



**Is delighted to Present**



**A Balkan Odyssey:  
Budapest to Venice**

**Aboard the *Golden Eagle*  
*Danube Express***



**June 1-12, 2016  
July 4-15, 2016**



Dear Luxury Rail Traveler:

We're pleased to send you an exclusive peek at this *Golden Eagle Danube Express* tour of Eastern Europe's Balkans, a region synonymous with history and legend, stunning architecture and colorful people, yet also with war and tragedy. This tour is being run by one of our favorite rail journey suppliers, and we know it will be spectacular. Come aboard and find out why this all-ensuite train is one of IRT Society's World's Top 25 Trains®.

In one glorious sweep, you'll travel from Budapest, where you overnight at the famed Four Seasons Gresham Palace, then through Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and on into Venice's Santa Lucia Station.



The *Golden Eagle Danube Express* is your comfortable, rolling hotel. Opt for Deluxe Class, and you'll have your own private lavatory and shower, with twin beds, plus, in a throwback to the classic days of rail, windows that fully open. On board, enjoy local, hearty fare and friendly service in the dining car. Drinks are included and served in the charming bar car.

IRT's Angela Walker just returned from traveling on this train and itinerary with our group in May, 2015. She gave it high marks – as did our guests.

“Its riveting itineraries, fully inclusive pricing and comfort undoubtedly put it in the forefront of luxurious European railway travel. The future seems bright for this up-and-coming luxury train,” she wrote in IRT's blog, Track 25.

The response to the inaugural Balkan Odyssey was so overwhelming that two departures are planned for 2016, but demand is great and space is limited.

So please read through these pages, call or email us with your questions, and then reserve your spot. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Owen".

Owen C. Hardy  
Founder/CEO





### Highlights:

- Travel through eight European countries, with seven nights on board the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*
- Walking tour of Zagreb's "Kapitol" (ancient town center)
- Tour the mighty Kalemegdan Fortress in Belgrade
- Special visit to the Tunnel Museum under Sarajevo Airport with a guide who lived through the 1992-96 conflict
- Kazanlak tour including visit of a Thracian tomb
- Excursion to Dracula's Castle (Bran Castle)
- Traditional Puszta Horse Show
- Tour fabulous Budapest and overnight at the five-star Four Seasons Gresham Palace – one of the top hotels in Europe
- Budapest pre-tour; Venice post-tour available



**A Balkan Odyssey:  
Budapest-Venice Aboard the *Danube Express*  
12-Day Escorted Tour**

**BUDAPEST - LAJOSMIZSE - KECSKEMET - SIGHISOARA - BRASOV - VELIKO  
TARNOVO - PLOVDIV - SOFIA - BELGRADE - MOSTAR - SARAJEVO -  
ZAGREB - LJUBLJANA - TRIESTE - VENICE**



## Day 1: Budapest (Hungary)

Arrive Budapest, where you will be met and transferred to the Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace for a two-night stay. Enjoy a welcome reception dinner in the elegant surrounds of this art nouveau landmark where you can meet your fellow travelers on this highly anticipated journey.



## Day 2: Budapest

Budapest is actually two cities separated by the Danube. The old city of Buda and the imposing Royal Palace, dominates the city with stunning views across the Danube to the commercial heart of Pest. Our city tour includes the Royal Palace, St. Mathias Church and a panoramic view of the city from Gellert Hill. We will also see the Citadel, the Opera House, St Stephen's Cathedral, Heroes Square and the City Park.

The rest of the day is at leisure where you can stroll along the banks of the Danube, visit the historic Great Market Hall, with its endless variety of delicious foods and wines, or head to one of the city's famous thermal baths for a rejuvenating dip. Alternatively you can relax at the hotel and indulge in the hotel's luxurious spa with infinity-edge pool or make use of the state-of-the-art fitness centre.

This evening we will enjoy a beautiful dinner cruise along the Danube.





*The Danube Express, photographed by Eleanor Hardy for IRT, stabling overnight at the Budapest Railway Museum.*

### **Day 3: Lajosmizse & Kecskemet (Hungary)**



We enjoy a morning drinks reception in the impressive Royal Waiting Room at Budapest Nyugati station before boarding the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*. Settle in to your cabin and later enjoy lunch as the train heads to Lajosmizse for a spectacular 'Pusztá' horse show. Afterwards there is free time to explore Kecskemet, a fascinating city at the geographical centre of Hungary.

