



ITALY & MORE

GOLDEN EAGLE DANUBE EXPRESS: BALKAN EXPLORER

(TOUR CODE: 14038)

STARTS AND ENDS

Venice to
Istanbul

TRAVEL PERIODS

27 Aug 2025 - 02 Oct 2026

EXPERIENCE

Luxury
Rail

TRAVEL STYLE

Rail Journeys

The iconic European Grand Tour journey between Venice and Istanbul visiting nine countries in twelve days by private train.

Highlights

- Discover Sarajevo's poignant history on a guided tour of the city
- Enjoy a gondola ride through the iconic waterways of romantic Venice
- Explore the ethereal Postojna Cave network of limestone caverns and monuments
- Visit one of the world's best preserved Roman amphitheatres in ancient Plovdiv
- Tour Istanbul's magnificent Sultan Ahmet Mosque (the Blue Mosque)

This voyage of a lifetime transports you from the enchanting "City of Water" to the jewel of the Byzantium Empire. Evocative of the refinement and sumptuous elegance of a by-gone era, Golden Eagle trains capture the vintage charm of the golden era of travel. Begin your journey in Venice before meandering through the captivating Balkan Region. Experience exclusive excursions across this iconic route before arriving in the magical city of Istanbul.



INCLUSIONS

- Overnight stay at the Hilton Pucic hotel, Dubrovnic (or similar)
- Private ensuite accommodation on the Golden Eagle Danube Express train
- Quality pre and post tour accommodation in Venice and Istanbul
- Freshly prepared meals on board, using the finest local ingredients
- Authentic dining experiences in local restaurants
- Inclusive alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
- Arrival and departure transfers
- Expertly guided off-train excursions
- Cabin attendant service including evening turndown
- Experienced Tour Management team
- Services of a UK-registered Doctor and medical facilities on board
- All gratuities
- Luggage portage throughout the journey

ITINERARY

Day 11 Istanbul, Turkey

Also included in the Istanbul programme is a visit to the crown jewel of the Ottoman Empire, Topkapi. This stunning palace is the largest and oldest in the world and was the primary residence of the Ottoman Sultans from 1465 to 1853. With its

treasury and exotic buildings overlooking the Golden Horn, your visit to Topkapi promises to be a truly fascinating experience.

Also visit the Grand Bazaar, which is one of the world's largest covered markets, with 58 streets and over 4,000 shops. In operation since the 14th century the bazaar is especially known for its jewellery, leather, pottery, spices, and carpets.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 1 Venice, Italy

Arrivals day in Venice where you will be met and transferred to your centrally located hotel for a two-night stay.

This evening you will enjoy a welcome reception and dinner, giving you the opportunity to meet your fellow travellers.

Dinner



Day 2 Venice, Italy

Venice is a truly captivating city of romance; its unrivalled beauty takes away the breath of first-time visitors and regulars alike. Today you will have the opportunity to take a walking tour around the highlights of this spectacular city. Walk through the winding lanes beside the Grand Canal to St Mark's Square, which for 1,000 years was the heart of Venetian life. You will also see St Mark's Basilica and stroll through the Rialto Market.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day

3

Trieste, Italy

This morning transfer from the hotel, by boat, directly to Santa Lucia station on the Grand Canal. Here, the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*, is ready for boarding.

Mid-morning the train will thread its way-out of Santa Lucia station onto the 3-mile causeway over the Venice Lagoon and on to the first stop at the Italian port city of Trieste, for an afternoon tour where you visit Miramare Castle. You will also stop at the vast Piazza Unita d'Italia, the main town square.

There is the option to climb the hill to the famous Church of San Giusto built around a medieval complex that dates back to the 13th century. You may go inside the church for a close-up view of the splendid Byzantine-style architecture enriched with precious mosaics.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



MIRAMARE CASTLE

Day 4

Postojna & Ljubljana, Slovenia

Today you will visit Postojna Cave and ride an underground train deep into the cave and tour the network of magnificent halls, a myriad of cave formations and mysterious animals.

After the visit to the caves, return to Ljubljana which is the delightful capital city of Slovenia offering a combination of ancient architecture and youthful culture. An afternoon walking tour of Ljubljana's Old Town includes a visit to Preseren Square, the Three Bridges, Dragon Bridge and Plecnik Market.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



PRESEREN SQUARE

Day 5

Sarajevo & Mostar, Bosnia, & Herzegovina

Early morning arrival into the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo which is an intriguing blend of Eastern and Western culture; it has mosques and minarets, an ancient bazaar, and an atmospheric old Turkish quarter. Discover the city's poignant history through a truly absorbing tour detailing the horrors of the Balkan War. Sarajevo suffered from the longest siege of a capital

city in the history of modern warfare.

