

Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide®



Jewels of Bohemia: Czech Republic,
Slovakia & Hungary

2026

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Budapest, Hungary

Jewels of Bohemia: Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary

Small Group Adventure

Czech Republic: Prague, Cesky Krumlov, Slavonice | **Slovakia:** Bratislava |

Hungary: Budapest

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

15 days starting from \$4,495

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/bca2026pricing

Journey with O.A.T. into Central Europe's Bohemian heartland to discover the history, culture, and landscapes of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. In the Czech Republic, witness the spires of Prague, the medieval splendor of Cesky Krumlov, and the Renaissance village of Slavonice. In Slovakia, discover the youthful optimism of Bratislava. Then, enjoy an audience with the "Queen of the Danube" and immerse yourself in the grandeur of Hungary's iconic Budapest.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 13 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 31 meals—13 breakfasts, 10 lunches, and 8 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 21 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

Jewels of Bohemia: Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 5 locations in 14 days

Physical requirements: You must be able to walk 5-6 miles unassisted and participate in 4-6 hours of physical activities each day

Flight time: Travel time will be 12-19 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/bca

BOHEMIA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Enjoy a glimpse of life in the Czech Republic when you savor a **Home-Hosted Dinner** in Cesky Krumlov, where you'll sit down in even smaller groups of no more than 5 travelers with a local family and share a meal and lively conversation. And experience **A Day in the Life** of a Czech farming village, where you'll meet the family that owns the land, and learn about farm life in the Czech Republic when we roll up our sleeves and help out with the chores.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Learn about **Controversial Topics** such as the thorny question of ethnic German property rights in Sudetenland after the end of the Nazi occupation during World War II.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Prague, Czech Republic
2-4	Prague
5-7	Cesky Krumlov
8-9	Slavonice
10-11	Bratislava, Slovakia
12-14	Budapest, Hungary
15	Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Berlin, Wittenberg, Dresden & the Elbe River Valley

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,995**

Vienna: Palaces, Music, Architecture & Sachertorte

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,495**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Berlin** before your Germany pre-trip extension from **\$270** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Prague** before your main adventure from **\$210** per room, per night

Jewels of Bohemia: Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in Berlin, Wittenberg, Dresden & the Elbe River Valley

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Berlin, Germany

Day 3 Explore Berlin

Day 4 Berlin • Optional *Allies in Berlin* tour

Day 5 Berlin • Wittenberg •

Meissen • Dresden

Day 6 Dresden and Elbe River Valley tour

Day 7 Dresden • Overland to Prague via Sudetenland and Terezin • Home-Hosted Lunch • Begin main trip

Day 1 Fly to Prague, Czech Republic

Depart the U.S. today on your overnight flight to Prague, Czech Republic.

Day 2 Arrive Prague, Czech Republic

- Destination: Prague, Czech Republic
- Accommodations: K+K Hotel Central or similar

Afternoon: Arrive in Prague, where an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist you to your hotel.

You'll get to know your Trip Experience Leader and small group, including those arriving from our *Berlin, Wittenberg, Dresden & the Elbe River Valley* pre-trip extension, during a short orientation walk around the neighborhood.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide restaurant suggestions, if you'd like.

Evening: The remainder of the day is free for you to explore the area or settle into your room.

Day 3 Explore Prague • Welcome Dinner

- Destination: Prague
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: K+K Hotel Central or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our Trip Experience Leader will lead a Welcome Briefing, during which we will introduce ourselves and review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur).

We'll then begin our Czech Republic travel experiences with a guided walking tour of Prague led by a local guide. Nestled in a bend of the Vltava River, Prague's spires have endured to create one of Europe's most recognizable

skylines. While other European capitals were leveled during World War II, Prague survived virtually intact.

We'll witness a few of its enduring landmarks during our tour, as well as less-visited side streets, as we make our way to the famous Old Town Square, densely packed with Gothic medieval architecture. One of the square's defining features is the 15th-century Astronomical Clock at the Old Town Hall. Every hour, crowds assemble below to watch Christ and the twelve Apostles appear at two little windows above the clock face, followed by the skeleton of Death tolling the bell.

Lunch: On your own after the conclusion of our tour.

Afternoon: Your afternoon is free to make your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll visit Josefov (Prague's Jewish Quarter). The Prague Ghetto and vibrant Jewish community have contributed to Prague's character since the tenth century.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant. Get to know your fellow travelers and toast to the adventures ahead.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll take an evening stroll in town or enjoy a Czech Pilsner at a local bar.

Day 4 Conversation about Velvet Revolution • Explore Prague

- Destination: Prague
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: K+K Hotel Central or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin the day at our hotel, where we'll join our Trip Experience Leader and a local expert for a conversation about the Velvet Revolution—a series of mass demonstrations in 1989 which ended 40 years of Communist rule over Czechoslovakia, as the region was then called. Our guest speaker was present when these events unfolded, and during our conversation, we'll get their firsthand perspective of what life was like under Communism, how things changed after the Iron Curtain fell, and the divided attitudes of modern Czechs toward the post-Communist government and administration.

Then, we'll drive to our first destination of the day: Strahov Monastery. Founded in 1140, this sprawling complex sits high atop Petrin Hill on the opposite side from Prague Castle and offers visitors sweeping views of the city below. After exploring the monastery, we'll head to Prague Castle to wander its sprawling grounds and courtyards, with the opportunity to ask any questions we may have about this historic site.

Afterwards, we'll walk to visit *Mala Strana*, which translates to "the lesser side." Our Trip Experience Leader will introduce us to this area as we explore its streets. *Mala Strana* is linked to Prague's Old Town (*Stare Mesto*) by the Charles Bridge. Originally an eighth-century market town, today *Mala Strana* is a neighborhood of cobbled streets, boutiques, and Baroque churches and palaces. As you explore with your Trip Experience Leader, you might witness the iconic John Lennon wall and stroll along the tree-lined lanes of Kampa Park.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You have free time to explore this afternoon.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll try *veřo-knedlo-zelo*, a local specialty made of bread dumplings, roast pork, and stewed cabbage.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish, making any final discoveries during your last night in Prague.

Day 5 Travel to Cesky Krumlov • Visit Vojna Memorial

- Destination: Cesky Krumlov
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Ebersbach or similar

Activity Note: Today's transfer to Cesky Krumlov will be about 4 hours long, broken up by intermittent stops.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to Cesky Krumlov, stopping on the way to visit the Vojna Memorial. Located in the middle of a forest, Vojna was originally built by German prisoners of war after World War II as a labor camp to work in the nearby uranium mines. With the Communist takeover in 1948, Vojna transitioned into a notorious forced labor camp for political prisoners. Today, the Vojna Memorial is a powerful reminder of the many Czech victims of the Communist regime.

We then continue our drive, stopping again in Pisek, a picturesque Bohemian town founded in the 13th century on the banks of the Otava River.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Pisek.

Afternoon: We'll depart Pisek and continue driving to Cesky Krumlov. Upon arrival late this afternoon, we'll check in to our hotel.

Later, join your Trip Experience Leader on an orientation walk to get acquainted with the vicinity around your hotel.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 6 Explore Cesky Krumlov • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Cesky Krumlov
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Ebersbach or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Witness the Cesky Krumlov of today when we join a local guide on a walking tour. Nestled inside a narrow loop of the Vltava River, this romantic town with its hilltop castle was once a wealthy trading center and a favorite of European nobility. Established in 1250 by the Lords of Krumlov, the 14th through 16th centuries brought a period of great splendor to Cesky Krumlov, which became a stop along one of the main trading routes to Italy. Today, its confection of red-gabled roofs, elegant bridges, and storybook castle lures lovers of history, culture, and architecture alike.

We'll walk the winding, cobbled streets to admire the splendidly preserved historic buildings of the medieval town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and ascend to the top of the hill to stroll through the courtyards and gardens of Cesky Krumlov Castle, a Renaissance jewel that encompasses more than 40 buildings, a castle brewery—and live bears who roam the castle's moat. We'll also visit the recently opened Castle Museum, which features precious artifacts previously hidden in castle depositories.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you'll try *svíčková*, a meat dish with sirloin steak, vegetables, and a thick cream sauce.

Afternoon: We'll have some time to make our own discoveries before dinner. This walkable town is densely packed with historic architecture, and your Trip Experience Leader can point you toward the hidden gems that line its cobbled lanes.

Dinner: Tonight's dinner is in a special location—the home of a local Czech family to enjoy a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. You'll enjoy a taste of Czech culture and engage in lively conversation over a dinner of freshly-prepared, home-cooked dishes.

This experience offers us a rare opportunity to connect with local culture on a more intimate level: In our hosts' homes, we'll see the family go about their evening routine and witness what life is like in this small town in South Bohemia. As you get to know your hosts, take the time to ask questions and get a better sense of not just local Czech culture, but also family dynamics and culinary traditions.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 7 Controversial Topic: Restitution of property rights in Sudetenland • Explore Vyssi Brod Monastery • Rafting on Vltava River

- Destination: Cesky Krumlov
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Ebersbach or similar

Activity Note: Early spring and fall departures may not offer the rafting excursion, and adverse weather conditions may preclude rafting at any time of year.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll gather in a meeting room in our hotel to meet a local from Cesky Krumlov, and engage in a conversation about a **Controversial**

Topic: the question of ethnic German property rights in the Sudetenland region of the western Czech Republic.

Following World War II, thousands of ethnic Germans were expelled from this region as a result of the German occupation of Czech Republic (then known as Czechoslovakia), beginning in 1938 and continuing throughout the war. Czech resistance groups demanded the deportation of ethnic Germans from their country. Although the official plan called only for the expulsion of a few hundred hardline Nazi supporters, the chaos of the postwar era allowed the project to quickly spiral out of control. In the end, around 1.6 million Sudeten Germans were deported to West Germany while another estimated 800,000 were sent to Soviet-controlled East Germany, and several thousand Sudeten Germans died during the expulsion through either acts of violence or hunger and illness.

Our speaker's family was directly impacted by this expulsion, and during our conversation, we'll hear their story, and learn about the ways in which many Germans today are seeking restitution for this turbulent period of history. The scars of the war are not yet fully healed, and as we'll learn, the Czech Republic's citizens are divided on the best way to address this controversial issue.

Then, we'll board our bus and drive for a guided tour of Vyssi Brod Monastery, a Cistercian monastery with roots that stretch back to the middle of the 13th century. Considered the spiritual center of South Bohemia, the monastery also features a richly decorated library that dates back to the Baroque period. At the onset of World War II, the religious order lost control of the monastery—first to the Nazis, and then to the Soviets. Following the

Velvet Revolution, the monastery was returned to the monks, who have begun restoring it to its former glory.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Vyssi Brod.

Afternoon: We'll return to Cesky Krumlov after lunch, where we'll embark upon a peaceful rafting excursion through the historical heart of the city, discovering its medieval charms from a different perspective. We'll paddle about three miles on the gentle waters of the undulating Vltava River, with six travelers and an instructor in each raft. This trip is easy enough for the novice but passes through parts of the city that will charm the more experienced rafters as well. Following our rafting adventure, you'll have the rest of the day free to spend as you please.

Dinner: On your own in Cesky Krumlov. The town hosts a variety of restaurant options including medieval taverns, a barbecue cellar, and even an Italian pizzeria.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll take one last stroll through town or rest up for tomorrow's transfer to Slavonice.

Day 8 Overland to Slavonice • Budvar

Brewery in Ceske Budejovice •

Explore Trebon

- Destination: Slavonice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Dom u Ruze or similar

Activity Note: Today's transfer to Slavonice will be about 3 hours long, with stops along the way.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We depart Cesky Krumlov by bus for an overland journey to Slavonice. En route, we'll stop in southern Bohemia's regional

capital, Ceske Budejovice, to visit the famous Budweiser Budvar Brewery for a tour led by a brewery guide. While the history of brewing in Ceske Budejovice dates back to the 13th century, Budweiser Budvar was founded here in 1895 (the U.S. brewer chose the name Budweiser in 1876 because it was synonymous for superior beer).

