

# Hungary, Austria & Czech Republic: Capitals of Central Europe

DAY 1

## ARRIVE BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Arrive in Budapest, a city occupying both sides of the Danube River and founded when right-bank Buda and Óbuda joined left-bank Pest in 1873. Budapest's broad avenues and turn-of-the-century architecture have earned it the name, "the Paris of Eastern Europe." Like Paris, it is a cultural mecca for writers, artists and musicians. Transfer by private car to your hotel; your day is at leisure.

DAY 2

## BUDAPEST | SYNAGOGUES & CATHEDRALS

Discover Pest, starting with a private exploration of the Liszt Academy of Music. Founded in 1875 by the famed pianist and composer Franz Liszt, this attractive Art Nouveau building is home to a several valuable books and manuscripts from Liszt's private collection, not to mention the most prestigious music university operating in Hungary. Soak up the rich atmosphere as your eyes are drawn to the stunning frescoes, Zsolnay porcelain and grand chandeliers at this top concert venue. Continue to the ornate Great Synagogue, the largest in Europe. See Heroes' Square and St. Stephen's Basilica. Then, visit the Central Market Hall to see a vast array of food and crafts on sale, with time for lunch at leisure. In the afternoon, visit the Parliament building, and then step back in time to experience the charming period of fin-de-siècle Hungarian coffeehouse culture with a stop at a classic coffeehouse. Enjoy a coffee or soft drink and a piece of delicious torte or cake, just as one of Hungary's literary greats might have done, in a setting restored to its early-20th-century splendor.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3

## BUDAPEST | MATTHIAS CHURCH & FISHERMAN'S BASTION

Today, explore the Buda side of this city. Visit Matthias Church, the 13th-century coronation cathedral of Hungarian kings, and Fisherman's Bastion, offering spectacular views of the city. Enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4

## BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA | OLD TOWN



Drive to Bratislava, Slovakia's capital, and join a local guide for a walking tour of the attractive Old Town, once a jewel of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Stroll the cobblestone streets, admiring the Baroque architecture. Then, after time for lunch at leisure, continue to Vienna, Austria.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5

## VIENNA, AUSTRIA | HOFBURG PALACE

Join your local guide for a walking tour of marvelous Vienna. At the Hofburg Palace — former seat of emperors and current residence of the president of Austria — visit the Treasury to admire its glittering collection of Imperial regalia. Continue to the Gothic St. Stephen's Cathedral. View the colorfully patterned, double-eagle mosaic on its steeply inclined roof and marvel at the spectacular interior, adorned with intricate stone sculptures. This afternoon, tour Schönbrunn Palace, the former residence of Habsburg monarchs.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6

## VIENNA | VISIONS OF THE IMPERIAL CITY

This morning, enjoy a panoramic tour of Vienna, viewing the Prater and its giant Ferris wheel. See the Secession Building and the famous Hundertwasser House, and then visit the Belvedere Gallery, where you find works by the brilliant and controversial symbolist artist Gustav Klimt, including *The Kiss*. Lunch and the afternoon are at your leisure to shop and explore independently.

