



DANUBE DISCOVERY BIKE & BOAT TOUR - 6 COUNTRIES

15 DAYS – Bike & Boat Cycling Tour through Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia

DATES: August 3-17, 2024

Discover the breathtaking natural scenery of the Iron Gates, one of Europe's most spectacular gorges; the vast expanse of the Pannonian plains, the Danube Bend in Hungary and the breadbaskets of Croatia and Serbia, Travel through idyllic wine-growing regions and past commanding fortresses high above the river. Visit Belgrade, the "white city", fall in love with bewitching Budapest, the "Paris of the East", marvel at the baroque palaces in the picturesque old town of Bratislava and let yourself be carried away by the elegant charm of Vienna, the city of the waltz. Your hotel ship is a luxuriously appointed river cruise ship with an attentive crew eager to exceed your expectations for the trip of a lifetime!

Day 1: Arrival in Passau

Meet Tour Director Stephanie in Passau aboard the luxurious MS Swiss Crown, your home for the next 15 days. Embarkation begins at 4.00 p.m. for a 5:00 pm departure. Passau is known as the "City of Three Rivers" as it lies at the scenic confluence of the Danube, Inn and Ilz Rivers. The city has long been admired for its well-preserved gothic and Baroque architecture so arrive in time to stroll the cobblestone alleys and take it all in. This evening you will enjoy a final glimpse as you sail serenely into the sunset, past dark green forests, before entering the lock at Jochenstein on the border of Germany and Austria.



Day 2: Great Loop/Engelhartzell-Aschach (26 mi)



Your first ride begins with a spin through the classic scenery of the 'Great Loop' Donauschlinge - one of the most beautiful sections of the Danube. Along the way you will encounter tiny villages and cozy cider taverns. In Austria's only Trappist monastery at Engelhartzell you can taste their delicious liquors, abbey brewed beer, and cheese. The famous 'Schlögenger View' provides a wonderful panorama of the surrounding countryside. The ship's crew welcomes all cyclists back on board in the charming market town of Aschach.



Day 3: Devin - Bratislava, (9-27 mi)

Pedal on the cycle path that runs along the Iron Curtain from the castle ruins in Devin to the splendid palace Schloss Hof, featuring one of the most magnificent baroque gardens in Europe. Ride a stretch of untouched countryside before arriving in the vibrant city of Bratislava. Take an *optional city tour* on a miniature train in this Slovakian capital where Hungarian kings were once crowned. Stroll through the beautifully restored historic city center and enjoy a fantastic view from the hilltop fortress overlooking the city.



Day 4: Budapest | Excursion to Szentendre (33 mi or rest day)

You may choose to ride today or opt for a rest day and a choice of optional sightseeing. Savor the entrance to Budapest and the stunning views of the city's most famous buildings. Discover the city that straddles the Danube on a guided bus tour or take a detour to the delightful little town of Szentendre with many artists' galleries. From the ship's upper deck, one can enjoy the illuminated skyline of this magical city.



Day 5: Baja - Mohacs, (23 mi)

From the quiet Baroque town of Baja, famous for its fish soup (which you may find on tonight's dinner menu!), you will cycle along a flood protection dike in the Gemenc floodplain, through sleepy river landscapes past fields of sunflowers. At the end of today's bike ride, you take the ferry to the little town of Mohacs, Hungary's southernmost town on the Danube and famously the site of two battles with the Turks.



Day 6: Belgrade (rest day)

Join our included bus tour to explore the fun-loving Serbian capital at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube. Journey in time from the past to the present and learn about the rise and fall of former Yugoslavia. Prepare to be dazzled as you enter St. Sava's Serbian Orthodox Cathedral with its jaw dropping glass mosaic interior! In the evening, Belgrade is bathed in a sea of light. Visit the famous artists' quarter "Skadarlija", where in the countless taverns typical local specialties are served against a backdrop of lively folk music.