After our brewery tour, we'll drive to Trebon, an ancient walled town set among rolling hills and ancient fish ponds. Established in the middle of the twelfth century, Trebon has been a popular center of Czech fish farming since the Middle Ages and remains a picturesque spa town. There is also a brewery here that has been producing Bohemia Regent lager since 1379. We'll stroll through the park surrounding Trebon's Renaissance-era chateau, and visit the town center to admire the series of pastel-colored burghers' houses and ancient fortifications.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Trebon.

Afternoon: We'll arrive at our hotel in Slavonice in the mid afternoon.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap in town.

Day 9 Slavonice • A Day in the Life of a Czech farming village

- Destination: Slavonice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Dom u Ruze or similar

Activity note: Depending on your departure, you will either visit a horse farm or a goat farm today. Activities will be comparable.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Taking advantage of our small group size, we'll drive to spend *A Day in the Life* of a farm owner (or a family member) and learn what everyday life is really like on a rural farm in the Czech Republic. Depending on your departure, you will either visit a horse farm or a goat farm. For those who visit the horse farm, we'll drive outside Slavonice to the small village of Placovice. There are only eight buildings in the whole town, laid out in the shape of a horseshoe. The region also once belonged to Sudeten Germans who were forced to leave Czechoslovakia in 1946 (which we learned about earlier in the trip).

We'll be greeted there by the farm owners, who will share their life story. After getting to know our hosts, we'll head outside to take part in some of the farm's daily chores—perhaps learning how to brush and feed the horses. Then we'll enjoy a horse-training demonstration, witnessing the art of "horse whispering"—a variety of natural horsemanship that takes an empathetic approach to training. Afterwards, we'll head back to the main house to help prep the midday meal together.

Lunch: We'll sit down with our hosts and enjoy a hearty lunch featuring traditional cuisine. During this time, you'll have the opportunity to learn more about daily life on the farm.

Afternoon: We'll drive back to Slavonice, where you'll have some time to relax or continue exploring on your own. You can also join your Trip Experience Leader on a stroll along the town's medieval streets and a visit to a 16th-century house with frescoes of scenes from the Apocalypse. You may also choose to visit the hotel's 700-year-old wine cellar for a tasting featuring local vintages.

Dinner: At the hotel, accompanied by traditional Moravian music.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 10 Slavonice • Explore Trebic and Lednice • Travel to Bratislava, Slovakia

- Destination: Bratislava, Slovakia
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: AC Hotel by Marriott Bratislava Old Town or similar

Activity Note: Lednice Castle is closed to the public on Mondays. An alternative activity will be offered if our visit falls on a Monday.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We leave the Czech Republic and drive to Bratislava, capital of Slovakia. En route, we'll stop for a visit to Trebic, an ancient Moravian city that is home to one of Europe's best preserved Jewish ghettos—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Jewish and Christian cultures co-existed here from the Middle Ages up to the 20th century, and our hour-long stroll will take us to Trebic's ancient synagogue. During our visit, we'll also learn about local hero Antonin Kalina. While imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp during World War II, Kalina managed to save the lives of more than 900 children.

Lunch: At a cozy café in Trebic.

Afternoon: We continue our drive, stopping again for a tour of Lednice. Over the centuries, the region surrounding Lednice (and its twin town of Valtice) has been carefully landscaped with a series of woodlands, lakes, streams, gardens, and tree-lined chateaux—all of which have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. When we arrive, we'll head to Lednice Castle. We'll meet with a local guide, and they will take us on a tour of the immense structure, which was built in the Neo-Gothic style; then we'll get to wander among the tropical plants in the Castle's original iron-framed greenhouse.

We continue our transfer, arriving in Bratislava in the late afternoon to check in to our hotel. After settling in, our Trip Experience Leader will lead us on a brief orientation walk of our surroundings.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll begin your discoveries in Bratislava this evening by enjoying a nightcap at one of the bars or restaurants located within walking distance of the hotel.

Day 11 Explore Bratislava • Optional *Jewels of Slovakia* tour

- Destination: Bratislava
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: AC Hotel by Marriott Bratislava Old Town or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off for a walking tour of Bratislava. Just as in the Czech Republic, the Velvet Revolution spelled the end of Communism for Slovakia, a densely forested country with towering mountains in Central Europe's heartland. Its capital, Bratislava, is situated along the Danube in Slovakia's southwestern tip, close to the border with Hungary and Austria.

With a local guide, our morning walking tour will focus on Bratislava's compact Old Town, home to a variety of 14th- and 15th-century structures that include the Old Town Hall, the Neo-classical Archbishop's Palace, and St. Martin's Cathedral, a Gothic coronation church where several Hungarian Habsburg kings and queens were crowned.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: During your free afternoon, perhaps you'll check out the sweeping views of the city from the ramparts of Bratislava Castle, whose origins stretch back to the days of the Roman Empire. Or, you may choose to join our optional *Jewels of Slovakia* tour that includes a wine-tasting at a family-owned winery, a light dinner, and a visit to a traditional blueprinting workshop—a Slovak folk art that involves printing intricate patterns on white fabric.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll savor a hearty bowl of *kapustnica*—cabbage soup with sauerkraut, potatoes, mushrooms, ham, and garlic. If you join the optional tour, a light dinner is included.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. You might choose to take in one last view of the Danube illuminated at night.

Day 12 Bratislava • Explore Roman ruins at Carnuntum • Travel to Budapest, Hungary

- Destination: Budapest, Hungary
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel President Budapest or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to Budapest, Hungary, stopping along the way at the Roman city of Carnuntum, which began as a Roman army camp along the Danube River in what is now Austria. At its peak, some 50,000 people lived here, and after 1,700 years Carnuntum's ancient glory is currently being recreated from the site's extensive ruins. After our visit, including a tour of the open-air museum, we cross into northwestern Hungary, stopping in Györ, an ancient city situated at the confluence of the Danube, Rába, and Rábca rivers.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Györ.

Afternoon: We'll take a stroll to admire the Baroque and Neo-classical structures in Györ's pedestrian-only historic core. Then, we'll depart for the final leg of our journey to Budapest, checking in to our hotel in the mid-afternoon.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll indulge in a popular beverage of Budapest, *fröccs*, which is a refreshing mixture of wine and soda water.

Day 13 Explore Budapest • Evening Danube River cruise

- Destination: Budapest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel President Budapest or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: With a local guide, we embark on a panoramic tour of the undisputed "Queen of the Danube." Budapest is divided by the river, with *Pest* (the left bank) to its east, and *Buda* (the right bank) to its west.

We'll encounter iconic landmarks and hidden gems on our tour, including the Jewish Quarter. Originally a ghetto during World War II, Budapest's Jewish Quarter today is a lively district full of art galleries, shops, and bustling courtyards. During our guided tour we'll witness such sights as the Great Synagogue—the largest in Europe—its Moorish design further enhanced by Byzantine, Romantic, and Gothic elements. We'll also ride down bustling Kazinczy Street, a haven of trendy pubs and eclectic street art.

Then, we'll enjoy a scenic drive along Andrassy Avenue, a historic boulevard lined with splendid architecture, including the Hungarian

State Opera House, a stately example of Hungarian Neo-Renaissance design, and the statues of Heroes' Square, which pay homage to notable figures of national history.

We'll also stop at Fisherman's Bastion, an alabaster monument whose fairytale turrets and arcades offer breathtaking panoramic views of the Budapest skyline below. You'll also have some time to explore the area independently; you might choose to spend it discovering the nearby Gothic Matthias Church.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: The afternoon is yours to make your own discoveries. You may wish to spend some time at the famous Chain Bridge, which was first opened in 1849 to link the two provincial towns of Buda and Pest, and now stands as a symbol of Hungarian liberty.

Dinner: Your independent time continues into the evening for you to enjoy dinner on your own. From old-fashioned taverns to more modernized eateries, Budapest offers an array of restaurant choices.

Evening: Tonight, we'll enjoy an hour-long evening cruise on the Danube River—an opportunity to witness Budapest's monuments illuminated, from Pest's Danube Promenade to the Buda Castle District.

Day 14 Explore Budapest

- Destination: Budapest
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel President Budapest or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet a local expert in the lobby of our hotel who will accompany us on a walk to Parliament Square, home to one of Europe's oldest legislative bodies, the imposing riverside

Hungarian Parliament Building. In the square, we'll learn about the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, a time when students and workers took to the streets of Budapest in the first major threat to Soviet control of the region. Following our tour, we'll take the tram to Great Market Hall, the oldest and largest indoor market in Budapest where you can enjoy local Hungarian specialties.

Lunch: On your own in Great Market Hall. Your Trip Experience Leader will be glad to recommend some dining options here.

Afternoon: After lunch, you have the remainder of the afternoon to make more independent discoveries in Budapest. Perhaps you'll visit Heroes' Square where you can witness a memorial to the great leaders in Hungary's history, including the Millennium Monument.

Dinner: Enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant to celebrate the end of our adventure.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a final nightcap in the city, or rest up for tomorrow's return home.

Day 15 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to the airport this morning for your return flight home. Or, begin your post-trip extension to Vienna: *Palaces, Music, Architecture & Sachertorte*.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in Vienna: *Palaces, Music, Architecture & Sachertorte*

Day 1 Budapest, Hungary • Transfer to Vienna

Day 2 Explore Vienna • Heurigen Wine Dinner

Day 3 Vienna • Belvedere Palace

Day 4 Explore Vienna • Optional Footsteps of the Great Composers tour

Day 5 Vienna • Schoenbrunn Palace

Day 6 Vienna • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2-3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2-3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Jewels of Slovakia

(Day 11 \$120 per person)

Experience a sampling of the best Slovakia has to offer when we visit a local winery. First, you'll enjoy a wine-tasting before interacting with the family who owns the winery to discuss their daily life and wine production in the area. Then, you'll participate in a traditional blueprinting workshop. Learn more about blueprinting—a Slovak folk art that involves printing intricate patterns on white fabric—during conversations with the artist and hands-on activities.

Please note: *In order for this optional tour to operate, a minimum of seven travelers must participate.*

PRE-TRIP

Berlin, Wittenberg, Dresden & the Elbe River Valley

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 3 nights accommodation
- » Bus transportation from Dresden to Prague
- » 11 meals—5 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Explore Berlin, the divided city that has blossomed anew in the era of reunification. Then discover how Dresden, Germany's artistic hub for centuries before the destruction of World War II, has risen from the ashes, fully restored and gleaming.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on your international flight to Berlin.

Day 2 Arrive Berlin, Germany

- Destination: Berlin, Germany
- Accommodations: Park Inn Berlin or similar

Afternoon: Arrive in Berlin, where an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to the hotel. Later, meet your fellow travelers and take part in a short briefing with your Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 3 Explore Berlin

- Destination: Berlin
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Park Inn Berlin or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart by bus for a city tour of Berlin. Divided at the end of World War II, blockaded by the Soviets during the Cold War, riven by a cruel grey wall, and finally delivered by the sledgehammers of freedom fighters, Berlin is once again a united city.

During our panoramic tour, we'll witness some of the city's most iconic landmarks, such as Charlottenburg Palace, an opulent 17th century Baroque complex that was beloved by several generations of Prussian royalty, and reflects the grandeur of this bygone era today. We'll also discover the trendy and modern neighborhood of Schöneberg, including the town hall where

President John F. Kennedy delivered his famous “*ich bin ein Berliner*” speech in 1963, in solidarity with the people of West Berlin.

We’ll also discover the Kreuzberg neighborhood, a multicultural melting pot that is also home to a thriving arts and counterculture scene. We’ll get a sense of this legacy during a brief stop at the East Side Gallery, a portion of the former Berlin Wall that is now an open-air art installation. Enjoy an opportunity to browse its inspirational (and at times, provocative) murals before ending our tour at Checkpoint Charlie, one of the most notorious borders between East and West Berlin during the Cold War. Here, we’ll learn about the escapes, standoffs, and other human dramas that have occurred at this fateful crossing over the years.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we conclude our discovery walk with a visit to the Berlin Wall Documentation Center. Then, use your newfound knowledge of Berlin to explore the city on your own.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant. Get to know your fellow travelers as you toast to the adventures ahead.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 4 Berlin • Optional *Allies in Berlin* tour

- Destination: Berlin
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Park Inn Berlin or similar

Activity Note: The optional tour is not available on Mondays or any other day that Cecilienhof Palace is closed.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: The morning is yours to explore Berlin at your leisure.