The scars of war are still evident as you travel past war-torn buildings, and make a special visit to the Tunnel Museum under Sarajevo Airport. Your guide, who lived through the 1992-1996 conflict, brings to life in touching fashion the struggles the citizens of Sarajevo faced during the siege of the city.

Following Sarajevo, this afternoon travel onto the historic city of Mostar by coach, the crossroads of many civilizations, cultures and three religions. Mostar was one of the most important cities of the Ottoman Empire. The town's renowned stone arch bridge linking the Christian and Muslim areas was re-built in the summer of 2004. You will also visit Turkish House and the mosque before walking through the narrow, bazaar streets, where you can shop for traditional souvenirs and handicrafts.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 6

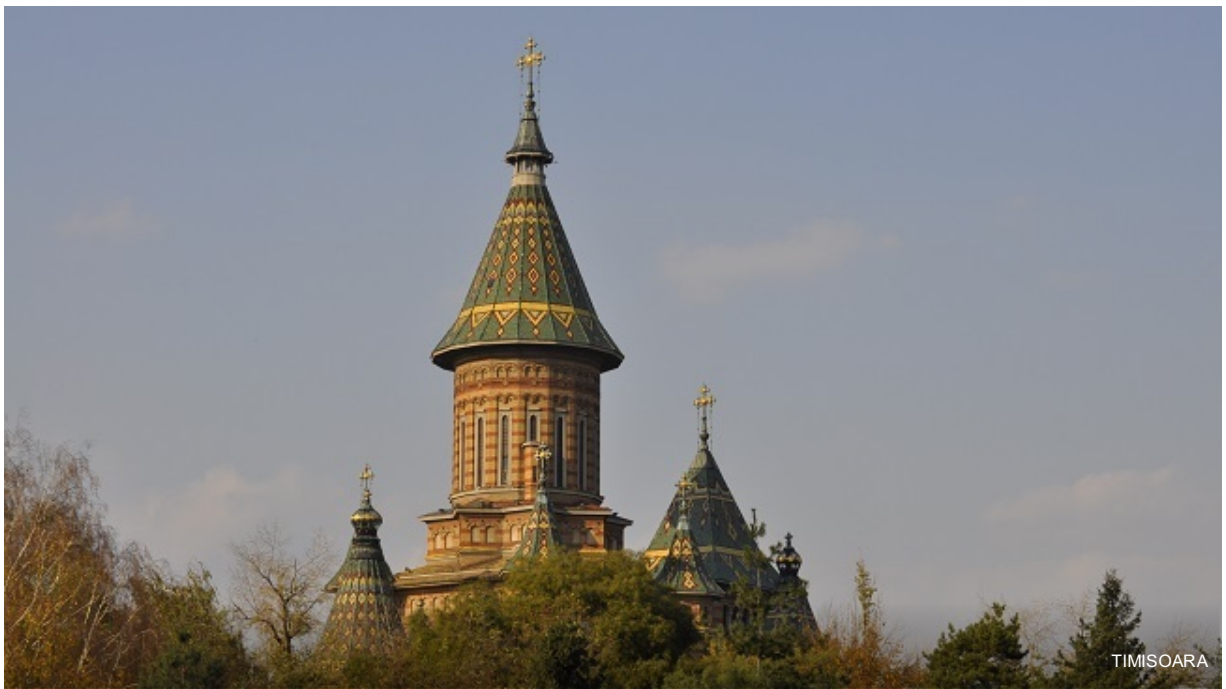
Timisoara, Romania

Today is a day to sit back, relax, and enjoy one of the most captivating stretches of the journey. As you depart Bosnia aboard the train, meander through the scenic landscapes of Croatia, cross the mighty Danube into Serbia, and glide into Hungary before reaching Romania and your destination—Timisoara.

Often referred to as “Little Vienna,” Timisoara is a vibrant city in western Romania, shaped by centuries of diverse cultural influences. Once a Roman crossroads, it was ruled by the Tatars and later transformed by the Habsburg Empire in the 18th century into a thriving centre of industry. The arrival of German-speaking Swabians left a distinctive architectural legacy that still graces the city today—grand boulevards, elegant façades, and open, leafy squares.