Day 7: Cataract Canyons / Iron Gates National Park (cruise / rest day)

Experience the stunning fjord-like landscape up close from the comfort of the ship's sundeck. The Danube slices through the Romanian Carpathian Mountains and grand foothills of the Balkan Mountain range. The breathtaking natural beauty includes a spectacular landscape with steep gorges, dark forests with historic monuments, mighty fortresses on the shores, and stunning reflections in the river's blue waters! Weather permitting, enjoy an abundant, al fresco barbeque lunch prepared by the ship's talented culinary team.



Day 8: Novi Sad - Ilok, (30 mi)



The imposing Petrovaradin fortress perches high above the provincial capital of the Vojvodina. After cycling upstream along a flat bicycle path, you board a ferry to reach the foothills of the Fruška Gora, with its orchards, vineyards, and charming farming villages. Ilok, the easternmost town in Croatia is renowned for its wines, which are enjoyed by the English royal family. Choose an optional excursion to a wine cellar, where you can taste the region's best wines. Enjoy a serenade and the lovely sounds of Croatia's national instrument.



Day 9: Batina – Mohacs, (26 mi)

Today you will find yourself in the border triangle, cycling through the endless expanse of the Batschka (the territory of the Danube Swabians). Small, dreamy farming villages, bright yellow rapeseed fields and endless agricultural areas line your route from Croatia via Serbia to Hungary. Farmers cheerfully wave from their fields, and every now and then a horse-drawn wagon crosses the road. The alternative route leads through the untouched nature of the Dunav-Drava-Nemzeti Nations Park. On the roofs of the farmhouses nest numerous white storks, for which even a separate museum has been established. On your way to Mohacs, Hungary, you will pass the National Memorial commemorating the great battle of 1526.

Day 10: Kalocsa - Solt, (31 mi)

Kalocsa is the "Paprika Capital" of Hungary and the character of the town is strongly influenced by colorful houses with hand-painted, bright floral patterns. The cathedral towers are visible from a distance as they rise into the sky from the flat Hungarian plain. Visit the Paprika Museum and learn all about Hungary's favorite spice. Continue your journey on the well-built cycle path along the flood protection dike through the vast expanse of the Puszta. On your way to Solt, the birthplace of the famous conductor Sir George Solti, white sandbanks along the Danube bank invite you to jump into the cool water. This evening, treat yourself to an optional excursion to a nearby Puszta ranch to tour the working farm, experience the traditions and daily life of Hungary's cowboys, and enjoy an entertaining horse show.





Day 11: Danube Bend - Esztergom, (27 mi)

The Danube is framed by steep wooded hills as it flows through the picturesque, hilly landscape of the "Hungarian Wachau". Set in the middle of the Danube, the delightful island of Szentendre radiates real puszta romance. As you continue your journey on idyllic cycle paths through picturesque villages, you will be able to experience the Hungarian zest for life first hand. The dome of the imposing basilica in Esztergom that sits high over the Danube can be seen from everywhere. Hungary's largest church, with its Tuscan style high altar and a side chapel with red marble walls is especially worth seeing.

Day 12: Vienna (Bike excursion to Klosterneuburg, Danube Island)

After so many vigorous days of cycling, you deserve some relaxation. Enjoy the breathtaking view of the idyllic floodplain forest of the Donau-Auen National Park and the impressive skyline as you sail into Vienna. Go for a ride on the Danube Island – Vienna's favorite recreational area, cycle out to the nearby Klosterneuburg Abbey or wander through the idyllic vineyards of the Kahlenberg (with magnificent views over the city and the Danube). You may want to end your day with an optional concert of traditional waltz and operetta music in Vienna's lovely Schönbrunn palace.



Day 13: Vienna (rest day)

Discover Vienna: from the saddle on a guided bike tour (included), on your own, or with an optional HOP ON HOP OFF Bus tour. Ride through the historic city center at a leisurely pace and see the sights. The magnificent Ringstrasse will remind you of times long past, and inviting coffee houses will tempt you with delicious Viennese cakes and pastries. Afterwards, there is enough time to stroll through the quaint lanes or visit the Naschmarkt, a feast for the senses. You may want to end your day in Vienna in traditional style at a Heuriger, a rustic wine tavern where you can sip on new releases of local wines.