Lunch: On your own. Or, join our optional *Allies in Berlin* tour, which begins with an included lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: If you chose to enjoy a day of independent discoveries, you’re free to continue exploring this afternoon. Travelers on our optional tour will begin their in-depth explorations of Cold War-era Berlin with a visit to the Bernauer Strasse Memorial, where a well-preserved section of the Berlin Wall still stands, testifying to the fraught decades of Germany’s division. At the nearby Berlin Wall Documentation Center, we’ll learn more about the politics and history behind the wall’s construction.

Then, we’ll continue on to two sites that served as the base of democratic resistance in West Germany: Templehof Airport, the main access point for the American military in West Berlin, and *Rathaus Schöneberg* (Town Hall)—the seat of the West German government during the Cold War.

Our optional tour concludes at the Allied Museum, whose exhibits document the roles the Western Allies played in liberating Berlin and ending the Cold War.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: Spend the rest of your evening as you wish. You may wish to take in a show at the CHAMÄLEON Theatre, known for its innovative circus productions.

Day 5 Berlin • Wittenberg •

Meissen • Dresden

- Destination: Dresden
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hyperion Hotel Dresden or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: On our way to Dresden, stop in Wittenberg for a short walking tour of the city that's famous for its connection to Protestant leader Martin Luther.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Meissen.

Afternoon: Enjoy a stroll through Meissen, the European center of porcelain set on the banks of the Elbe with its castle and soaring Gothic cathedral, before continuing to Dresden.

Upon arrival in Dresden, our Trip Experience Leader will lead us on a short vicinity walk.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 6 Dresden and Elbe River Valley tour

- Destination: Dresden
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hyperion Hotel Dresden or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we'll tour the city of Dresden and the Elbe River Valley by motorcoach. Situated in a broad floodplain, Dresden was founded in the twelfth century by Slavs. In the 16th century, the finest painters, architects, and musicians from across Europe began to flood the city, which remained a cultural hub until World War II, when Allied aircraft used incendiary bombs to burn Dresden to the

ground. The city was completely destroyed, and thousands of civilians were killed. Kurt Vonnegut, himself a survivor of the air raids, chronicled these events in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Following the war, Dresden was rebuilt from the ground up, an eternal reminder of the folly of war and strength of the human creative spirit.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Enjoy the rest of the afternoon to explore Dresden on your own.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You may want to take an evening stroll to make any final discoveries in Dresden before our transfer to Prague tomorrow.

Day 7 Dresden • Overland to Prague via Sudetenland and Terezin • Home-Hosted Lunch • Begin main trip

- Destination: Prague, Czech Republic
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to Prague for our *Jewels of Bohemia: Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary* adventure. En route to Prague, we'll visit Skanzen Zbrnice, an open-air museum of historic dwellings, where we'll enjoy a glimpse of agricultural traditions during a farm presentation.

Lunch: Enjoy a **Home-Hosted Lunch** near Skanzen Zbrnice.

Afternoon: We'll pause for a somber reminder of the Holocaust at Terezin, whose fortress was used as a Gestapo prison during World War II. Then, we'll continue on to Prague to begin our main adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Allies in Berlin

(Day 4 \$195 per person)

Discover the impact of Allied resistance in Berlin during the Cold War on this half-day optional tour. Your discoveries begin on Bernauer Strasse, where you'll witness a well-preserved section of the Berlin Wall—the most iconic symbol of Germany's division. Then, continue on to Templehof Airport and Rathaus Schonberg, both of which served as hubs of Allied intervention and democracy in West Berlin. Our tour concludes at the Allied Museum, which sheds light on the role Western Allies played in the eventual end of the Cold War. The price of this optional tour includes lunch.

POST-TRIP

Vienna: Palaces, Music, Architecture & Sachertorte

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » Bus transportation from Budapest to Vienna
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 3 dinners
- » 3 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

City of waltzes and Habsburg glory, Vienna still charms with elegant architecture, thriving arts, and lush gardens. Witness the Ringstrasse, sip local vintages in the wine district, and explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Schoenbrunn Palace.

Day 1 Budapest, Hungary •

Transfer to Vienna

- Destination: Vienna, Austria
- Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Rathauspark or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to Vienna.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Vienna.

Afternoon: Following an orientation walk led by our Trip Experience Leader, the balance of the afternoon is free for you to make your own discoveries in Vienna.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 2 Explore Vienna • Heurigen

Wine Dinner

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Rathauspark or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our Vienna city tour features the *Ringstrasse*, probably the greatest achievement of the Emperor Franz Joseph. This boulevard encircling the Innen Stadt was mapped out in the 1860s along the ramparts Joseph II had begun clearing 80 years prior. The Neo-classical buildings along the *Ringstrasse* bring together all the greatest architectural styles in a celebration of all that seemed possible during the Industrial Revolution.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: Enjoy independent discoveries of Vienna this afternoon, perhaps taking in one of the city's renowned museums. When the weather agrees, the entertainment moves outdoors to the sidewalks.

Later this afternoon, we'll drive to the Grinzing wine district, the location of various authentic Heurigen restaurants. The Heurigen tradition began when Emperor Joseph II passed a law stating that small local winemakers were allowed to serve their vintages and food to members of the public so long as they sold only wine of their own making. Many people then opened the gardens of their own homes and small estates, and visiting one of these establishments became a traditional outing for the city dwellers. It's a rich tradition that is maintained today.

Dinner: Enjoy dinner together with local vintages at an authentic Heurigen restaurant in the Grinzing wine district.

Evening: Spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 3 Vienna • Belvedere Palace

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Rathauspark or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll take public transportation to the magnificent Belvedere Palace, which is actually two palaces set amidst a splendid park. Both palaces are home to museums featuring Austrian art from the 18th to the 20th centuries, and we'll explore one of the renowned galleries as well as the gardens.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: The rest of the day is free for you to explore on your own.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 4 Explore Vienna • Optional Footsteps of the Great Composers tour

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Rathauspark or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: The day is free to relax or explore on your own. Or, you may join our optional Footsteps of the Great Composers walking tour, which begins with lunch at a local restaurant, followed by several museum visits in the afternoon.

Lunch: Travelers who joined the optional tour will have lunch at a local restaurant. Otherwise lunch is on your own.

Afternoon: Today's optional tour continues with a visit to several museums and sites associated with Mozart and Beethoven. Tour highlights include the Mozart House Museum, where the composer lived from 1784 to 1787, and a visit to the House of Music, a museum with a floor dedicated to Mozart, Beethoven, and other great masters of the Viennese music tradition.

If you did not join today's optional tour, the afternoon is yours to spend as you choose.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 5 Vienna • Schoenbrunn Palace

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Rathauspark or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll board the local subway to visit the expansive summer estate of Habsburg royalty, Schoenbrunn Palace (whose name means "beautiful spring"). Featuring 1,400 rooms, meticulously maintained gardens, and an architectural legacy that stretches back to the 17th century, the palace is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our visit includes a tour of palace highlights and free time to spend exploring the palace's park.

Lunch: On your own. There are a variety of cafés and restaurants on the grounds of the Palace you may choose to visit.

Afternoon: Enjoy time to make final discoveries in Vienna at your own pace.

Dinner: We toast our adventure tonight during a Farewell Dinner together in a local restaurant.

Evening: Spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy one final Austrian beer or *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel).

Day 6 Vienna • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for our morning flight home.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Footsteps of the Great Composers

(Day 4 \$150 per person)

This half-day walking tour follows in the footsteps of two of the world's greatest composers, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven—and how their paths are said to have crossed in Vienna. The tour begins with an included lunch at a local restaurant. After lunch, we'll visit the Mozart House Museum, where we'll learn about the legendary composer's life, family, and friends at his residence from 1784 to 1787. Then, we head to the House of Music, a museum featuring an entire floor dedicated to Mozart, Beethoven, and other great masters of the Viennese music tradition.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at www.travel.state.gov for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip to Berlin & Dresden, Germany:** No additional passport pages are needed for this extension.
- **Post-trip to Vienna, Austria:** No additional passport pages are needed for this extension.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** No additional passport pages are needed for this extension.
- **Stopover in Barcelona, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Madrid, Paris, Helsinki, Munich, or Rome:** No additional passport pages are needed for this extension.
- **Stopover in Istanbul or London:** You will need to add an additional page to the applicable total listed above.

Visa Required

We'll be sending you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about **100 days prior to your departure**. In the meantime, we're providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Germany, Austria):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – O.A.T. will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or www.pvsinternational.org.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

Requirements for the Czech Republic

You will need to bring additional documentation for the Czech Republic, so please read carefully.

According to the U.S. State Department and Czech Embassy, all foreign tourists must be able to provide proof of medical coverage, if asked. ***Not all travelers will be asked—in fact, most travelers won’t—and even some local officials are unaware of this rule.*** But occasionally, travelers are asked at passport control or by medical personnel. And if that happens to you, we want you to be prepared.

Specifically, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

- Be for a minimum of 30,000 Euros (about \$37,000 US dollars at the time of writing).
- Cover possible medical expenses and hospitalization charges while traveling.
- Be valid in Schengen countries like the Czech Republic. Schengen countries are the European Union countries that have signed the Schengen Agreement—for example, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, etc.
- Include evacuation or repatriation coverage—it must cover the cost of getting you back home if you need to return for medical reasons.

The good news is that our Travel Protection Plan DOES meet these requirements. So what type of documentation you should bring depends on if you purchased Travel Protection with us or not.

If you purchased our Travel Protection Plan: All you'll need to bring is a copy of the coverage from our plan provider. You can download and print a copy of your coverage for this purpose. Go online to www.gct.com/tpp or oattravel.com/tpp, and follow the links to the plan provider's website. This will redirect you to where you can print a copy of your coverage. *TIP: In our experience, the page from Part B with the schedule of benefits is usually enough to satisfy local officials.*

If you did not purchase Travel Protection with us: You will need to bring some other form of proof of coverage. If your own health insurance meets the requirements above, contact your insurer for a letter stating that you are covered. A certificate of coverage or proof of purchase from a private insurer or another Travel Protection Plan will also suffice, as long as the requirements listed above are met. However, **Medicare cards are not acceptable**, since Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 5 locations in 14 days
- International flights to Czech Republic depart around midnight

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 5-6 miles unassisted and participate in 4-6 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for embarking inflatable rafts
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 35-70°F
- The Czech Republic and Hungary have relatively temperate climates, while Slovakia may see larger seasonal changes in temperature
- The hottest months are June-August, when mid-day temperatures can reach more than 95°F
- April weather can be unpredictable and can change quickly within a short period of time

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel on some rugged paths, as well as bumpy, cobblestone roads, both by bus and on foot; climb uneven stairways
- Travel by 30-passenger coach, 50-passenger boat, and raft

- Several drives of 3 to 5 hours each

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than those in the U.S. and offer basic amenities
- All accommodations feature private baths

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at www.cdc.gov/travel or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: travel.state.gov (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water in the region is safe to drink, but is processed differently than in the U.S. so it can still upset your stomach or feel "heavy". Therefore, you might want to drink bottled water instead.
- Bottled water is readily available for purchase and is relatively inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.)
- Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly.
- When in doubt about the water, salads, or ice, just ask the restaurant or your Trip Experience Leader.
- It is OK to brush your teeth with tap water.

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked foods.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not accepted in the countries on this itinerary.**
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip**; you will need local currency instead.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

Czech Republic: Czech Koruna (CZK pr Kr.)

Some establishments will accept euros, but the exchange rates are usually not favorable, and any change will be in Czech crowns. If possible, use local currency or credit/debit cards.

Hungary: Hungarian Forint (ft)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. One exception is in the Czech Republic, where it is more economical to try a bank first. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Austria: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Austria. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1–2 per room, per night

- **Waiters:** When dining as a group, your tip is included—there is no need for you to leave an additional tip. When dining on your own, you can simply round up the bill. Or if you want to leave a really nice tip for excellent service 5-10% of the check is enough.
- **Taxi drivers:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. In Germany, taxi drivers will not assist you with luggage without mandatory tips.

