

Day 1 VBT Bicycling tour begins / Budapest guided walk / Embark ship / Warm-up ride

At 9:30 a.m., meet your private VBT walking tour guide in the hotel lobby. Please be checked out of your room and dressed ready to walk. Join up with your local guide for a walking tour through the city's highlights. Enjoy your first lunch on board, after arriving at the dock in Budapest at approximately 1:00 p.m. to board your Emerald Cruises ship.

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m. However, you are welcome to relax in the ship's common areas, or explore more of Budapest.

Later, meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for an introduction to the week, followed by a safety and bike-fitting session. After the introduction meeting, get acquainted with your bike and with riding on bike paths and in bike lanes on a warm-up ride along the Danube River. A welcome dinner in the ship's Reflections Restaurant and traditional Hungarian folklore performances are in store this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Budapest Warm-up — 6 km (4 miles)

What to Expect:

Your warm-up ride follows paved, dedicated bike lanes alongside vehicular traffic on both banks of the Danube, with spectacular views of the city. Your ride ends at the ship. As you ride, get acquainted with your bicycle, route notes, Ride with GPS, and the locals. Check your brakes and play with shifting your full range of gears.

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 km (4 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Day 2 Szentendre / Vác

Spin through the lush outskirts of Buda to Szentendre, a delightful artists' community. Upon arrival in Szentendre, you'll have some free time to browse the galleries and shops and to discover its narrow Baroque streets. Afterward, you will learn how to prepare goulash and strudel before lunch at a popular restaurant. Then continue to Vác, the capital of the Danube Bend.

Admire views of the Baroque town center and the river during the ferry crossing. In Vác, we invite you first to visit an exciting and famous local exhibition. Afterward, you have some time at leisure before your small group rejoins the ship in Vác.

On your return to the ship, enjoy the captain's welcome cocktail and dinner. With its regional specialties, tonight's meal completes the day's Hungarian theme!

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Budapest to Szentendre — 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Szentendre to Vác ferry — 15 km (9 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's biking is on a flat, paved bike path along the Danube. The first part of the morning ride is in a relatively quiet, urban environment, while the second part is on a designated bike path away from the traffic. After lunch, an optional ride continues on country roads with some traffic to the Vác ferry. VBT offers a support vehicle from Szentendre.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 35 km (12 – 21 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3 Bratislava / Donau-Auen National Park / Hainburg

Awake this morning in Bratislava, the riverside capital of Slovakia and the only capital to border two other nations. After breakfast, disembark for an orientation walking tour with your trip leader. You'll find an unusual mix of 20th-century Communist-era architecture, Baroque palaces, medieval spires, and the narrowest house in Europe—all overlooked from a hillside by the rectangular white castle and watchtowers of Bratislava Castle.

Mid-morning, you pedal out of town, crossing the Danube by way of the "UFO" bridge, and traverse the forests and meadows of Danube-Auen National Park, one of the largest remaining floodplains of the Danube. Arrive in Hainburg, a small town on the Austrian bank, where Joseph Haydn studied music as a young boy. After a delicious lunch in a local restaurant, arrive at Schloss Hof, the "hunting lodge" of Prince Eugene of Savoy. A guided visit introduces the lodge and the estate. You're invited to roam the splendid gardens and castle.

Mid-afternoon, travel back to Slovakia and to your waiting ship. Alternatively, you can choose to cycle back along the other side of the river, though the small village of Devin, famous for its castle.

Back in Bratislava, enjoy some leisure time before dinner and a late departure for Vienna.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Bratislava to Schloss Hof — 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon: Schloss Hof to Bratislava — 20 km (13 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride features a combination of bike paths and town streets. While both Slovakia and Austria offer bike paths, we would like to make you aware that the paths in Slovakia are slightly less well-maintained. The afternoon option is partly along a busy country road.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 – 54 km (21 – 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4 Ride along the Donauinsel / Explore Vienna

Your ship is in Vienna from very early this morning until very late tonight, so you will have a convenient base from which to explore Austria's glorious capital.

Vienna is renowned as one of Europe's most cycle-friendly cities, so you can make use of its abundant bike paths and bike lanes. This morning, our small group will enjoy a private walking tour of Vienna with the help of an experienced local tour guide.

After lunch on board, your bike ride leads to the edge of the city and along the Donauinsel, or Danube Island, a 13-mile (21 km) strip where scenic vistas and quiet riding add to your Vienna discoveries.

Or explore Vienna on your own, pursuing your own whims and interests in the city of Strauss, Beethoven, and Mahler. The gracious boulevards of Vienna are awash in culture and elegance. Head to the Ringstrasse, the circular avenue that replaced the city's demolished medieval wall, to marvel at the breathtaking architecture from the gleaming Imperial Palace and St. Stephen's Cathedral to the famed Vienna State Opera. And be sure to take a break in one of the city's famed coffee houses to experience Viennese café culture firsthand.