Day 14: Wachau | Krems - Melk, (23 mi)

This final stage of your cycling tour can best be described as magical! It will earn a vote for your favorite ride of the tour! The gentle hilly countryside of the Wachau with its picturesque villages, historic castles and palaces surrounded by apricot trees and terraced vineyards, is one of the loveliest stretches of the river. In Weißenkirchen the cycle path is lined with cozy vintner taverns, and you may have time to treat yourself to a break here for a wine tasting. Finally, you will reach the famous Melk Abbey, a spectacular UNESCO site and a fitting end to a fabulous tour. One peek inside and you'll understand why!



Day 15: Passau

Enjoy the first rays of sun and the early morning tranquility of the Danube valley one last time. Catch a final view of the Danube Bend at Schlögen – before you reach Passau, your heart and mind are full of memories and impressions. Disembarkation begins at approx. 10.30 a.m., subject to sailing schedule. **We recommend that you not make any arrangements for travel connections (trains, buses, rental cars) that depart before 12 noon.**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included in the cost of the tour

- 14 nights in outside cabins with ensuite bath, air conditioning, television, safe and hair dryer
- Full board: Breakfast buffet, lunch on board (non- cyclists) or packed lunch (cyclists), afternoon coffee break, dinner (choice of entrée), late night snack
- Captains greeting and welcome cocktail / Gala dinner with farewell cocktail
- Daily live music
- Services of a Tour Director, Cycling Tour Guide
- Daily information meeting
- Ferry rides along the bike route
- CITY TOURS: Budapest by bus, Belgrade by bus, Vienna by bike
- Entrance fees for sites listed as included in the itinerary
- Use of 21 or 24 speed touring bike, pannier bag
 - Unisex step through frame in various sizes
 - Weight: 16 kg / 35 lbs.
 - Max. rider and gear weight: 130 kg (286 lbs.)



On request

- **E-bike surcharge - €125 per bike**
- Special diets, please inquire

NOT Included in the cost of the tour:

- **Airfare, transfers**
- **Insurance:** Travel, Health, Bicycle (available for purchase onboard)
- **Gratuities** for crew, guide(s)
- **Optional excursions** not listed in the itinerary as included
- **Drinks on board** (complimentary water is NOT served onboard, it is available for purchase at meals and the bar)
- **HELMETS- you must bring your own helmet and are required to wear it properly on all tour rides**

SHIP: MS Swiss Crown Premium passenger hotel ship that sleeps 150 guests. Our group will be 20 guests, Stephanie your tour director, and a regional English-speaking bike guide. *The MS Swiss Crown* is stylish, elegant, and timelessly beautiful – you will feel at home on board as soon as you enter her spectacular foyer. Designed in warm wood tones, the ship radiates comfort and simple elegance. You are sure to enjoy the serene, relaxed atmosphere and the fantastic views of breathtakingly beautiful natural landscapes, sometimes from the bicycle seat, sometimes from the inviting, partially covered sun deck. Let yourself be pampered by the friendly, accommodating crew and indulge in some self-care in the ship's sauna, steam bath and whirlpool.



GUEST CABINS are all outward-facing cabins and a spacious 14 m² footprint with an elegant, comfortable interior.

Each cabin has a double bed which can be separated into 2 single beds, shower/WC, hairdryer, SAT TV, safe, coffee maker and individually adjustable air conditioning.



Cabins pictured above, left to right, subject to availability:

COMFORT CABIN: €4250, VAT Inclusive, per person, DOUBLE occupancy

located on middle deck, panoramic window can be opened

SUPERIOR: €4595, VAT inclusive, per person, DOUBLE occupancy

located on upper deck, sliding glass doors open to a private balcony

Stephanie Ventures Group size: 20 guests + Tour Director (Stephanie) + regional English-speaking bicycle guide

Arrival in Passau: The closest airport to the tour start is Munich (MUC). There is train service from the airport to Passau. We recommend overseas guests arrive the day before departure and spend a night in a hotel in Passau. Directions to the ship's mooring location will be provided as the departure date approaches. Ask your hotel concierge to reserve a taxi to take you to the ship.