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Most hotels in Eastern Europe will have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. WiFi service is fairly common, but may be limited to a public area, like the lobby. If you'd like to use WiFi when and where it is available, you'll need to bring your own device. Or you could choose to rely on hotel computers instead—many hotels will also offer a limited number of computers in the lobby or business center for guests to use.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Czech Republic: +420

Germany: +49

Slovakia: +421

Austria: +43

Hungary: +36

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches .
Luggage Type	Duffel bag, soft-sided, or hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** Comfortable, supportive walking shoes are essential. You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction.
- **Light rain gear is recommended.** Regardless of when you travel, rainfall is a possibility. While it may not rain on your trip, we suggest you bring a waterproof shell or coat, preferably with a hood. This might be a better choice than a folding umbrella, which is usually less effective in wind. (Plus it can be tricky to try to hold onto an umbrella and take photos at the same time.)
- **Layers are key.** We suggest wearing layers, so you can adjust to warmer and cooler conditions as needed.

Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual. You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants or for the Farewell Dinner, but that is completely up to you.

Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each traveler's packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts.
- Trousers and/or jeans.
- Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking/ running shoes or low-cut hiking shoes, with arch support. Bring at least a couple pairs of medium- to heavy-weight socks for long walks.
- Underwear and sleepwear
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Wide-brim sun hat
- Swimsuit for hotel pools or saunas

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For summer departures (June- August):

- Although high temperatures tend to be in the high 80s, temperatures can easily spike into the 90s. Shorts and lightweight tops will help you cope with an unexpected heat wave.
- Despite the potential for higher temperatures, you'll also want at least one piece to layer—a light sweater, a vest, or jacket—in case it gets cool at night or in case you are somewhere where the air conditioning is chilly.

For spring and fall departures (April, May, September, October):

- Light sweater and/or a warm jacket
- Gloves and a scarf

For winter departures (January- March, November, December):

- Winter coat, hat, warm gloves, scarf, and long underwear

Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.

- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses
- Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Cold-water hand-wash laundry soap such as Woolite and plastic hang-up clothespins
- Light folding umbrella
- Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- Packets of pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- Electrical converter & plug adapter: see “A Word about Electricity” for details
- Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- Your own prescription medicines
- Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in this region is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Since an E or F socket will take a C plug, you'll only need one adapter, though it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Czech Republic: C

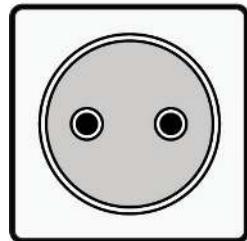
Slovakia: C

Hungary: C

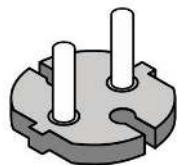
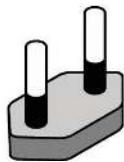
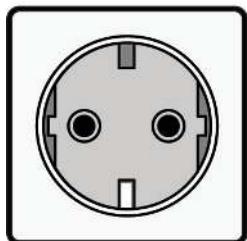
Germany: C and/or F

Austria: C and/or F

Type C



Type F



Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Czech Republic: In spring, variable weather reigns: some years it's warm, in others it's cool. Summer days are typically very warm, though there may still be some brisk days. Temperatures start to fall in early autumn, and winter weather begins settling in by early November. In general, you can expect average spring temperatures in the low 60s, summer in the 70s, and fall in the 50s. **However, if you're traveling in July or August,** be prepared for heat waves that can spike the temperatures up past the average and into the 90s.

Slovakia: Because of Slovakia's landlocked position, seasonal extremes are common without the curbing effects from the Atlantic Ocean. This means that summer can be extremely hot while winter weather can bring bitterly cold temperatures. Weather can fluctuate more during spring and fall, with some days on the cool side but with the occasional warm day. By the end of October, temperatures have started to drop and the evenings are chilly.

Hungary: Hungary is completely landlocked, and its inland position cuts it off from the moderating influence of the Atlantic Ocean. Consequently, seasonal weather is more prone to extremes. Summers can be very hot and winters absolutely frigid. If you're traveling during the peak of summer, be prepared for some high temperatures, though it could also be comfortable and pleasant. As fall approaches, some days may be on the cool side, but stints of warm weather still occur. By late October, the air is usually brisk and evenings are chilly.

Berlin, Germany: Summer in Berlin, between May and August, is pleasantly warm with lots of sunshine July and August, the hottest months, are also unpredictable – with the possibility of going from sunny to rainy very quickly. Winters can be quite cold and damp although extreme weather is rare. Snow, however, is common and days can be cold, clear, and frosty.

Austria: Austria has a central European climate: variable weather reigns, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Spring weather is moderate, with intermittent sun and showers; afternoons in early spring average about 60° F and about 70° later in the season. Summers are typically sunny and warm, though you should be prepared for a few cloudy and wet days. Evenings, too, can get quite chilly. Autumn weather with some drizzle comes early to this region of the world, so by November it can be on the brisk side, with daytime temperatures in the mid to high 40s, and evenings that dip into the 30s.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use www.weather.com for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC			BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	37 to 29	91 to 84	15	37 to 26	87 to 79	13
FEB	41 to 30	92 to 76	12	42 to 28	88 to 72	11
MAR	50 to 36	89 to 63	16	52 to 35	85 to 58	15
APR	62 to 44	83 to 51	16	62 to 40	78 to 50	14
MAY	67 to 50	79 to 53	17	75 to 49	77 to 52	14
JUN	75 to 57	85 to 55	17	85 to 55	76 to 53	15
JUL	79 to 60	85 to 54	18	87 to 58	75 to 49	15
AUG	78 to 59	88 to 53	16	90 to 57	80 to 50	12
SEP	68 to 51	90 to 60	15	75 to 51	85 to 56	14
OCT	56 to 43	91 to 68	16	65 to 42	89 to 64	15
NOV	47 to 38	91 to 83	17	47 to 34	88 to 77	16
DEC	40 to 38	90 to 85	14	38 to 30	86 to 80	14

MONTH	BUDAPEST, HUNGARY			BERLIN, GERMANY		
	Temp High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	38 to 25	86 to 77	7	37 to 26	89 to 83	23
FEB	43 to 27	85 to 68	6	40 to 27	90 to 76	18
MAR	53 to 35	81 to 57	6	48 to 33	88 to 64	20
APR	63 to 41	75 to 51	7	57 to 37	84 to 54	16
MAY	70 to 51	77 to 51	8	67 to 45	78 to 50	15
JUN	80 to 56	72 to 51	8	72 to 53	79 to 55	19
JUL	85 to 59	76 to 48	7	76 to 56	80 to 53	18
AUG	90 to 59	76 to 48	7	79 to 55	84 to 54	17
SEP	80 to 52	82 to 52	5	69 to 50	89 to 59	17
OCT	65 to 43	86 to 60	5	58 to 42	90 to 71	17
NOV	50 to 34	87 to 75	8	49 to 35	89 to 81	22
DEC	40 to 28	86 to 79	8	40 to 30	89 to 86	23

MONTH	VIENNA, AUSTRIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	39 to 31	84 to 75	1
FEB	43 to 33	82 to 68	2
MAR	52 to 38	81 to 62	4
APR	63 to 46	76 to 54	2
MAY	73 to 55	76 to 54	7
JUN	79 to 59	76 to 57	4
JUL	84 to 63	76 to 54	7
AUG	88 to 64	78 to 54	5
SEP	75 to 57	84 to 61	5
OCT	63 to 48	86 to 65	2
NOV	50 to 39	86 to 75	3
DEC	40 to 33	85 to 78	2

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

The Culture of Central Europe

The three countries visited on your main itinerary—the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary—all have very rich, and very distinct cultures. But they also have significant overlap, which makes sense when you consider that up until this century, these nations did not even exist in their current sovereign states but were variously part of each other. Much of this had to do with the Hapsburg dynasty who controlled most of Central Europe (and beyond) from late medieval times till the 20th century. On a cultural level, that meant that Germanic culture was held as the ideal. This is often expressed as an appreciation for cooperation, for precision and accuracy, and a certain level of formality.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, this comes through in the way people appreciate good manners and well-behaved children. You are expected say “good day” to everyone you meet, and to be polite. If you are not, don't be surprised if local grandmas cluck their tongues at you. At the same time, Czechs and Slovaks have a dark sense of humor and they love to poke fun at themselves and especially, the government. But one thing they do thank the government for is its traditional support for the arts. During the Soviet era (and still today), the Czechoslovakian as well as the Hungarian governments subsidized many programs for artists as well as theaters and concert halls, so attending plays and musical performances is a regular and affordable pleasure for all members of society.

History has shaped the Hungarian people in slightly different ways. Hungarians have struggled for centuries to find their own identity while under the control of more powerful states, from Austria to Turkey to Germany and the Soviet Union. Especially among the older generation, there is a sense of somber nostalgia called the “Trianon Syndrome” that harkens to a post-World War I Treaty that whittled Hungary down to about 60% of its previous size. The country has yet to fully recover from this loss, and some still look back on the pre-Trianon years as Hungary's golden age. On the other hand, most Hungarians have a strong sense of pride about their fierce Magyar forebears, their legendary cuisine, and their close family ties. Regarding the latter, they are not insular and will extend true hospitality to all guests.

Religion and Religious Observances

All three countries were Christianized during Roman times, and the spread of this new religion was largely attributed to the Byzantine monks saints Cyril and Methodius. But in the early medieval era, the region's nobles cast their lots with the Roman Catholic church, and the Holy Roman Empire. In the 16th century, an early version of Protestantism took hold in Bohemia. The Hapsburgs were threatened by this movement, which rejected the church-state concordat that Hapsburg power rested upon. And so they launched an aggressive counter-Reformation, forcing many people to re-convert.

Though most people were nominally Catholic, the region still had many Protestant strongholds. Today, after nearly half a century of Communist rule, religion is not a major force in any of the three countries. Most people identify as non-believers, and though some religious traditions are bound up in the observance of local holidays and customs, church attendance is low. The Jews were once a large and vibrant community here, particularly in Prague and Budapest. But most were killed or forced to flee during the Holocaust. Today, Hungary has the region's largest Jewish population at a little over 100,000. But most Hungarian Jews are not religiously affiliated and consider themselves Jews by ethnicity.

Language

In the Czech Republic, the majority of the population speaks the official language, Czech, as their first language. Among the other languages spoken by minorities in the Czech Republic are Romani, German, and Polish. Prior to 1989, learning Russian in school was mandatory. Today, especially among young people and in cities, English is the most popular foreign language and about a third of the people speak it (more in cities).

In Slovakia, the people speak Slovak. It is mutually intelligible to Czech speakers, and both languages belong to the West Slavic language group, which uses the Latin (Roman) alphabet (versus the Cyrillic). Overall, just over 12% of the population speaks English, but that number is much higher in tourist areas and in the capital, Bratislava. The next most popular foreign languages are Hungarian and German.

The situation is similar in Hungary, where nearly 100% of the people speak the official Hungarian language. Just over 12% speak English nationwide, but the number is higher in cities and among young people. German is the next most popular foreign language.

Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

Czech and Slovak Cuisine

Like their neighbors, the Czech Republic and Slovakia share a culinary heritage that emphasizes meat, potatoes, dumplings, and fermented vegetables (usually, sauerkraut). These are often served with heavy gravies or sauces, but the high-caloric impact is somewhat mitigated by the fact that most Czechs and Slovaks eat their heaviest meal at lunch, and have a lighter supper of just cold cuts and condiments. You'll also find that in the major cities, young chefs are experimenting with lighter and healthier versions of the classic dishes they grew up with.