Back onboard, enjoy a pre-

drink in the Lounge Car as the train continues



across the Great Hungarian Plain and dine as we head  
towards Transylvania.

#### Day 4: Brasov & Sighisoara (Romania)

Today we arrive in Sighisoara for a walking tour of the town's main highlights. A World Heritage site rumored to be the birthplace of Dracula, it is one of the best-preserved fortified medieval towns in Europe. Burgher houses and ornate churches line its cobbled streets.



We return to the train for lunch as we continue onto Brasov for a tour of Bran Castle. Popularly known as Dracula's Castle, this beautiful 14<sup>th</sup> century building is situated amongst stunning mountain scenery.

Back onboard later this evening, the train twists and turns as it climbs over the Carpathian Mountains and threads its way through the dramatic landscape with crystal clear mountain streams. Dinner is served as our train continues onto Bulgaria.

#### Day 5: Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria)

We arrive after breakfast in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria's ancient capital. Nestled in a magnificent mountain setting, the stone houses seem perched, one above the other, on the steep banks of the Yantra River.

A tour includes the superbly preserved medieval Tsarevets Hill and Castle, and there is free time to wander through the streets of the ancient city.



*Evelyn Fitzpatrick & Rita Menzies, two IRT guests, loved the Danube Express as it rolled through Eastern Europe.*



### **Day 6: Plovdiv & Sofia (Bulgaria)**

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. We spend the morning here exploring the many sights in the charming Old Town including its ancient theatres, medieval walls and Ottoman baths.

The sight of Bulgaria’s modern capital, Sofia, at the foot of Mt. Vitosha, was first occupied by the Thracian tribe of Serdi. On our afternoon tour we will spot sections of Roman wall, admire the ancient church of St. George, the golden-domed Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and the Turkish Bashi Mosque.

### **Day 7: Belgrade (Serbia)**

Arrive this morning in the Serbian capital, Belgrade. Located at the strategic meeting point of the Danube and Sava Rivers, this truly cosmopolitan city has fortifications from Celtic times, medieval tombs and Turkish baths.

We spend a full day here and our city tour includes Tito’s memorial, the Town Hall, Republic Square and Knez Mihajlova Street; as well as ‘Varos’ Gate and a visit to the mighty Kalemegdan Fortress.





### **Day 8: Mostar & Sarajevo (Bosnia)**

This morning we tour the historic city of Mostar, 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. We also visit Turkish House and the mosque before walking through the narrow, bazaar streets, where you can shop for traditional souvenirs and handicrafts.



An early afternoon 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 we travel past war-torn buildings and we 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.

### **Day 9: Zagreb & Ljubljana (Croatia & Slovenia)**

This morning we will tour Zagreb, a central European city with over 900 years of documented history. We will take a walking tour of the upper town and 'Kapitol' (the ancient town centre), which abounds in Baroque atmosphere and cultural monuments. We will also see the ornate buildings of the lower town and its wide boulevards.

We enjoy lunch back onboard the train as we travel onwards towards Slovenia. Ljubljana is a delightful city, a combination of ancient architecture and a youthful culture. Our morning city tour includes visits to Preseren Square, Three Bridges, Dragon Bridge and Plecnik Market.



### **Day 10: Trieste & Venice (Italy)**

This morning our private train arrives into the Italian port of Trieste for a short tour. We stop at the vast Piazza Unita d'Italia, the main town square, and can climb the hill to the famous Church of San Giusto built around a medieval complex that dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We will go inside the church for a close-up view of the splendid Byzantine-style architecture enriched with precious mosaics. We also offer a Freedom of Choice option to visit the Museum of the Risiera di San Sabba. This former rice-husking facility became the site of the only Nazi extermination camp in Italy.



We enjoy our last lunch onboard as we leave Trieste and follow the Adriatic coast towards Mestre where our train curves to the left onto the three-mile causeway across the Venice Lagoon and into Santa Lucia station on the Grand Canal. We say farewell to the train and train crew and transfer by boat to the five-star Hotel Danieli (or similar) for a two-night stay. The hotel enjoys a spectacular location and is only a short stroll from St Mark's Square, the Doge's Palace and the Bridge of Sighs.

