



TURKEY

GOLDEN EAGLE DANUBE EXPRESS - BALKAN EXPLORER

(TOUR CODE: 12631)

STARTS AND ENDS

Venice to
Istanbul

TRAVEL PERIODS

18 Oct 2023 - 20 Oct 2024

EXPERIENCE

Rail

TRAVEL STYLE

Rail Packages

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

Highlights

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

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



- ✓ ENTIRE Cooling-Off Period
- ✓ ENTIRE Change of Mind
- ✓ ENTIRE On Ground Support
- ✓ ENTIRE AUD Prices
- ✓ ENTIRE Industry Accredited
- ✓ ENTIRE Australian Owned

INCLUSIONS

- Private en-suite accommodation on the Golden Eagle Danube Express train, Deluxe Cabin
- Quality pre and post tour accommodation in Venice and Istanbul
- Overnight stay at the Hilton Pucic hotel, Dubrovnic (or similar)
- Freshly prepared meals on board, using the finest local ingredients
- Authentic dining experiences in local restaurants
- 11 Breakfasts, 10 Lunches, 11 Dinners
- Inclusive alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages from Standard Bar list
- Arrival and departure transfers
- Expertly guided off-train excursions
- Cabin attendant service including evening turndown
- Experienced Tour Management team
- Services of a UK-registered Doctor and medical facilities on board
- All gratuities
- Luggage portage throughout the journey

ITINERARY

Day **1**

Venice, Italy

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

Today is at leisure for all guests to explore this wonderful city. This evening we will enjoy a welcome reception and dinner, giving you the opportunity to meet your fellow travellers.

Dinner



Day **2**

Venice, Italy

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

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day **3**

Trieste, Italy

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

Mid-morning the train will thread its way-out of Santa Lucia station onto the 3-mile causeway over the Venice Lagoon and on to the first stop at the Italian port city of Trieste, for an afternoon tour. Stopping at the imposing Miramare Castle and visit

the vast Piazza Unita d'Italia, the main town square. Standing on a hill overlooking Trieste is the famous Church of San Giusto built around a medieval complex and dates to the 13th century. Enter the church for a close-up view of the splendid Byzantine-style architecture enriched with precious mosaics.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 4 Postojna & Ljubljana, Slovenia

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

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

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 5 Sarajevo & Mostar, Bosnia, & Herzegovina

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

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

Following a lunch on board the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*, this afternoon you will travel along a very scenic line to the historic city of Mostar, the crossroads of many civilizations, cultures and three religions. Mostar was one of the most important cities of the Ottoman Empire. The town's renowned stone arch bridge linking the Christian and Muslim areas was re-built in the summer of 2004.

We also visit Turkish House and the mosque before walking through the narrow, bazaar streets, where you can shop for traditional souvenirs and handicrafts. From here, you will travel onto Dubrovnik by coach where you will stay for one night.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 6

Dubrovnik, Croatia

Since its foundation in the 13th century Dubrovnik has been attacked many times but it is now restored as one of the great cities of the Mediterranean, essentially unchanged for 700 years. Tour the city travelling through Ploce Gate to visit the Franciscan Monastery with one of the world's oldest pharmacies, the Old Harbour, St Laurence Fortress and the Rector's Palace. Have lunch overlooking the Adriatic and have free time to wander the narrow streets. Mid-afternoon, head back to the train positioned close to the Croatian border in Capljina, and enjoy dinner as you depart towards Serbia.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 7

Belgrade, Serbia

Arrive this morning in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, the former Yugoslavian capital. Located at the strategic meeting point of the Danube and Sava Rivers, this truly cosmopolitan city has fortifications from Celtic times, medieval tombs, and Turkish baths. Spend a full day here and enjoy the city tour which includes the 'House of Flowers' –the mausoleum of Josip Tito, the Town Hall, Republic Square and Knez Mihajlova Street, as well as 'Varos' Gate and a visit to the mighty Kalemegdan Fortress.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 8

Skopje & Thessaloniki, Macedonia & Greece

This morning, arrive in the Skopje and discover a city where the Ottoman influences are still strong. Explore the narrow streets of the Old Town with tiny shops and mosques with ceramic-tiled interiors. Meander through the Old Bazaar area, brimming with things to buy, and cross the 15th-century Stone Bridge which links the bazaar to the modern town.

Return to the train for lunch on board and continue through the afternoon crossing into Greece for an early evening arrival into Thessaloniki. Soak up the evening atmosphere of this vibrant city by heading to Aristotelous Square and enjoy an al-fresco Mediterranean seafood dinner.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 9