- **Vepro-knedlo-zelo:** Shorthand for *veprové s knedliky a kyselé zeli*, this dish consists of a succulent roast pork and dumplings concoction that is often seasoned with caraway, and served with sauerkraut. You will see it on just about every restaurant menu.
- **Houskové knedlíky:** Bread dumplings made with flour, yeast, egg yolks and milk, sometimes with bread cubes added to the mix. After the dough rises it gets boiled or steamed, then sliced.
- **Ovocné knedlíky:** Fruit-filled dumplings served with cottage cheese as a main course.
- **Bryndzové halušky:** Potato dumplings (similar to Italian *gnocchi*) topped with a creamy, soft, Slovakian sheep's milk cheese that has its own EU protected designation of origin status. It is then topped with crumbled bacon bits and a garnish like chopped chives, onions or dill. It is the national dish of Slovakia, but it's also popular in the Czech Republic, especially in Moravia.
- **Svicková na smetane:** A dish where beef is marinated in vinegar and herbs; then roasted with vegetables; then simmered till tender. The broth and vegetables are pureed with sour cream to make a sauce, and it all gets garnished with cranberries.
- **Párek v rohliku:** The quick meal where a small *parek* sausage is completely enclosed within the bun, like pigs in a blanket.
- **Laskonky:** A dessert of two crispy meringues filled with caramel or chocolate buttercream.
- **Trdelník:** A dessert made by wrapping dough around a metal or wooden stick, then roasting it over an open flame. The tubular treat is then dusted with sugar, and topped with nuts and cinnamon.
- **Veterník:** A profiterole made of puff pastry filled with vanilla and caramel cream. The whole pastry is then dipped in a shiny caramel icing for a belt-busting grand finale.

Pub are an integral part of Czech and Slovak life, and the region brews some of the best beer in the world. In the Czech town of Plzen, brewing dates as far back as the founding of the town, in 1295. Plzen is internationally known for its award-winning *Pilsener Urquell*, and there are numerous other local beers that perfectly accompany the region's hearty food.

Hungarian Cuisine

It won't take long for you to figure out that paprika (*paprikás*) and sour cream (*tejföl*) figure prominently in many classic Hungarian dishes. But don't be fooled, Hungarian food is delicious and diverse, and even dishes accented with paprika have distinctive tastes, thanks to the eight different grades of "red gold" that are used here.

- **Gulyás:** Or goulash is a saucy beef dish that in Hungary is more like a soup than the stew you may be familiar with.
- **Pörkölt:** A hearty stew of beef, pork, lamb, chicken, or liver simmered with onion, paprika and other spices, and served with a side of chewy *nokedli* (egg noodle dumpling). It's comfort food at its finest, and Hungarians like to say, "It's not a real Sunday without *pörkölt*." If you thicken the stew with sour cream, you get *paprikás*.
- **Töltött káposzta:** Rolls of pickled cabbage stuffed with seasoned rice and ground pork or beef, in a sauce accented by sour cream. It is a favorite around Easter and Christmas.
- **Halászlé:** Or fisherman's soup, is cooked in a kettle over an open fire. It is based on Danube river fish like carp, catfish, perch, or pike and seasoned with hot paprika, giving it a bright red color. If you order it *a la Baja*, it will have thick pasta and mainly carp. *Szeged*-style will have four types of fish.
- **Lángos:** A popular street food of crispy, chewy, deep-fried flatbread smothered with sour cream and garlic sauce, and topped with grated cheese and sometimes, sausage and bacon.
- **Lecsó:** Similar to the French ratatouille, this dish is a stew of peppers, tomatoes and onions. Some cooks do put meat in it but typically it is served just with bread and a dollop of sour cream.
- **Uborksaláta:** A salad of thinly sliced cucumbers dressed with white vinegar, dill, and onions.
- **Palacsinta:** Hungary's answer to crepes, they can have sweet or savory fillings, and they are always served rolled. The famous Budapest restaurant Gundel serves their own version filled with a rum-walnut cream which is then flambéed, and drizzled with chocolate sauce.
- **Dobos torte:** This dessert was named after the master confectioner who invented it in 1885. It includes six layers of sponge cake covered in chocolate buttercream with a glistening topping of caramel. It is a staple at the many famous coffeehouses of Budapest (and Vienna), and not to be missed.
- **Somlói galuska:** A cake is topped with chocolate cream, walnuts, rum and whipped cream, and it is another specialty of the renowned Gundel restaurant.

German Cuisine

German Cuisine varies greatly from region to region. The southern regions of Bavaria and Swabia share many dishes among them and with their neighbors to the south, Switzerland and Austria. In the West, French influences are more pronounced, while the eastern parts of the country have much in common with Eastern European cuisine and there are marked Scandinavian influences in the northern coastal regions. But the region that is often viewed as having the most classic German cuisine is Saxony.

- **Sauerbraten:** A tangy pot roast that is eaten all over Germany. *Sächsischer Sauerbraten* uses beer instead of wine to marinate the beef before its long, slow braising. *Rheinischer Sauerbraten* is made with raisins and crumbled *lebkuchen* (gingersnaps) to give the tangy gravy a touch of sweetness
- **Dresdner Wiegebraten:** A Dresden meat loaf made with minced pork, veal and beef bound with eggs, breadcrumbs, anchovies, bacon and herbs that gets slathered with butter before roasting.
- **Sächsische Kartoffelsuppe:** (Saxon potato soup), a rich, creamy puree of potatoes and broth studded with onions fried in bacon fat, finely chopped greens, and bacon and sausage bits—all seasoned with ginger, nutmeg, salt and pepper. A special version is made with succulent shrimps and shrimp broth.
- **Leipziger Allerlei:** A casserole of shrimp or crayfish mixed with cauliflower, carrots, peas, asparagus, and mushrooms, baked with a creamy sauce topped with bread crumbs.
- **Buchweizenpfannkuchen:** A buckwheat pancake that may be served with syrup and cranberries, or with salmon and a salad.
- **Dresdner Eierschecke:** A three-layered cake filled with custard and cream.
- **Currywurst:** A bratwurst flavored with curry, ketchup and Worcestershire sauce. It was invented in 1946 by Herta Heuwer, a Berlin housewife who decided to spice up her family's diet by trading some booze for seasonings from some British soldiers. *Currywurst* is a classic example of post-war, East German cuisine—a style that arose during a time of severe shortages, when the people of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany) had to get inventive with very economical ingredients.
- **Westfälischer Schinken:** Or Westphalian ham is made from pigs raised solely on acorns. The meat is dry cured and smoked over beechwood and juniper.
- **Dampfnudeln:** A yeasty steamed dumpling with vanilla sauce. If they are topped with *powidl* (a plum jam) and sprinkled with poppy seeds, they are called *germknödeln*. If you prefer your dumplings savory, *dampfnudeln* can be enjoyed with mushrooms and béchamel sauce; or with gravy and rolls of beef stuffed with bacon and pickles called *Rouladen*.
- **Badische Schaeufele:** Smoked pork shoulder simmered in wine with garlic, leeks, juniper berries, and other spices.

- **Maultaschen:** In this dish, pockets of dough are stuffed with spinach, meat or cheese; and eaten as a main course or in a beef broth.
- **Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte:** Or Black Forest Cake. It's a chocolate layer cake filled and frosted with fresh cream and cherries soaked in *Kirschwasser* (cherry schnapps), and decorated with chocolate shavings.
- **Nürnberger bratwurst:** These were the first sausage to receive the European Union's Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) status. To be labeled as *Nürnberger bratwurst*, these small, coarsely-ground pork sausages must be 2 3/4–3 1/2 inches long; contain mace and marjoram; and be made within the metropolitan Nuremberg limits. The most popular way to eat them is *Drei im Weggla* or “three in a bun.”

Austrian Cuisine

Austria has quite a bit of culinary overlap with neighboring Germany. But you have only to consider the scope of the Hapsburg Empire to understand the many influences that have also shaped the national cuisine: the empire once ruled over Switzerland, Holland, Alsace, Burgundy, Spain, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, and happily appropriated many of their ingredients and cooking techniques. This is to say nothing of the Turkish influence that wafted westwards across the Austro-Hungarian empire.

- One constant on Austrian menus is the national dish, **wiener schnitzel**, the classic Viennese veal cutlet which is pounded till thin, breaded, fried and served with wedges of lemon and greens. It can also be made with chicken or pork.
- **Tafelspitz:** A filet of beef (or veal) that is gently simmered with vegetables, and served with applesauce and horseradish. Late spring brings spargel, or asparagus, which are particularly tender and flavorful here. It'll appear as a special on many menus, often served with a delicate hollandaise or just butter, lemon, and toasted bread crumbs.
- **Kasspätzln:** A Tyrolean casserole of chewy, hand-made egg noodles that are mixed with sauteed onions, covered with *bergkäse*, a strong local cheese, and baked till browned. Before serving, it is topped with crispy fried onions and parsley.
- **Speckknödeln:** A bacon dumpling that is often served as an appetizer or in stews or clear soups. It is just one of the dozens of different dumplings that grace the Austrian table.
- **Frittatensuppe:** Or “pancake soup” is a Styrian specialty that is popular all over Austria. It's a bowl of clear beef consommé with strips of cooked crepes or pancakes.
- **Würstelstände:** Or sausage booths. These street stalls are the go-tos for snackers on the go, and the sausage of choice will usually be a wiener sausage, which Austrians will only ever call a “*Frankfurter*.” You can also ask for a *bratwurst*, a *Käsekrainer* (which is studded with cheese), or a *Debreziner*, which is a lightly-smoked, reddish sausage spiced with paprika.

- **Sachertorte:** A classic chocolate sponge cake layered with apricot jam, and covered in chocolate ganache. It's available all over, but for the quintessential Viennese experience, try it where it originated, at the Sacher Hotel, or at the famed Demel bakery.
- **Mozartkugel:** Small, round candies are balls of pistachio marzipan and nougat, covered with dark chocolate.

One thing Austria can thank the Turks for is coffee. Legend has it that when Hapsburg troops chased the Turks out in 1683, the retreating invaders left behind bags of coffee beans. Within two years the first Viennese coffee house opened, and the rest is history. In 2011, UNESCO designated Viennese coffee house culture as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, saying that the coffee houses have a "very specific atmosphere" and are places "where time and space are consumed, but only the coffee is found on the bill."

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic many stores sell a wide range of crafts and tourist goods, such as Bohemian glass, porcelain, crystal, peasant pottery, wooden toys, jewelry, and folk carvings. Modern artwork and crafts are sold at private art galleries.

Slovakia

Handicraft shops in Slovakia feature pictures painted on glass or wood, puppets in elaborate costumes, and shepherd axes. Travelers who enjoy musical instruments from other countries should keep their an eye out for a *fujara*, a type of flute that is played upright like an oboe. At 3 feet long, it might not fit in your carry-on, but it is typically Slovakian. Slovakia is also known for its wines and for *slivovica*, a potent plum brandy.

Hungary

Look for exquisite Herend porcelain, cut glass, fine peasant embroidery and needlework, homespun cloth, carpets, charming carved wood objects and, of course, dolls in national dress. Other excellent buys are recordings of classical and folk music.

Germany

Popular German buys include Nymphenburg porcelain, cutlery, high-quality cameras and binoculars, loden clothing, goose-down comforters, Rosenthal china and glassware, and chocolate. Munich is Germany's fashion capital—there are plenty of chic boutiques, especially on Theatinerstrasse, Maximilianstrasse, and Schwabing's Leopoldstrasse.

Value Added Tax: Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of Germany's 16% Value Added Tax (VAT). You must obtain a special form for VAT from the store. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details, and be sure to save all receipts for Customs.

Austria

Popular buys include glassware, crystal, porcelain, petit point, musical instruments and scores, fur hats, ski wear, and, of course, lederhosen (leather pants), loden-cloth coats, and sachertorte (chocolate cake). But be forewarned: the quality of Austrian wares is exceptionally high, and so are the prices!

Value Added Tax: In Austria, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 10% to 30%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Czech Republic

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 30,451 square miles
- **Capital:** Prague
- **Languages:** Czech is the official language.
- **Ethnicities:** Czech 64.3%, Moravian 5%, Slovak 1.4%, other 29.3%
- **Location:** The Czech Republic is bordered by Austria, Slovakia, Poland, and Germany.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic comprises the ancient provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, with a mountainous rim on the German border to the west.
- **Population:** 10,644,842 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 10.4%, Protestant 1.1%, other or unspecified 54%, none 34.5%
- **Time Zone:** The Czech Republic on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Prague.

National Holidays: Czech Republic

In addition to the holidays listed below, the Czech Republic celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/08 Victory in Europe Day

07/05 Saints Cyril and Methodius

07/06 Jan Hus Day

09/28 St. Wenceslas Day

10/28 Independent Czechoslovak State Day

11/17 Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

The Czech Republic: A Brief History

Though the Czech Republic is less than 50 years old, its culture dates to the 5th century BC, when groups of Celts calling themselves “Boii” settled in Bohemia, which means “home of the Boii.” By the 6th century, the Celts were replaced by Germanic and Slavic tribes. Around 631 AD, Samo, a Frankish merchant living in the area, formed a coalition of Slavic tribes, became their king, and won victories against the Avars and the Franks. His short-lived kingdom was the first Slavic state.