This afternoon we have the opportunity to take a familiarization 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. We also see

St Mark's Basilica and stroll through the Rialto Market.

**Day 11: Venice (Italy)**

Venice is a truly captivating city of romance; its unrivalled beauty takes away the breath of first time visitors and regulars alike.

Enjoy the city at your own pace today. Take an iconic gondola ride in the Basin of St. Mark's and along the Grand Canal or stroll through the artists' district of Dorsoduro, stopping to take in the city's most breathtaking views from the Accademia Bridge.



This evening we will enjoy a farewell reception dinner at a local restaurant, giving you the opportunity to reflect on your journey through this fascinating part of Europe.

**Day 12: Venice (Italy)**

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

<b>2016 Pricing</b>	<b>Twin (<i>per person</i>)</b>	<b>Single</b>
Heritage Class	\$9,995	\$14,995
Deluxe Class	\$15,995	\$26,995

**Included:**

- All accommodation on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* for 7 nights
- Accommodation in five-star Four Seasons Gresham Palace Budapest for 2 nights
- Accommodation in five-star Hotel Danieli in Venice (or similar) for 2 nights
- Arrival and departure transfers
- All meals and a generous drinks allowance, including wine with lunch and dinner; all alcoholic drinks included on board
- All sightseeing and transfers within the program
- All entry fees for sightseeing
- All gratuities

(Additional nights on either end can be arranged at extra cost. Transfers are included no matter what day you arrive or depart.)



### **About the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*:**

The *Golden Eagle Danube Express* has a capacity of 56 passengers and comprises five sleeping cars, a lounge car and two dining cars. Tours on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* are fully inclusive (food, drinks, gratuities, touring, transfers), making it a truly worry-free adventure.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Four of the sleeping cars contain Deluxe cabins; one car carries Heritage class cabins.

#### **Deluxe Cabins**

Deluxe cabins are spacious (99 square feet including the bathroom) and offer the best sleeping accommodations in Europe. Each cabin has two lower beds in an L-shape configuration, which converts to seating during the day. The en-suite bathroom contains a cubicle shower, sink and toilet – and towel warmer. Air conditioning and heating are individually controlled. There is also a small wardrobe, safe, cupboard and luggage rack above one bed. But keep in mind: the storage space is



limited, especially in the bathroom.



#### **Heritage Cabins**

Heritage class cabins (33 square feet) are budget-oriented, at about one-third the size of the Deluxe. They have upper/lower berths, which convert to a couch during the day.

There is a pull-down sink in the cabin; toilets and showers are shared and located at the end of each Heritage car. There are hangers and space for a few hanging clothes and a luggage rack overhead. Again, remember that storage space is limited.

#### **DINING**

Two dining cars seat 42 passengers each (much more than the train's 56-passenger capacity). The dining cars are attractive and comfortable, offering tables for 4 or 2.

Breakfast is taken on board. Choose from the buffet of fruit, breads, cereal, cold meats and cheeses. Hot breakfast (omelette, French toast, bacon, sausage) is available on order. On-board lunches and dinners are usually three courses, with meat and

vegetarian choices. A cheese and fruit course is added with dinners on board.

Sample starters: asparagus with hollandaise sauce; zucchini rolls with ricotta stuffing, served in a chargrilled pepper sauce with basil olive oil; and foie gras terrine with spicy apricot chutney and toasted challah bread. Sample main course options: Moroccan baked vegetables with prunes and spicy couscous and beer-braised beef cheek with malted onions and ale sauce, served with carrots, green beans and onion mashed potatoes. Desserts are equally sumptuous.

### **LOUNGE CAR**

A new lounge car (with bar) is currently under construction and is set to replace the current lounge in summer 2015.



### **How to book:**

Call us to reserve right away: 800-478-4881 OR email [tourdesk@irtsociety.com](mailto:tourdesk@irtsociety.com).

The deposit required is \$2,000 per person for Deluxe and \$1,500 per person for Heritage Class. All payments are nonrefundable. Final payment due 90 days before departure.

As members of the [Virtuoso luxury travel consortium](#), we are happy to customize your trip for you. Please call us to learn all that we can do for you: (800) 478-4881; (502) 897-1725.



**VIRTUOSO MEMBER.**

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