Internet: There is free WIFI on the ship which can best be accessed in the ship's lounge. It will not be as fast as you are accustomed.

Bicycles: Included in your tour price is a 21 or 24 Speed touring Bike, ideal for the terrain you will cycle on. E-bikes are available for a surcharge. Keep in mind that e-bikes are heavier than touring bikes and require good bike handling skills. We do not recommend them for novice cyclists.

Bicycle Helmet: We require all guests to always wear a properly fitting helmet while riding on the tour. **Please bring your own helmet with you to wear on the tour.**

Bicycle Locks: All bicycles are outfitted with locks. Please use them whenever you plan to leave your bicycle unattended for any length of time. You will be liable for damage or theft of the bicycle if it is stolen during an excursion because it was not locked properly. Bicycle insurance is available at check in for a nominal fee.

Itinerary Program: The above itinerary is subject to change. Alterations are sometimes necessary due to circumstances beyond the operator's control.

Physical Fitness and Bike Handling: To participate in and enjoy the biking part of the tour, it is important that all guests are in good physical condition and have the necessary bike handling skills to ride safely with the group. One should be able to shift gears, apply brakes safely, maintain proper balance, and use hand signals. Prior group riding experience is strongly encouraged. This tour is rated difficulty level 2 so novice cyclists may occasionally find it challenging. Guests are expected to maintain a pace of 10-12 mph. It is quite possible that our touring bikes are heavier (35 lbs.) than your road bike at home, so you should be able to ride your home bike at a speed of 13-15 mph to keep up the pace on this tour. Guests who cannot maintain that pace will be asked to board the support van or ride on their own. Electric bikes are also an option (for a surcharge) but will need to be requested before the tour begins. Our e-bikes weigh about 50 lbs. and we do not recommend them for novice cyclists. On this tour, we will occasionally need to share the road with motor vehicles, and to cross busy intersections. The weather is variable, however, even under poor weather conditions, you should feel safe and able to cover the day's distance on your bike.

PLEASE NOTE: *In the event of extremely high or low water, the shipping company reserves the right to bridge stages by bus or even to cancel the trip at short notice without any legal claim arising therefrom (water levels are force majeure). The same applies for officially decreed repairs to locks or bridges, not announced in advance, or in the event of motor or propulsion damage to the ship without attributed fault.*

A riverboat is a "holiday hotel," but it is also a means of transport that moves with motor power and must always be operated, even at night. Expect lock and bridge passages, retractions and extensions of ship structures, and some occasional noises or jarring of the ship. This is the case for all Danube journeys and cannot be avoided. We appreciate your understanding.

About Stephanie Ventures

Our expertise is active, affordable, small group travel and we pride ourselves on putting a unique spin on our itineraries to ensure you will not find another tour experience out there quite like ours. Founder Stephanie Scott started the company in the US, with 35 years of experience in specialty food and wine, during which she designed plenty of fun, memorable events, and travel adventures. She managed the title sponsorship of one of the most popular men's pro-cycling teams in the US for 15 years, but is content to ride her bike, at home and on tour, at a more leisurely pace. She believes that one of the best ways to see the world and meet its people is by traveling around it on two wheels. She logged many kilometers on the bike paths of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria before launching her tour company in 2015.

Certified as a Tour Director by the International Tour Management Institute, Stephanie worked as a tour guide in San Francisco before founding Stephanie Ventures. She went on to host amazing bike & barge tours in the Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. Fast-forward a few years and a pandemic, and in the dead of winter 2022, Stephanie sold everything she owned and ran away to Europe to realize her long-time dream of living and working there. From this new home base in Alphen aan den Rijn in South Holland, she can be closer to the destinations she offers, and design new tours including land-based journeys. Join her as she searches for panoramic views, history, local culture, regional cuisine, wine, beer, or whatever the locals drink, and much more! Be sure to bring your spirit of adventure, hearty appetite, and a good sense of humor!



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