A unified Slavic state continued with the formation of Great Moravia, an empire that included the Duchy of Bohemia. The region soon fell under the influence of German dukes, and in 950 became part of the Holy Roman Empire. Fast-forward to the 14th century, the Czech golden age. Under the enlightened reign of Charles IV, who was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1355, Bohemia was a center of power, culture and prestige.

By the 14th century, Jan Hus, a rector at Charles University in Prague, advocated for church reform and against corruption. He gained a huge Czech following two centuries before the Protestant Reformation. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, and in 1419 his followers stormed Prague's Town Hall and tossed Catholic councilors out the window in what is called the "Defenestration of Prague." Bohemia and Moravia remained Protestant strongholds, but as the Hapsburgs consolidated power, they confiscated Protestant lands. The Hapsburgs dominated for 300 years, leaving an ambiguous legacy. Though they suppressed dissent and imposed Austrian culture, they also provided stability. Under Empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph, serfdom was abolished, public education was provided, and the region's Jews gained rights. An industrial middle class emerged. And there was a renewal of Czech language and culture.

World War I brought the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the establishment of the first independent Czechoslovakia—a joint state between ethnic Bohemians, Moravians, and Slovaks. Czechoslovakia thrived until Hitler annexed the country in 1939. Bohemia and Moravia became a protectorate of the Reich, and Slovakia became a puppet state. Prague was spared significant physical damage, but the resistance was destroyed and two-thirds of the nation's Jews were murdered. In 1945, the Nazis withdrew; Czechoslovakia was reconstituted; and in 1947 2.5 million resident ethnic Germans were expelled to Germany and Austria.

The Soviets took power in 1948, sending thousands of Czechs to prison. Resistance emerged in the 1960s with the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Alexander Dubcek, who espoused "socialism with a human face." It smiled upon the world during the Prague Spring of 1968, when there was an outpouring of democratic sentiment. Dubcek loosened restrictions on the press, speech and travel. But in August, 1968, the Soviets invaded with Warsaw Pact troops, replaced Dubcek with a hardliner, and began reprisals against protest leaders (including activist-playwright, Václav Havel).

As Communism fell across Europe in 1989, the most striking revolt was in Czechoslovakia. When Prague police brutally attacked a peaceful student demonstration, dissidents led by Václav Havel negotiated the government's resignation on December 3, and Havel was elected president. Forty years of Soviet domination were swept aside in what has been called "the Velvet Revolution." Soon after independence, differences between the Czechs and Slovaks became irreconcilable. So on January 1, 1993, they agreed to a "Velvet Divorce" and split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, and the EU in 2004. Today, the Czech Republic is a pluralist multi-party parliamentary democracy. The country has held numerous free elections without incident, and the economy has remained relatively robust.

Slovakia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 18,933 square miles
- **Capital:** Bratislava
- **Languages:** Slovak is the official language; Hungarian is also spoken.
- **Ethnicities:** Slovak 80.7%, Hungarian 8.5%, Roma 2%, other and unspecified 8.8%
- **Location:** Slovakia is bordered by Austria, Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic.
- **Geography:** Situated in central Europe, Slovakia has a strategic position as a “bridge” between the countries of Austria (on its west) and Ukraine (on its east), and Hungary (to the south) and Poland (to the north); it’s also bordered by the Czech Republic (to the northwest). The land has rugged mountains, rich in mineral resources, and vast forests and pastures. The Carpathian Mountains dominate the topography of Slovakia, with lowland areas in the southern region.
- **Population:** 5,445,027 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 62%, Protestant 8.2%, Greek Catholic 3.8%, other or unspecified 12.5%, none 13.4%
- **Time Zone:** Slovakia is on Central Europe Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Bratislava.

National Holidays: Slovakia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Slovakia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 Republic Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/08 End of World War II

07/05 St. Cyril & St. Methodius Day

08/29 National Uprising Day

09/01 Constitution Day

11/01 All Saints’ Day

11/17 Fight for Freedom and Democracy Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen’s Day

Slovakia: A Brief History

Slovakia only gained true independence as a nation in 1993, after the peaceful dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation that it had variously been part of for most of the 20th century. But sovereignty aside, Slovak culture has been evolving for hundreds, if not thousands of years.

What is now modern-day Slovakia has been inhabited since Paleolithic times. The earliest identifiable people were the Celts, who arrived around 400 BC and colonized lowlands along the Danube and its tributaries. They lived in small huts and established villages around hill forts. Romans set up shop here around 174 AD, but their focus turned elsewhere Huns and Germanic tribes moved in. By 500 AD, Slavic tribes had established themselves in settlements along the Morava, Váh, and Hron rivers. Growing in number, they became the progenitors of the Slovak people. By 830 AD, they united with Bohemia and Moravia to form Great Moravia.

Great Moravia was conquered by Hungarian Magyars in the 10th century, and for nearly 1,000 years, Hungarian domination continued. In fact, Hungary's first king, Saint Stephen, established eight counties in what is present-day Slovakia, and the region was the frontier of the Kingdom of Hungary throughout the medieval era. When Turks invaded in the 16th century, they captured much of south and central Hungary (and Slovakia). Budapest was taken, but the Hungarian royalty moved to Bratislava. They paid obeisance to the Austrian Hapsburgs, upon whom they depended for defense against the Turks. And so Slovakia became a Hapsburg territory, and between 1526 and 1830, 19 Hapsburg rulers of Hungary were coronated in Bratislava.

The emergence of a Slovak national identity dates to the late 18th century, coincident with the appearance of a written language. The romantic nationalism that swept Europe in the early 19th century also swept Slovakia, and was focused on literature and folklore. But after the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1848, Hungary's weakness left an opening for a political Slovak national political movement. It was sidelined in 1867 after Hungary and Austria reached a compromise and formed the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Slovakia's dream of independence did not materialize until 1919, when it joined with Bohemia, Moravia, Czech Silesia and Carpathia Ruthenia to form Czechoslovakia. During the interwar period, this was the only true democracy in Eastern Europe.

When Hitler annexed Czechoslovakia, Slovakia became a client state headed by Josef Tiso, a Catholic priest and Nazi collaborator. Under his rule, nearly all the Jews remaining in Slovakia were deported to death camps in Poland, or killed in Slovakia. In 1944, the Slovak Uprising attempted to overthrow the Tiso government. It was put down by the Nazis, but guerilla operations continued until Slovakia was liberated in 1945 by the Red Army and Czech, Slovak, and Romanian partisans. After the war, a reunited Czechoslovakia became a Soviet satellite.

The nation endured the repression and hardships of the Stalin years. But in the 1960s Czechoslovakia enjoyed a period of liberalization under Slovak-born president Alexander Dubcek. This ended with the "Prague Spring" of 1968, when the Soviets invaded with Warsaw Pact troops. The dissidents moved underground until 1989, when they helped bring about the fall of communism during the Velvet Revolution. In 1993, Slovaks and the Czechs agreed to separate in what is called the "Velvet Divorce." Thus, Slovakia finally became truly independent.

Slovakia joined both NATO and the European Union in 2004. Today, Slovakia is a modern country with a strong market economy, complemented by a comprehensive social security system that offers universal health care, free education and generous civil liberties.

Hungary

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 35,911 square miles
- **Capital:** Budapest
- **Languages:** Hungarian (Magyar) is the official language.
- **Ethnicities:** Hungarian 85.6%, Roma 3.2%, German 1.9%, other 2.6%, unspecified 14.1%
- **Location:** Hungary is located in central Europe
- **Geography:** Hungary is a landlocked country that has borders with seven countries: Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia to the east; Serbia and Romania to the south; Ukraine to the northeast; and Slovakia directly to the north. Most of Hungary is a fertile, rolling plain lying east of the Danube River, and drained by the Danube and Tisza Rivers.
- **Population:** 9,897,541 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 37.2%, Calvinist 11.6%, Lutheran 2.2%, Greek Catholic 1.8%, other 1.9%, none 18.2%, unspecified 27.2%
- **Time Zone:** Hungary is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Budapest.

National Holidays: Hungary

In addition to the holidays listed below, Hungary celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

03/15 1848 Revolution Memorial Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/20 Hungary National Day

10/23 1956 Revolution Memorial Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Hungary: A Brief History

Hungary has been populated for half a million years. It was settled by Illyrians, Thracians and Scythians, and the Celts arrived around 400 BC. Romans established a province in western Hungary called Pannonia, but left in the 2nd century AD, when Attila the Hun briefly took over.

The progenitors of modern Hungarians were the Magyars. In 895, seven Magyar tribes under the leadership of Árpád formed an alliance. (These chiefs are depicted in the iconic statues of Budapest's Heroes' Square.) They were fierce and superior horsemen who conquered lands as far west as Spain. But the Magyars realized that their survival depended on forming ties with more powerful entities—namely, Byzantium or the Holy Roman Empire. They chose Rome.

Magyar rule was solidified in 973, when Géza, the great-grandson of Árpád, had himself and his grandson Vajk baptized—gaining the favor of Rome. Vajk took the Christian name Stephen (István) and in 1000 he became the first King of Hungary. His kingdom lasted 500 years and its endurance gave Hungary a strong taste for sovereignty. But by 1526, nearly all of Hungary was occupied by Ottoman Turkey. The remaining western and northern parts gained the protection of Austria. But when the Hapsburgs drove the Turks out in 1686, they also made the rest of “liberated” Hungary an Austrian province. Over time there were setbacks (and revolts) under the Hapsburgs, but also an economic and cultural flowering that continued into the 20th century.

In 1848, Hungary revolted against Hapsburg rule and failed. But in 1867, Austria and Hungary formed a federated dual monarchy with two parliaments, two capitals (Vienna and Budapest) and a hyphenated name: Austria-Hungary. Hungary was industrialized, and its economy soared. When Austrian Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, Hungary entered World War I as a German ally. Losses were enormous, the empire dissolved, and unrest broke out. Large minorities within Hungary’s borders clamored for independence, and got it, thanks to the Treaty of Trianon. It gave lands to the new nations of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, reducing Hungary to 40% of its traditional size—a loss many Hungarians still mourn.

To recoup its former lands, the increasingly right-leaning Hungarian government of Miklós Horthy turned to fascist Italy and Germany. Hungary did recover some lands, but it was also drawn into World War II as an Axis ally. After the Hungarian army was virtually decimated, Horthy tried to negotiate a separate peace with the Allies. But Hitler invaded, installed the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross party, and resumed the murder of thousands of Jews, partisans, Romani, and intellectuals. In December 1944, the Red Army had encircled Budapest and a two-month siege began. By the time the Nazis surrendered in April 1945, much of Budapest had been destroyed.

The Soviets occupied Hungary after the war and made it a satellite state. In October 1953, 50,000 Budapest students began an anti-Soviet demonstration calling for Hungary’s liberal-minded Imre Nagy to be Prime Minister. The secret police fired on them and overnight, Hungary was in revolt. Nagy formed a government and offered amnesty to those involved in the violence. But when he announced that Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact and pursue neutrality, the Soviets stormed in with tanks. The world watched in horror as nearly 20,000 Hungarians died.

Communism fell in 1989 and on October 23—33 years after the 1956 Uprising—Hungary became the Republic of Hungary. The new Hungary joined NATO in 1999; and the EU in 2004. The current Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, a onetime anti-Communist, now serves his fourth term. He has moved far right and been criticized for increasing authoritarianism.

Germany

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 137,846 square miles
- **Capital:** Berlin
- **Languages:** German is the official language; Turkish is also spoken in Berlin.

- **Location:** Germany is bordered by Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea.
- **Geography:** Located in central Europe, Germany is bordered on the west by the Benelux countries and France, and on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic. Switzerland and Austria are to the south. Germany's northern coastline is met by the North Sea and the Baltic.
- **Population:** 80,854,408 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, other 28.3%
- **Time Zone:** Germany is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Berlin. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

National Holidays: Germany

In addition to the holidays listed below, Germany celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. There are also some holidays that are not national holidays, but are widely observed. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 May Day
 10/03 Day of German Unity
 11/01 All Saints' Day
 12/24 Christmas Eve
 12/25 Christmas Day
 12/26 Boxing Day

Germany: A Brief History

For many contemporary travelers, the history of Germany has been overshadowed by its role in the two World Wars of the past century. But that belies the two millennia of history and culture that is the legacy of Europe's Germanic people, and which awaits your discovery.