Nestled along the Bega River, Timisoara boasts a mild climate and a lively cultural scene, with flourishing arts, music, and theatre. Arriving in the early evening, we take to the river for a gentle boat ride, enjoying a panoramic view of the city before disembarking for dinner at a local restaurant, offering a warm taste of Romanian hospitality.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day **7**

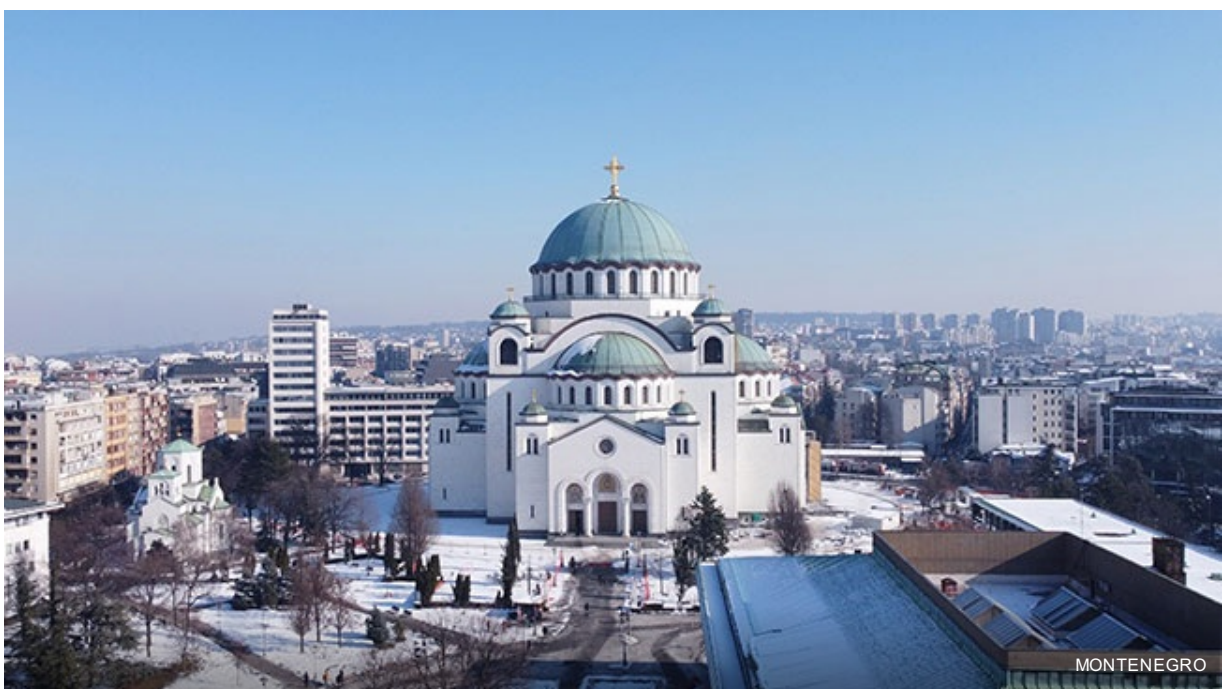
Timisoara & Belgrade

After a restful night on board, begin your day with a private tram tour through Timisoara, offering a unique perspective of the city's handsome architecture and historic landmarks. A guided walking tour then takes you deeper into its atmospheric streets, charming piazzas, and storied past.

Later, return to the train in time for lunch and begin your journey southward, bound for the Serbian capital, Belgrade. Nestled at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers, Belgrade, capital of Serbia, is one of oldest and most fascinating cities in Europe. With its turbulent past it became also a city of contrasts from Communist-era buildings to Orthodox churches, from old Celtic fortresses to the ruins as a result of the Balkans wars.

Spend an afternoon here and your city tour includes the "Blue Train" – the private train of Josip Tito, the President of the former Yugoslavia. Also featured on the touring programme in Belgrade is the Town Hall Building, Republic Square and Knez Mihajlova Street and an optional visit to the Belgrade 'Kalemegdan' Fortress.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day **8**

Skopje, Macedonia

Today, arrive in the little-visited Skopje and discover a city where the Ottoman influences are still strong. Explore the narrow streets of the Old Town with tiny shops and mosques with ceramic-tiled interiors. Meander through the Old Bazaar area, brimming with things to buy, and cross the 15th-century Stone Bridge which links the bazaar to the modern town. You will have lunch in one of Skopje's oldest restaurants.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 9

Sofia & Plovdiv, Bulgaria

The site of Bulgaria's modern capital, at the foot of Mt Vitosha, Sofia was first occupied by the Thracian tribe of Serdi. On the morning tour visit sections of the Roman wall, admire the ancient church of St George, the golden domed Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, and the Turkish Bashi Mosque.