This evening, you are invited to join the Viennese Evening Concert excursion, featuring the music of Strauss and Mozart. This private event is available only to those on our ship.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Vienna and Danube Island — 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

The afternoon ride is a relaxing and easy loop ride through the edge of the city and on Danube Island, a car-free recreational paradise.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 km (12 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5 Dürnstein / Cycle through the Wachau Valley / Melk

Your ship is moored in Krems, Austria, when you awake. The town and its surroundings are a center of Wachau wine production. From here, you begin to cycle toward Dürnstein. Admire its stunning powder-blue bell tower soaring above red roofs. A cliffside castle, which once held Richard the Lionheart captive, watches over the scenic town.

Later this morning, cycle through what is perhaps the most beautiful stretch of the Danube, the Wachau Valley, Austria's celebrated wine-growing region. The "Wachau Cultural Landscape" was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. As for its physical landscape, it is blessed with lush vineyards and hillside orchards set among castle ruins, churches, and abbeys. Few places match the Wachau for its striking beauty and rich viniculture. Ride through the scenic hamlets of Spitz and Wiessenkirchen, nestled between the Danube and its rising banks.

On arrival in Melk, celebrate the ride over a lunch of Austrian specialties. Afterward, you can continue cycling along the river on a loop ride, or go for a short walk, maybe exploring the city's spectacular Benedictine Abbey, one of Europe's largest Baroque monasteries. In the afternoon, you are invited to join a private wine tasting in the city center of Melk.

Upon returning to the ship, you'll have time to relax before dinner on board. This afternoon, the ship charts a course for Engelhartszell and Passau.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Krems to Melk — 40 km (24 miles)

Afternoon: Optional loop outside Melk — 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

Begin biking from Krems, again following the Danube Bike Path. You can extend your ride after lunch in Melk. Both options are mostly on paved bike paths with some short ascents. In some sections, the bike path is directly adjacent to the roadway.

Cumulative Distance Range: 40 – 58 km (24 – 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6 Engelhartszell / Cycle to Passau

Your bicycle is waiting for you in Engelhartszell, where you disembark after an early breakfast to start your ride. This morning's route to Passau follows the Danube Bike Path on a leisurely ride. After leaving Austria, continue cycling before taking a short detour along the river Inn to Passau, the scenic "City of Three Rivers" at the confluence of the Danube, Inn, and Ilz. Enjoy lunch on board your river cruise ship, and join an informative walking tour with a local guide, followed by free time to explore.

Afterward, you may join an optional hike to Veste Oberhaus, Passau's famous castle on the other side of the river. Reboard the ship late afternoon and set sail for Regensburg. Enjoy a Captain's Gala Dinner and evening activities on board.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Engelhartszell to Passau — 33 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Bike along the right bank, on a section of the Danube Bike Path that is mainly flat and entirely paved. You will cycle the last section in an urban environment, across the relatively quiet city center of Passau.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 km (20 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7 Regensburg / Cycle to Kelheim / Danube Gorge and Weltenburg

As you'll see when you awake, Regensburg is an imposing town of red-roof houses at the convergence of the Danube and Regen rivers. Its 12th-century stone bridge features 16 arches spanning the Danube and reaching into the Old Town.

After breakfast, cycle along the Danube banks to Kelheim. Following the Danube Bike Path, your scenic ride continues to be easy and mostly car-free. Pause for a typical Bavarian lunch in a small, historical restaurant.

In the afternoon board a small ship in Kelheim for a picturesque 45-minute sail through the Danube Gorge (Donaudurchbruch). Upon arrival in Weltenburg, your presence is requested at a world-famous abbey for a private visit, followed by a beer tasting. Afterward, a shuttle will take you back to the ship for dinner with live music played by a traditional Bavarian band. The ship will moor in Regensburg, where you are welcome to enjoy an evening walk in town.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Regensburg to Kapfelberg — 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon: Kapfelberg to Kelheim — 13 km (8 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride options are on the famous EuroVelo 6 bike path. The Danube is your constant companion on this scenic and easy ride upstream to Kelheim. The short option ends at Kapfelberg, with a shuttle on to Kelheim to board the small ship to Weltenburg. Today is the only day with significant sections of packed gravel (about 60%). Almost the entire ride is on vehicle-free bike paths.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 39 km (16 – 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8 Disembark / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends

After breakfast, disembark your ship and conclude your Danube odyssey.

Your trip ends at the docks in Regensburg, Germany, on the morning of disembarkation. The ship is scheduled to arrive in port the day before. You may travel from here on your own by taxi to the train station, a distance of one mile (1.8 km), which should take about 5 minutes by taxi, to board a train, which takes you directly to the Munich International Airport in one hour and 20 minutes. The ship's staff will be happy to arrange a taxi for you.

Included Meals: Breakfast