During the Bronze and Iron Ages, Germanic tribes from southern Scandinavia and Northern Germany expanded, mixing and clashing with Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, Gaul, and Indo-European people. Settling east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, in a region the Romans dubbed "Germania," they never unified. But they repulsed nearly all efforts of Rome to colonize them. The Romans were only ever able to subdue Germania's southern and western flanks.

With the 5th century fall of the Western Roman Empire, Germanic Franks rose as the largest tribal confederacy of the middle Rhine. They spread to Gaul, absorbing all of France; and as far west as Poland. There was no unified German nation but by 800 AD, there was a Holy Roman Empire with the Frankish king Charlemagne as Emperor. For 1,000 years, the Holy Roman Empire mostly controlled Europe, and German prince-electors mostly controlled the Empire.

The Holy Roman Empire became a collection of duchies, principalities, Free Imperial Cities, and ecclesiastical states that spread across the larger kingdoms of Germany, Italy, Bohemia, and Burgundy. In 1440, the Austrian Hapsburg dynasty took control of the Holy Roman Empire (and held it until 1806). But all the imperial states became embroiled in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), which was sparked by a revolt of Bohemian Protestants, but grew into a deadly struggle between Bourbon and Hapsburg powers. Most of Central Europe was devastated by the conflict.

The prospect of a unified German nation began to coalesce during the Seven Weeks War in 1866, when the Prussian army under Otto von Bismarck defeated Austria. Prussia's superior firepower convinced other German states that Austria was no longer a force. Bismarck then formed a North German Confederation without Austria—the forerunner to the unified German Empire of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Bismarck fostered alliances and instituted universal health care, pension plans, and other social welfare programs. But after Wilhelm I died in 1888, his grandson Wilhelm II rejected liberal reforms in favor of imperialism, which led to Germany's involvement in World War I. Its defeat ended of the German Empire with the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

The punitive provisions of the Versailles agreement opened the door for the Nazis. In 1933, a government was formed with Hitler as Chancellor. By 1934, Hitler took over as Führer and established a totalitarian regime. German Jews were targeted by vicious propaganda and stripped of their rights. By 1939, half of Germany's 500,000 Jews had fled. The Final Solution was implemented in 1941, and the ensuing Holocaust killed 6 million Jews and 11 million others. Meanwhile, Germany began annexing territories and the world was drawn into war.

The Allies defeated the Axis powers in 1945, leaving a partitioned Germany with a decimated political, social, and economic infrastructure. Yet despite its ruin and enormous burden of shame, the Federal German Republic (West Germany) became a parliamentary democracy, a NATO member, a founding member of the European Union, and one of the world's richest countries. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) demanded reform. German reunification took place in 1990. Since then economic integration of East Germany has been difficult, but progressing. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor from 2005 to 2021, helped Germany retain its position as a leader of the EU, and indeed, of the free world.

Merkel stepped down from her position following the COVID-19 pandemic and was succeeded by Olaf Scholz, who has since weathered the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine. Scholz responded to the invasion by significantly increasing Germany's defense budget and supplying weapons to the Ukraine resistance.

Austria

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 32,382 square miles
- **Capital:** Vienna

- **Languages:** German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
- **Location:** Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
- **Population:** 8,665,550 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 73.8%, Protestant 4.9%, Muslim 4.2%, Orthodox 2.2%, other 0.8%, none 12%, unspecified 2%
- **Time Zone:** Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

National Holidays: Austria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Austria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day	05/01 Labor Day/May Day
01/06 Epiphany	08/15 Assumption of Mary
	10/26 National Day
	11/01 All Saints' Day
	12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception
	12/25 Christmas Day
	12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Austria: A Brief History

Austria has been populated since Neanderthal times, but its most significant early culture was the Hallstatt, which arose around 400 BC when Celtic people settled along the shores of the Hallstatter See. The Celts formed a confederation called Noricum, established a prosperous salt trade, and forged iron implements. When Romans arrived in 15 BC, they made the area a province. In exchange for their excellent Noric steel (which the Romans used for swords), the Celts received protection—and they needed it, as Germanic Teutons and other tribes invaded.

When Charlemagne arrived in the 8th century and created a zone in the Danube Valley called the East March. In 976, the Babenburg dynasty became the margraves of this “eastern realm” or Österreich, German for “Austria.” The Babenburgs extended the territory and made Vienna their capital. When they died, Rudolf I took over in 1278, ushering in the dynastic powerhouse that dominated Europe for 500 years. Consolidating power through strategic marriages, they built a network from Spain to the Netherlands to Germany. The Hapsburgs were all prince-electors of the Holy Roman Empire, and from 1452 they elected their kinsmen as its Emperors. But holding

power was not easy. In 1618 Europe erupted into a Thirty Years War that caused nearly eight million deaths. It was largely a contest between Bourbon and Austro-Spanish Hapsburgs. Things further destabilized when the Turks advanced to Vienna. They remained a threat until 1699.

Austria bloomed during the Enlightenment reigns of Maria Theresa and her son, Joseph II. They instituted reforms, and were patrons of the arts (with Mozart as their court composer). Decades later, a result of the Napoleonic wars was that the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806. But the Hapsburgs survived, creating a German Alliance of hundreds of small states. In 1867, Austria and Hungary united as a dual monarchy—and reveled in the Austro-Hungarian Empire's cultural flowering. Vienna, newly magnificent after a flurry of building, was its epicenter. The Empire prospered until Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, sparking World War I. The 1919 defeat of the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey, and Bulgaria) ended the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which split into several nations per the Treaty of Versailles.

Austria became a republic, but suffered inflation, unemployment, and the loss of a national identity. Political tensions erupted into violent street fights, and in 1934, a Conservative government took legislative powers from the parliament, making Austria a fascist country. Though the Treaty of Versailles had expressly forbidden the reunification of Germany and Austria, Hitler (himself an Austrian) had other ideas about this Anschluss. When the Nazis goose-stepped into Austria in 1938, they were welcomed by cheering crowds. Austria's military, economy, and political infrastructure were integrated into Germany's war efforts; the execution of Jews and resistors stepped up; and many Austrians participated in the Nazi's crimes.

Austria was liberated by Allied and Soviet troops in 1945, a second republic was established, and Austria remained under occupation. In 1955, Russia demanded that Austria declare its neutrality as a condition for ending Soviet occupation. This status enabled Austria to be a bridge between East and West during the Cold War. But the nation never came to terms with its war history. That started in 1986, when former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim ran for president. He won and served until 1992, and investigations into his wartime activities were inconclusive.

Austria joined the EU in 1995, adopted the euro in 1999, and is one of Europe's most prosperous nations. It is considered a liberal democracy, and consistently ranks high for its quality of life.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

General

The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty by Benjamin Curtis (2013, History) Discover how this Austrian family gained power—and held it—for more than 500 years, shaping all the nations featured on this adventure.

The Bridge of Sighs: A Novel by Olen Steinhauer (2003, Mystery) Set in an unnamed Eastern European country under Soviet control, this mystery follows a young member of the state's police force on his first big case. The only trouble is that no one trusts him and his co-workers think he's a spy. This is the first of a series that also includes *The Confession* and *36 Yalta Boulevard*.

Czech Republic

Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937–1948 by Madeleine Albright (2012, Biography) Former Secretary of State Albright describes her early life in Czechoslovakia during the Nazi occupation and World War II. Albright spent much of her childhood in exile in London, and was too young to understand the forces at work in her birth country. For that, she relies here on historical research but also the letters, journals, and articles of her remarkable family and their friends. A stellar example of how the personal becomes the political.

Me, Myself & Prague: An Unreliable Guide to Bohemia by Rachael Weiss (2008, Travel Narrative) When the author uproots herself and moves from Australia to Prague she hopes to reinvent herself in a specific way—as a worldly and chic novelist—but ends up discovering more about who she was all along.

The Garden Party and Other Plays by Václav Havel (1994, Plays) Written by the famed playwright who went on to become the first president of post-communist Czechoslovakia. These absurdist plays blend politics with typical wry Czech humor to capture the mood of a country on the brink of great change.

Love and Garbage by Ivan Klíma (1986, Fiction) When Klíma wrote this book in 1986, it was banned by the Communist regime. Three years later, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, it became a sensation. It follows the ups and downs of a dissident artist forced to be a garbage man in Communist Prague. He collects far more than trash.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera (1984, Fiction) Passion, politics, and philosophy; loyalty and lies; these are just some of the themes explored in this novel, which follows a young woman in love with a philandering surgeon in Prague of the 1960s.

Slovakia

A False Dawn: My Life as a Gypsy Woman in Slovakia by Elena Lacková (2000, Biography) In the late 1970s, Lacková began telling her life story to Milena Hübschmannová, a leading Romani scholar. It is a startling and moving glimpse at a long-despised culture, and the strength of its families. We follow Lacková from her World War II struggles, to her exhilaration as a youthful playwright, to her emancipation (and gradual disillusionment) as a female socialist state official. Filled with details about daily life, superstitions, gender roles, and more.

In the Name of the Father by Vladimir Balla (2017, Fiction) A combination of the author's award-winning novella and three additional short stories, this satirical work explores the mind of a man who is looking in all the wrong places to place blame for his serial adultery, failed marriage, dysfunctional family relationships, and his wife's mental illness. With his dark humor, Balla has been called "the Slovak Kafka."

A Country Lost, Then Found: Discovering My Father's Slovakia by Rick Zednik (2012, Memoir) In this touching memoir Zednik first describes what it was like for his father to break all ties with Slovakia (due to the 1968 Soviet invasion); the second half reveals what it was like for the author himself to visit Bratislava after the end of the Cold War, and rediscover his extended family.

A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival by Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (2005, History) A ground-breaking work this is the first comprehensive study to describe the resilience of the Slovaks—from the 7th-century Avar invasions to the break with the Czech Republic in 1993.

The Luck of the Weissensteiners by Christoph Fischer (2012, Fiction) When Greta, who is both Slovak and Jewish, falls for Wilhelm, who is German, everything seems to go well. But then World War II breaks out, and trouble ensues.

Hungary

Budapest: A Critical Guide by András Török (2016, Guidebook) Frequently updated and widely loved, this is more than your average travel guide, but a witty insider's look at the quirks and pleasures of Hungary's most dazzling city. Even if you never went here, this book would be fun to read.

Budapest Noir by Vilmos Kondor (2012, Mystery) The death of a call girl in a seedy neighborhood a few days after the death of Hungary's Prime Minister doesn't seem to be of interest to anyone, except a dogged reporter. A classic noir-style mystery that unravels in 1930s Budapest.

Fatelessness by Imre Kertész (1975, Literature) This semi-autobiographical novel follows the experiences of a young Hungarian Jewish boy imprisoned at Auschwitz. Kertész drew on his own experiences there, and went on to be the only Hungarian to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2002.

The Bridge at Andau by James Michener (1957, Nonfiction) For a brief time in 1956, the bridge at Andau became an escape route for Hungarians fleeing the Soviet suppression of the famous popular revolt that wracked Budapest and riveted the world. Historian Michener was living at the Austrian-Hungarian border at the time, and captures here the dramatic nature of the true-life events surrounding the revolt and the plight of the refugees.

Germany

Tschick by Wolfgang Harrndorf (2014, Fiction) Two unpopular teenagers—one German and one Russian—"borrow" a car and go on a joyride across Germany. Although the protagonists are young, the story seems to delight adults too—it was recommended by the ambassador of Germany has one of the best modern stories from his country.

In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin by Erik Larson (2011, History) Acclaimed historian and author Larson follows the experiences of the American ambassador to Germany in 1933 as he and his family slowly come to realize the menace and danger that is Hitler's Third Reich.

Martin Luther: A Life by Martin E. Marty (2004, Biography) A brief but engrossing biography of the fiery Protestant reformer who transformed western thinking, sending shock waves across Europe's political as well as religious landscape.

Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s by Otto Friedrich (1995, History) A noted historian describes the raucous social, cultural and political scene in this most vibrant city, when Christopher Isherwood, Marlene Dietrich, Albert Einstein, Greta Garbo, Berthold Brecht Walter Gropius, Vassily Kandinsky and so many others made their home here.

The Silent Angel by Heinrich Boll (1992, Fiction) A German WWII deserter returns to his home town of Cologne after it has been carpet bombed, and encounters a city filled with shell-shocked people trying to survive both physically and spiritually. Nobel Prize winner Boll, a Cologne native, drew from his own postwar experiences to create this moving portrait.

Austria

The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty by Benjamin Curtis (2013, History) Discover how this Austrian family gained power—and held it—for more than 500 years, shaping all the nations featured on this adventure.

When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel of Obsession by Irvin D. Yalom (2013, Fiction) Set in 19th-century Vienna, this novel is built upon a clever conceit: the psychoanalytic sessions between the impoverished and suicidal philosopher, Frederic Nietzsche; and distinguished physician Josef Breuer, who is undergoing his own existential crisis. The twist is that Nietzsche, too proud to seek help, does not know that he is Breuer's "patient." As the two meet in Vienna's salons and coffeehouses, we encounter the personalities of the day, including Sigmund Freud, and gain a sense of the healing power of connection.

The Age of Insight by Eric Kandel (2012, Art) This book takes us to Vienna in 1900, where leaders in science, medicine, and art began a revolution that changed forever how we think about the human mind—our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions—and how mind and brain relate to art. Kandel traces the ideas and advances of Vienna, in rich and rewarding detail, and their enduring influence today.

The Painted Kiss by Elizabeth Hickey (2005, Historical Fiction) The author, an art historian, imagines the relationship between the artist Gustav Klimt, and his younger model-mistress, the couturier Emilie Flöge. She was the inspiration for his famous work, *The Kiss*, and it was her name that he uttered as his dying words.

The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey by Gordon Brook-Shepard (1996, History) A noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Hapsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

Suggested Films & Videos

Middle Europe

The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014, Comedy/Mystery) This film was shot primarily in Saxony (Germany) and it takes place in the fictional Republic of Zubrowka, but it beautifully conjures a rich Mitteleuropa nostalgia and has an uproarious story-within-a-story format—plus a killer cast. Ralph Fiennes is the debonair concierge of a grand hotel who deftly contends with his quirky staff, wealthy guests, fascist agents, and the theft of a priceless artwork. Directed by Wes Anderson at his light-hearted (but always precise) best.

Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Czechoslovakia

Anthropoid (2017, Drama) Based on the true story of Operation Anthropoid, an attempt by World War II Czech and Slovak partisans to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, architect of the Final Solution and the so-called “Butcher of Prague.”

Ice Mother (2017, Comedy/Drama) Hana, a recent widow, has her spirit nearly crushed by her dysfunctional family, with whom she gathers every Saturday for the traditional dinner. Things get disrupted when she meets Brona, who welcomes her into his quirky club of cold-water swimmers, but warms things up in other ways.

Kolya (1996, Comedy/Drama) An Oscar winner for Best foreign Language Film. Kolya is an aging ladies man and professional cellist, after being flippant with Russian officials, he loses his orchestra position. To make money, he marries a Russian woman for pay so she can get her papers. But when the cellist is left with 5-year old son, he changes his tune.

Kafka (1991, Drama) Directed by Steven Soderbergh and starring Jeremy Irons as the legendary Czech writer Franz Kafka, this unconventional biopic blends events of the author's life with fantasy scenes from his fiction. Segments of striking black-and-white cinematography add to the moody allure of 1920s Prague.

The Shop on Main Street (1965, Drama). The Oscar for Best Foreign Film of 1965 went to this story about a disillusioned carpenter, Tono, who is appointed the “Aryan controller” of a button shop owned by an old Jewish woman. By Nazi decree, Tono is the shop’s new owner, but the kind Mrs. Lautmann is so senile, she thinks he is just a nice helper. The two end up forging a delicate bond, but when a roundup of Jews begins, Tono must make a terrible moral choice.

Fireman’s Ball (1967, Comedy) Made just before the Prague Spring, this is the last film that the renowned Miloš Forman directed before going into exile in the US. A masterpiece of the Czech New Wave, this veiled critique of Soviet bureaucracy is wrapped in a comic tale about a retirement fete being hosted by some small town firemen. None of the actors were professionals— they were the actual firemen of Vrchlabí, a Czech village.

Hungary

Son of Saul (2015, Documentary). Winner of the Cannes Grand Prix, Oscar, and Golden Globe awards, this film by László Nemes follows a day and a half in the life of Saul, a Hungarian inmate at Auschwitz forced to work as a *Sonderkommando*—a prisoner ordered to remove corpses from the gas chamber.

Mephisto (1981, Drama) This retelling of the Faust legend takes place in 1930s Germany, where amoral actor Hendrik Höfgen rapidly rises to become Germany’s most famous actor, and head of the State Theater, by currying favor with the Reich. Sharply observant, yet untroubled by scruples, Höfgen realizes that his best performance is the one that takes place off stage as he acts the role of a loyal Nazi. Buoyed by the electrifying performance of Klaus Maria Brandauer, this gem by István Szabó was the first Hungarian film to win an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

Germany

Look Who’s Back (2015, Comedy) Can Germany escape the specter of Nazism? Not according to this biting satire, in which der Fuehrer magically reawakens in 2014 in the square where his bunker once stood. He is horrified to learn that the country is led by a woman, Poland is a free state, and the Fatherland is full of immigrants. An out of work filmmaker thinks this eccentric character is just a comic Hitler impersonator, and he builds a reality show about him. As Hitler becomes a media sensation, others are shown to share his ideas about the future of Germany. Filmed *Borat*-style, many scenes feature real people reacting to this putschy provocateur.

The Lives of Others (2006, Drama) A drama that marked the feature film debut of German filmmaker Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Set in East Berlin in 1984, an agent of the secret police conducts surveillance on a writer and his lover. As the story unfolds, he finds himself becoming increasingly absorbed by their lives. As intoxicating as it is chilling, this film quietly depicts the secret world of German espionage. In German with subtitles.

Schindler’s List (1993, Drama) Spielberg’s masterpiece about a callow industrialist, Oskar Schindler, whose life is transformed as he gradually, then unceasingly works to save his Jewish workforce during World War II.

Cabaret (1972, Musical/Drama) Directed by Bob Fosse, this movie has it all: a killer Broadway score, a perfect cast, Fosse's sultry choreography, pointed social commentary, and an electrifying portrait of lost souls struggling to survive in Weimar-era Berlin on the cusp of Nazism. It did not win Best Picture, but took eight other major categories including Best Actress (Liza Minelli), Best Supporting Actor (Joel Grey), and Best Director (Fosse).

Immortal Beloved (1994, Drama) After the death of Ludwig van Beethoven (Gary Oldman), the life and loves of the great composer are revealed in flashbacks as his friend and executor tries to solve the mystery of an unmailed letter to a mysterious lover.

Austria

The Woman in Gold (2015, Drama) Helen Mirren stars as Maria Altmann, an Austrian-Jewish Holocaust refugee who successfully sued the Austrian government for the return of a major artwork that was stolen from her family by the Nazis: Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bauer-Bloch*, who was her aunt. Based on a true story.

Museum Hours (2012, Drama) A lonely guard at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Art Museum befriends an enigmatic American visitor, who has been called here due to a family emergency. Through conversations sparked by the art they both admire, the two begin sharing their lives, and the life of Vienna.

Before Sunrise (1995, Comedy/Drama) Two strangers meet on a train and decide to get off in Vienna for just one evening. As they explore some of the city's most evocative landmarks, their conversations go from wryly philosophical to deeply personal, before they must decide to go their separate ways. Stars Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke collaborated on writing the sparkling dialogue.

Amadeus (1984, Drama) The pious Italian composer Antonio Salieri is obsessed with his rival, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whom God has favored with divine talent and worldly success—despite Mozart's immaturity and vulgarity. The Oscar winner for Best Picture, this epic from director Milos Forman is gorgeously filmed, and lifted by its pitch-perfect performances by F. Murray Abraham (as Salieri) and Tom Hulce (as Mozart.)

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)
www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo or FLuentU or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

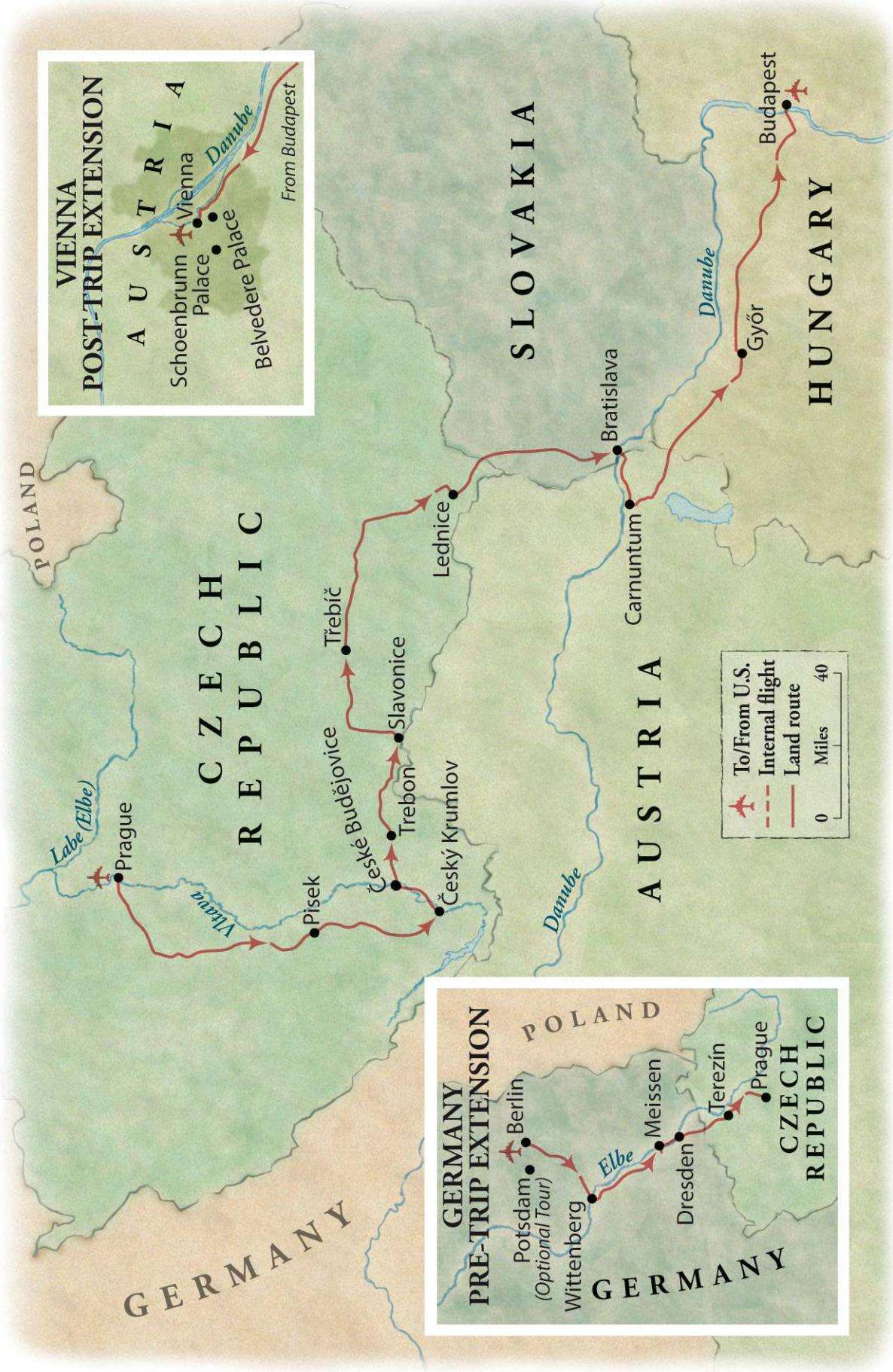
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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Submitted by Joy and Don Janke,
8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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