Enjoy lunch on the train as you travel from Sofia to Plovdiv. The second largest city in Bulgaria after Sofia, 'The City of Seven Hills' is one of the oldest cities in Europe with more than 200 known archaeological sites. Spend the afternoon here exploring the Roman Forum and Amphitheatre. You will visit the charming Old Town including its medieval walls and Ottoman baths.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 10 & 11 Istanbul, Turkey

On Day 10, arrive in **Istanbul** – the legendary city that straddles two continents—and check in for a two-night stay at the luxurious five-star Four Seasons Hotel. As the final stop on your journey, Istanbul offers a captivating conclusion where East meets West and ancient history blends seamlessly with modern life.

Here, you'll explore the city's iconic landmarks, starting with the awe-inspiring Hagia Sophia. Built in the 6th century under Emperor Justinian, it was once one of the grandest basilicas of the Christian world. After the Ottoman conquest, it was transformed into a mosque, and today it stands as one of the most magnificent Grand Mosques in the world—an enduring symbol of Istanbul's layered history.

In the evening, descend into the atmospheric world of Istanbul's ancient cisterns. Visit one of these remarkable underground structures—the Basilica Cistern being the most famous—followed by dinner in a beautifully restored cistern-turned-restaurant, offering a unique and memorable dining experience.

The following day includes a visit to the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, also known as the Blue Mosque—a masterpiece of classical Ottoman architecture. Admire its six elegant minarets and 260 windows that flood the interior with light, highlighting the grandeur of its vast central dome.

Also on the itinerary is a scenic cruise along the legendary Bosphorus, offering breathtaking views of the city's skyline from the water, as well as a visit to the vibrant Spice Bazaar, where the air is rich with the scent of exotic spices and the charm of traditional market life.

On the final evening, enjoy a Farewell Dinner in a local restaurant.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 12 Istanbul, Turkey

Following breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for onward departures. There is also an option to extend your stay in Istanbul for additional nights to explore more of this fascinating city.

Breakfast

ACCOMMODATION

Golden Eagle Danube Express

UPGRADE AVAILABLE

LIFE ABOARD THE GOLDEN EAGLE DANUBE EXPRESS

The Golden Eagle Danube Express is your luxurious hotel-on-wheels. Unpack just the once and settle into your well-appointed and comfortable cabin as you begin this voyage of a lifetime. Your cabin attendant will be on hand to look after all your needs.

In addition to our luxury sleeping cabins, we offer a first class Bar Lounge Car and Restaurant Cars.

DELUXE CABIN

Travel in some of the finest rail accommodation available in Europe.

Private bathrooms feature a shower with constant hot water, washbasin and toilet. There is a heated towel rail, shaver socket and hairdryer. A range of toiletries and a dressing gown are provided. Cabins have individually controlled air-conditioning, lighting with dimmer switches, individual reading lights, power sockets and a safe.

Co-ordinated fabrics complement wood-panelled walls and brass fittings. Two comfortable armchairs provide daytime seating, and a free-standing chair adds flexibility. Cupboards and a full-length wardrobe provide ample storage whilst the large picture window and full-length mirror enhance the spacious feel. A second window will open for fresh air and for that perfect photo opportunity.

During dinner each evening the living room is converted into two comfortable lower beds by your attendant who is also on hand to bring you early morning tea or coffee.

Room Upgrades

Superior Deluxe Cabin

Superior Deluxe cabins, with private en-suite facilities, offer the ultimate in European rail accommodation in terms of space, facilities, and comfort.

With 12 cabins per departure, each cabin offers comfortable daytime seating with a full-length sofa and two additional chairs. The large cabin also benefits from two full-size picture windows, one of which is openable to add to the bright and airy feel of the interior.

Each evening the cabin is transformed into a luxurious bedroom with a UK-standard King Size bed. All cabins have, as standard, a large double wardrobe with excellent storage space, individually controlled air-conditioning, lighting with dimmer switches, individual reading lights, in cabin Wi-Fi and USB ports, power sockets and a safe.



Prices are dynamic based on travel dates. Please proceed to [Book Now](#) or [Contact Us](#) for details.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Departure dates:

- 27 Aug - 07 Sep 2025
- 24 Oct - 04 Nov 2025
- 08 May - 19 May 2026
- 28 Aug - 08 Sep 2026
- 02 Oct - 13 Oct 2026

Excluded

- International airfares and taxes
- Domestic airfares and taxes, unless otherwise specified in our holiday package
- Visa expenses, processing, and issuance fees
- Meals other than as specified in our holiday package
- Travel Insurance or expenses of a personal nature (mini-bar, phone call, laundry, etc.)
- Or any other travel expense that has not been included in our holiday package