Sofia & Plovdiv, Bulgaria

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

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

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 10 Istanbul, Turkey

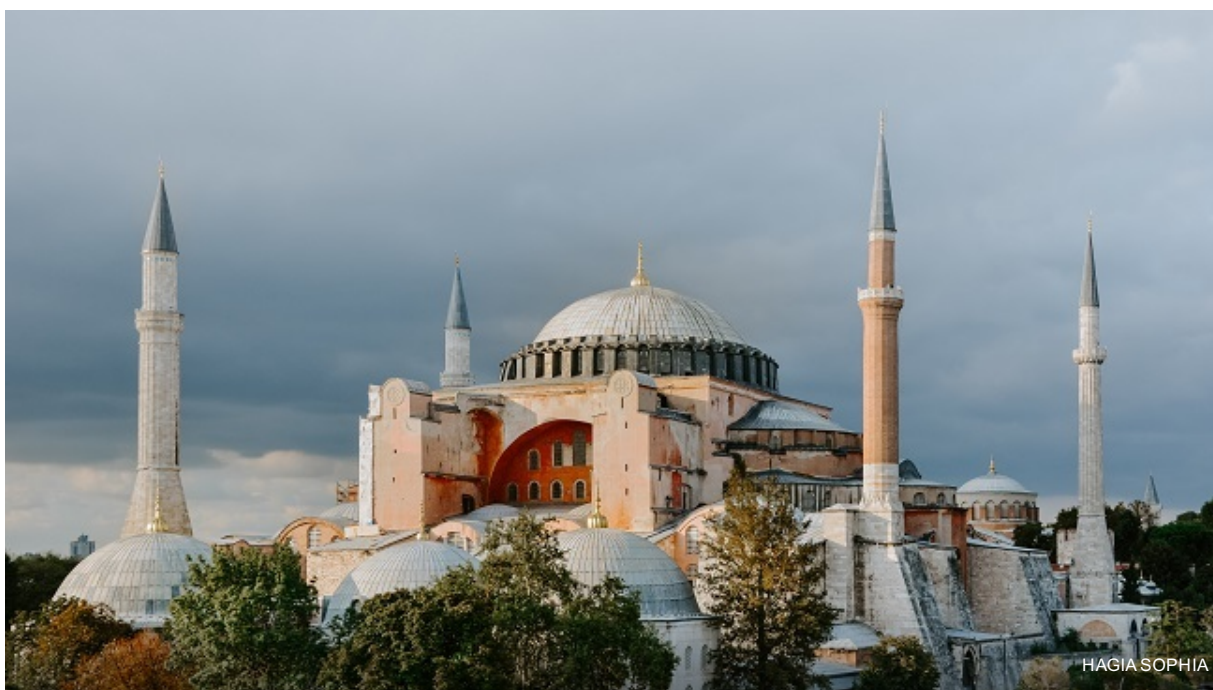
This morning you will arrive in Istanbul where you will stay for two nights at a five-star hotel.

This fabled city that spans Asia and Europe is the final stop on the tour so there is time to see how old meets new, east meets west when we visit Istanbul's must-see historic sites.

One of the most famous monuments in both the Turkish and Islamic worlds, the Sultan Ahmet Mosque (the Blue Mosque) is a superb creation in the classical Ottoman style and features six towering minarets and 260 windows illuminating its vast main chamber, which is decorated with more than 20,000 Iznik tiles.

Hagia Sophia was built in the 6th century by the Emperor Justinian and was one of the largest basilicas in the Christian world. After the Ottoman conquest, it was converted to a mosque and is today one of the most magnificent Grand Mosques in the world. Take a few moments to linger here to admire the fine Byzantine mosaics.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 11 Istanbul, Turkey

Also included in the Istanbul programme is a visit to the crown jewel of the Ottoman Empire, Topkapi. This stunning palace is the largest and oldest in the world and was the primary residence of the Ottoman Sultans from 1465 to 1853. With its treasury and exotic buildings overlooking the Golden Horn, your visit to Topkapi promises to be a truly fascinating experience.

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

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day **12** Istanbul, Turkey

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

Breakfast

ACCOMMODATION

Golden Eagle Danube Express

UPGRADE AVAILABLE

LIFE ABOARD THE GOLDEN EAGLE DANUBE EXPRESS

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

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

DELUXE CABIN

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

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

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

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



Room Upgrades

Superior Deluxe Cabin

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

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

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



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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The bar lounge: Unwind in comfortable surroundings and watch the world go by as you get to know your fellow passengers and begin long-lasting friendships. It is here that our Tour Manager will also organise a programme of activities. Passengers will receive printed daily itineraries throughout the tour detailing train arrival and departure timings, latest weather forecasts for the next destination and information on the following day's excursions and activities. The Bar Lounge Car and Restaurant Cars will host an entertaining and enlightening range of activities such as language lessons and engaging talks by expert lecturers on local history and culture. In the evening enjoy the sounds of the resident pianist playing in the Bar Lounge Car. Every night the bar stays open until the last person leaves.
- The restaurant car: Enjoy the delights of an on-train breakfast each morning - a wide selection of fruit, cereals, orange juice and cold plates are available from our bountiful buffet. Alternatively enjoy a cooked breakfast bought to your, all complemented by steaming hot tea and coffee.
- For lunch and dinner, you will enjoy fine food, great wines and attentive service in the welcoming atmosphere of the restaurant car. We offer a culinary experience that reflects the very essence of the countries we travel through, as well as international cuisine. Vegetarian and other dietary options are also available.
- Meals onboard are a relaxed affair as the restaurant cars can accommodate all guests in a single sitting. Throughout the journey there is an informal dress code, so you can enjoy our culinary experiences in convivial and relaxed surroundings and with our open-seating policy you can dine wherever, and with whomever, you please.

Departure dates:

- 18 Oct 2023 - 29 Oct 2023
- 01 May 2024 - 12 May 2024
- 09 Oct 2023 - 20 Oct 2024

Excluded

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