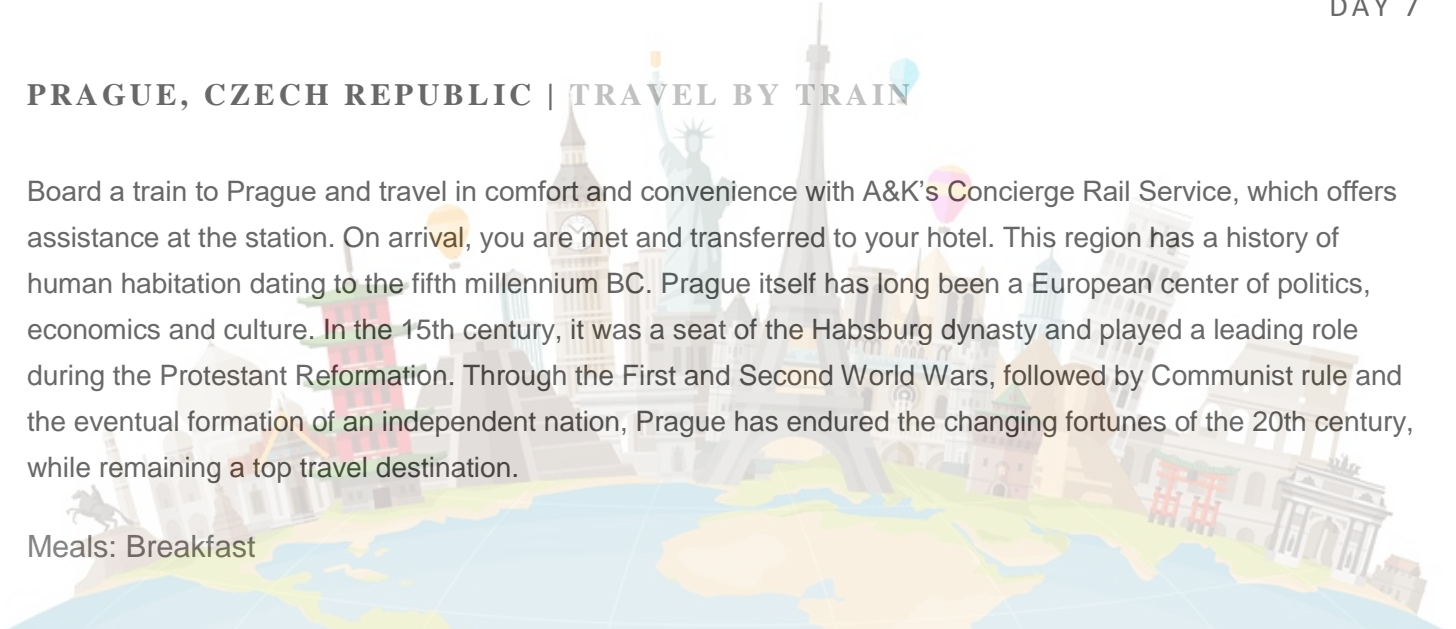
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7

## PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC | TRAVEL BY TRAIN

Board a train to Prague and travel in comfort and convenience with A&K's Concierge Rail Service, which offers assistance at the station. On arrival, you are met and transferred to your hotel. This region has a history of human habitation dating to the fifth millennium BC. Prague itself has long been a European center of politics, economics and culture. In the 15th century, it was a seat of the Habsburg dynasty and played a leading role during the Protestant Reformation. Through the First and Second World Wars, followed by Communist rule and the eventual formation of an independent nation, Prague has endured the changing fortunes of the 20th century, while remaining a top travel destination.

Meals: Breakfast



DAY 8

## **PRAGUE | THE ESTATES THEATER**

Walk in Josefov, the city's Jewish quarter, which was once a walled ghetto. Visit the Old New Synagogue and the Old Jewish Cemetery. Wander through the charming Old Town Square and pause to admire the 15th-century astronomical clock adorning the façade of the Gothic Town Hall. If you wish, stroll across the 14th-century Charles Bridge. Then, privately visit the Smetana Concert Hall, part of the Municipal House and home to the Czech National Symphony Orchestra. Behold this architectural masterpiece; a mix of carved white stone and gold featuring Karel Spillar's stunning frescos adorning the walls, all beautifully illuminated by hundreds of lights.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9

## **PRAGUE | STRAHOV MONASTERY**

Today, take a step back in time as you explore the historic Hradčany Castle District. See the impressive Gothic St. Vitus Cathedral, once the site of coronations of Czech kings and queens. On the Golden Lane, view the small, colorful houses that once were homes to alchemists. Admire the collection of religious artifacts at the Loreto Chapel, an important place of pilgrimage. Privately visit the Baroque library halls of the Strahov Monastery, with its gilded shelves and incredible frescoes. Enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10

## **DEPART PRAGUE**

Today, transfer to the airport for your departing flight.

