

Abercrombie & Kent



GOLDEN EAGLE: BALKAN EXPLORER

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

Luxury Rail Journeys



Europe, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia,
Turkey



12 days Call for a quote pp



Private

Journey Overview

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, our 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.



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Venice

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

The rest of the day 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.

Day 2: Venice

Venice is a truly captivating city of romance; its unrivalled beauty takes away the breath of first time visitors and regulars alike. Today we 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. We also see St Mark's Basilica and stroll through the Rialto Market.

Day 3: Trieste

This morning we transfer from the hotel, by boat, directly to Santa Lucia station on the Grand Canal. Here our private train, the *Golden Eagle* Danube Express, is ready to receive us.

Mid-morning the train will thread its way out Santa Lucia station onto the 3-mile causeway over the Venice Lagoon and on to our first stop at the Italian port city of Trieste, for an afternoon tour. We stop at the imposing Miramare Castle and also 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 back to the 13th century. We will go inside the church for a close-up view of the splendid Byzantine-style architecture enriched with precious mosaics.

Day 4: Postojna & Ljubljana

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

Day 5: Sarajevo & Mostar

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

Following a lunch on board our private train, this afternoon we 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, we travel onto Dubrovnik by coach where we stay for one night.

Day 6: Dubrovnik

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.

We will 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.

We have lunch overlooking the Adriatic and have free time to wander the narrow streets. Mid-afternoon we head back to the train positioned close to the Croatian border in Capljina, and enjoy dinner as we depart towards Serbia.

Day 7: Belgrade

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.

We spend a full day here and our city tour 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.

Day 8: Skopje

Today we arrive in the little-visited 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.

Day 9: Sofia & Plovdiv

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

We enjoy lunch on the train as we travel 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. We spend the afternoon here exploring the Roman Forum and Amphitheatre. We'll visit the charming Old Town including its medieval walls and Ottoman baths.

Days 10 & 11: Istanbul

On Day 10 we arrive into Istanbul where we stay for two nights at a five-star hotel.

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

Included in our two night stay is a visit to the crown jewel of the Ottoman Empire, Topkapi Palace. 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.

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.

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. We will have time to marvel at the exterior of the building which features six towering minarets and 260 windows illuminating its vast main chamber.

Also included in the Istanbul touring programme will be an afternoon's cruise on the legendary Bosphorus and a visit to the Grand Bazaar.

Day 12: Depart Istanbul

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.

Map



Accommodation

The Golden Eagle Danube Express



Journeys on this private train encompass some of the continent's most enticing destinations operating through wonderful natural scenery straight into the heart of vibrant cities like Budapest, Venice, Istanbul, Krakow or Prague. Each journey takes guests back to the age of elegance in the deluxe comfort and stylish surrounds of the finest sleeping cars on the European rail network.

Deluxe class

Each deluxe sleeping car has just five spacious yet intimate air-conditioned en suite cabins (9.2 sq m).

Private bathrooms feature a shower, washbasin and toilet. There is a heated towel rail, shaver socket and hairdryer and a range of toiletries are provided.

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.

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

or perhaps later, a glass of wine.

Superior Deluxe class

Each superior deluxe sleeping car has just four spacious yet intimate air-conditioned en suite cabins (8.6 sq m). Private bathrooms feature a shower, washbasin and toilet. Comfortable seating, two large picture windows, ample storage, individual air-conditioning, safe, and in cabin Wi-Fi. During dinner the cabin is converted into a luxurious double bedroom by your attendant who is also on hand to bring early morning tea or coffee or perhaps later, a glass of wine.

What's included

- Breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner daily
- Inclusive alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks throughout
- Optional in-cabin breakfast to start the day
- Dining experiences in local restaurants
- Live musical performances
- Welcome and farewell dinners Tea, coffee and bottled drinking water served in your cabin

Abercrombie & Kent

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