and discover local culture, spectacular scenery and exceptional gastronomy.

We begin in the charming village of Trsteno, where a stroll through the magnificent arboretum offers breathtaking sea views and a peaceful introduction to the day. We then continue to the medieval town of Ston, famous for its impressive defensive walls and centuries-old salt pans.

From here, we travel to one of the peninsula's renowned wineries, meet passionate local winemakers, learn about the region's rich viticultural heritage and enjoy a tasting of award-winning wines, including the iconic Plavac Mali.

The journey continues to the shores of Mali Ston Bay, where the freshest oysters are served straight from the sea.

The grand finale is a relaxed fish lunch in an authentic seaside setting, featuring the finest local seafood and regional specialties paired with excellent Croatian wines.

We return to Dubrovnik in the late afternoon.

Free time to prepare for tomorrow's departure.

Overnight at Rixos Premium Dubrovnik (or similar).

WEDNESDAY **DUBROVNIK DEPARTURE (B)**
OCT 27

Breakfast at the hotel.

At an appropriate time, you will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight.