

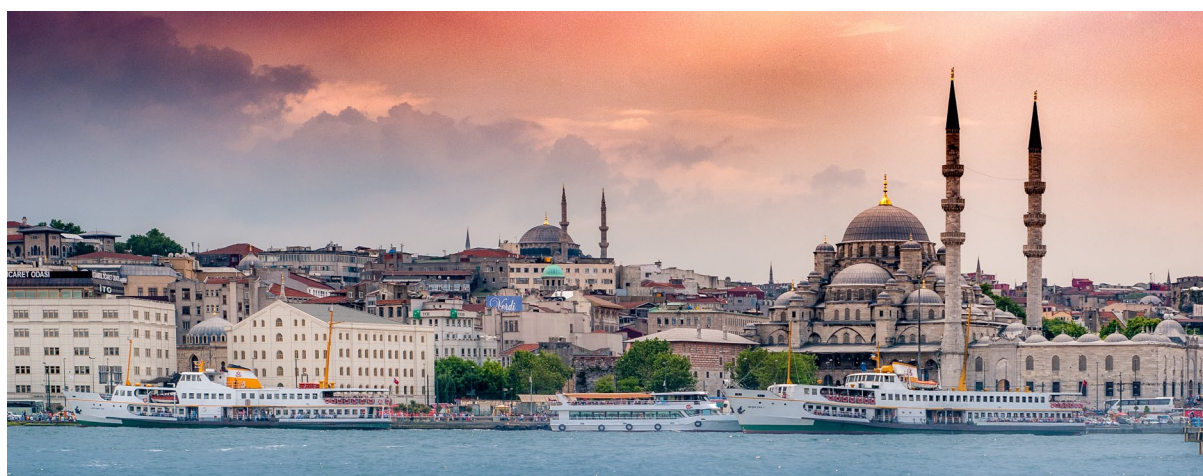


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# Tour Notes

London to Istanbul – Rail Adventure

Tour Duration – 15 Days



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●● | Wildlife ●●○○○

## Tour Pace

Busy

## Tour Highlights

- ✓ A unique opportunity to travel by first class train from London to Istanbul, staying in mostly 4 and 5 star hotels along the way
- ✓ Travel by a range of comfortable daytime trains and one overnight sleeper
- ✓ Stopover in Austria, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria
- ✓ Enjoy lunch in Paris, at the Gare de Lyon's famous *Train Bleu* restaurant, which opened in 1900 and is decorated in a sumptuous art nouveau style
- ✓ Travel by a modern *Railjet* train from Zurich to Vienna across the Arlberg pass. Take in spectacular Alpine scenery with the option to have lunch served at your seat
- ✓ Explore fabled Transylvania and travel through the scenic Carpathian Mountains
- ✓ Immerse yourself in the rich history of Romania's largest fortress, the Alba Iulia Citadel, and enjoy wine tasting in its 300 year old cellars
- ✓ Join a local ranger and spot brown bears in the wilds of the Transylvanian forests
- ✓ End your adventure with a stay in Istanbul at the iconic *Pera Place Hotel*, where it is said Agatha Christie wrote her novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*





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## Tour Map

### London to Istanbul – Rail Adventure



## Tour Essentials

<b>Accommodation:</b>	Mix of centrally located hotels, mostly 4 to 5 star
<b>Included Meals:</b>	Daily breakfast and lunches and dinners where shown
<b>Group Size:</b>	Maximum 12
<b>Start Point:</b>	London
<b>End Point:</b>	Istanbul
<b>Transport:</b>	First class trains with reserved seats and private sleeping compartments for one overnight journey, private van or minibus for transfers and sightseeing
<b>Countries:</b>	France*, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey (*no overnight stay)



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## London to Istanbul – Rail Adventure

A unique opportunity to travel in comfort and style all the way by train from the UK to Istanbul.

Fully escorted by Undiscovered Destinations' senior travel consultant Mark Huggins, enjoy a thoroughly well-planned journey which includes all trains and hotels, together with sightseeing excursions provided by experienced locally based guides.

Our adventure starts from London's impressive Gothic revival St. Pancras station. Meet Mark by the statue of poet laureate John Betjeman who led the campaign to save the station from being demolished. Travel by Eurostar to Paris where we will break our journey for lunch in the opulent surroundings of the Gare de Lyon's famous *Train Bleu* restaurant. Continue by high-speed TGV-Lyria to Zurich for an overnight stop before taking a swish Austrian *Railjet* train the next day from Zurich to Vienna. Enjoy an optional lunch served at your seat as we cross the fabulous Arlberg Pass through the Alps and onto the Austrian capital for an overnight stay. The next morning, we have time for a walking tour of Vienna, before we head to our next destination, Budapest. In a little under three hours another *Railjet* train will bring us to the Hungarian capital where we will break our journey for two nights. We will explore the city on walking tour, with time for coffee and cake in one of the cafes on the elegant Andrassy Avenue.

The next leg of our epic adventure takes us into fabled Transylvania, as we travel through the scenic Carpathian Mountains. We will immerse ourselves in the rich history of Romania's largest fortress, the Alba Iulia Citadel, and enjoy wine tasting in its 300 year old cellars. We continue our journey eastwards to the city of Brasov, where we will join a ranger and spot brown bears in the wilds of the Transylvanian forests. The next day we meet our guide to explore the local area including the medieval fortified city of Sighisoara, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We continue our adventure by taking a train from Brasov to Bucharest where we will break our journey for the night in the Romanian capital, giving us enough time for a city tour before we head south to neighbouring Bulgaria. Sadly, for this leg of our journey, given the lack of a reliable rail service, we need to travel by road. The distance between the two capitals is about 240 miles, but we will take our time and stop along the way to visit the rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, before reaching our luxury hotel in Sofia. During our two night stay in the Bulgarian capital, we will explore what is probably one of Europe's most underrated cities and enjoy a traditional folklore show and dinner.

As we approach the final leg of our transcontinental adventure we take the train from Sofia to Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest city. Like Rome, Plovdiv straddles seven hills; but as Europe's oldest continuously inhabited city, it is far more ancient. With our local guide we will explore its romantic old town, packed with colourful and creaky 19th-century mansions that are now house-museums and galleries, before we board the overnight sleeper train, bound for Istanbul.

Having reached the Bosphorus flight-free, and mostly by train, our adventure will conclude with a stay at the iconic Pera Palace Hotel. Although our journey has been made by regular modern-day trains, this is still *the* place for overland travellers to stay. Easily the most famous and historic hotel in Istanbul, the Pera Palace was built in 1892 by the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits to accommodate the passengers arriving by train on the Orient Express from London and Paris. Agatha Christie, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and even King George V have all stayed here. And it was here, in room 411, that supposedly Christie penned her famous novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*. Join Mark and your fellow travellers as we enjoy a farewell dinner served in the hotel's Agatha Restaurant. A truly fitting way to celebrate our own version of the Orient Express.



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## Tour itinerary notes

The itinerary has been carefully planned based on the latest train schedules, but timings can change at short notice, or the days of the week that a particular train normally operates can also change. This will potentially require amending our itinerary and the number of nights that we stay in each city. Before you are asked to accept any changes our experienced travel consultants will of course discuss the options with you. These may well be limited, so it is important that you can be flexible.

## Is this trip for you?

This journey will be best suited to experienced travellers and to those who are comfortable in carrying their own luggage unassisted. This is important as trains in Europe do not provide an airline style checked-in baggage service. Each passenger is responsible for their own luggage, which they will keep with them on each leg of the trip. On occasions this will mean storing luggage in the racks provided above the seats. Although the group, a maximum of 12 travellers, will be escorted throughout by a tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations, his role is primarily one of managing the logistics and liaising with the locally based guides who will be responsible for providing guided tours and excursions along the way.

In addition to the need to carry your own luggage on and off the trains, it should be noted that in most locations it will be necessary to walk from the railway station to our hotel and back. Where possible the hotels will be located just a short stroll from the station, but in some cities, it might be a longer walk of 20 minutes or so. Please see the itinerary below for further details and do get in touch before booking if you have any concerns.

# Itinerary

## Day 1: London to Zurich with lunch in Paris at the Train Bleu Restaurant

Meet Mark, your Undiscovered Destinations' tour leader, at London's impressive Gothic revival St. Pancras station. He will be waiting for you by the statue of poet laureate John Betjeman who led the campaign to save the station from being demolished. Take a morning Eurostar, with a light breakfast served at our seats, to Paris. Upon arrival at the city's Gare du Nord station road transport will be provided to take us to the Gare de Lyon, the Paris terminus serving trains to Switzerland. Before boarding our next train, a high-speed TGV to Zurich, we will break the journey for a leisurely lunch in the opulent surroundings of the Gare de Lyon's famous *Train Bleu* restaurant. Continue from Paris to Zurich on a TGV-Lyria train, a journey of just over four hours, passing through a patchwork of quiet French villages and open fields, briefly pausing at Dijon before reaching Basel, the Swiss border, and gently rising foothills of the Alps. Arrive in Zurich at around 8.30pm and make our way to our overnight accommodation, located just a few minutes' walk from the station. Overnight Hotel Bristol Zurich or similar. (BL)

## Train Bleu Restaurant

It is hard to believe that one of Paris' most serene, picturesque, and dignified restaurants is also located within one of its busiest train stations, but Le Train Bleu, an icon of Parisian dining, is a far cry from the Gare de Lyon's hustle and bustle. This restaurant, built for a World's Fair in 1900, features murals depicting different regions of France, as well as works from more than 40 prominent artists from that time. Every inch of this place drips with Parisian opulence in the best possible way. The perfect start to our transcontinental adventure.



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### Day 2: Zurich to Vienna via the Arlberg Pass

After breakfast at the hotel, we make our way back to the station for a mid-morning departure by slick Austrian *Railjet* train to Vienna. The wonderfully scenic journey will take us via the fabulous Arlberg Pass that lances dramatically through the Alps and into the Austrian Tirol. The train runs along the Zürichsee and Walensee lakes, and then hugs the mountainside, before it snakes through a huge valley, past Swiss and Austrian scenery taken straight from the *Sound of Music*. Sit back, relax, and perhaps enjoy lunch which can be purchased (debit and credit cards accepted) on the train to be served at your first class seat. Arrive in Vienna and check-in to our hotel, located close to the station. Overnight Novotel Wien Hauptbahnhof or similar. (B)

### Day 3: Vienna Walking Tour and continue to Budapest

Austria's capital offers a unique blend of imperial traditions and stunning modern architecture. It is famous for its cultural events, imperial sights, coffee houses, cosy wine taverns, and the special Viennese charm. Explore the city on a morning walking tour with a local guide, before we take a mid-afternoon *Railjet* train that flashes up the broad Danube Valley to Budapest, erstwhile gateway to the exotic east. Upon arrival at the city's uniquely designed Keleti station, intriguingly adorned with statues of British railway icons James Watt and George Stephenson, we will walk the short distance to our hotel and check-in for a two night stay. Overnight Intercity Hotel Budapest or similar. (B)

### Day 4: Budapest Walking Tour

After breakfast we will meet our guide in the lobby of the hotel and enjoy an in-depth look at Budapest's attractions and contemporary culture on a four-hour walking tour. Set off to visit the city's most popular sights, gaining an insight into the history of these fusion of the two great cities of Buda and Pest and their development from Roman to modern times, witnessing a glorious array of architectural wonders. During the tour pause for traditional cake and coffee (included in the price of our tour) before pre-paid public transportation takes us to Buda's landmark Castle Hill from where vistas of the Danube and the city are a delight. Later, return to the hotel and the rest of the day will be free. Of course, you can take the opportunity to explore more of the city on your own and your guide will no doubt be happy to offer advice, or perhaps you might head to one the famous thermal baths to while away the afternoon and recharge your batteries. Overnight Intercity Hotel Budapest or similar. (B)

### Day 5: Budapest to Alba Iulia, Transylvania

After breakfast we make our way back to the station to board a modern intercity train named *Claudiopolis* for Romania. Our first of two stops in the country's historical Transylvania region will be the city of Alba Iulia located on the River Mureş. As the journey is scheduled to take around nine hours we should be prepared for a long and tiring day, but we will be rewarded with some fabulous scenery. After the warm southern plains of Hungary recede and the Romanian border is crossed, our route follows the Mureş River which snakes its way steadily uphill into the heart of ancient Transylvania. Liberally forested mountains cloak the eye-line on either side of the carriage as we head east, crossing viaducts towards our destination. At around 6pm we will reach Alba Iulia, where we will walk from the railway station to our hotel, a distance of about 2km. Alternatively taxis are available at the station. Overnight Hotel Transilvania or similar. (B)

### Note

As food and drink is not always available to purchase on today's train, it is essential you bring your own provisions. A variety of shops can be found at the station or ask the hotel to provide a picnic.



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### Day 6: Walking Tour of Alba Iulia Citadel with Wine Tasting

After a leisurely breakfast we will walk the 1.5km from our hotel to the Alba Carolina Citadel, a star-shaped fortress, built between 1715 and 1738 and the largest citadel in Romania, which we will explore with a local guide. After our visit we will enjoy wine tasting accompanied by regional cheeses, hosted by a local wine expert, in the citadel's 300-year old cellars or catacombs. Mid-afternoon return to our hotel with the rest of the day at leisure to relax or to explore on your own. Overnight Hotel Transilvania or similar. (B)

### Day 7: Alba Iulia to Brasov and Bear Watching

After breakfast we head back to the station and continue our adventure through Transylvania by taking an intercity train to Brasov, a journey of around five hours. The line sweeps up the broad valley of the River Olt, dotted with small towns and farming villages. Keep your eyes peeled for the fortifications that tell of the turbulent past of the region before the route rises steadily into the hills, plunging into a tunnel to emerge at the start of the descent to our destination. Upon arrival we will walk the 1.3km to our hotel. After check-in and time for a quick freshen up, we will meet our local guide and head back out for a three to four hour excursion to spot brown bears in the wilds of the Transylvanian forests. We join a ranger and trek into the forest in search of a hide, then wait quietly in hope of spotting the Carpathian brown bear that inhabit the region. We might also see deer, wild boar, lynx, and other native wildlife. Return to our hotel at around 7pm. Overnight Qosmo Brasov Hotel or similar. (B)

### Note

As food and drink is not always available to purchase on today's train, it is essential you bring your own provisions. A variety of shops can be found near the station or ask the hotel to provide a picnic.

### Day 8: Full day guided tour to Sighisoara, Viscri and Rupea Citadel

Today we will make the most of our limited time in the region by discovering three of Transylvania's oldest and most captivating historical sights on a full day tour. We start by visiting the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sighisoara, a medieval fortified city, followed by a stop at the 14th-century village of Viscri and its listed fortified Saxon church. For our last stop we will visit the impressive Rupea Citadel, perched atop a hill, with breathtaking views. Return to Brasov by early evening. Overnight Qosmo Brasov Hotel or similar. (B)

### Notes

Please note this excursion does not include meals or drinks but a stop will be made for lunch payable locally.

### Alternative Excursion

As an alternative to the above full day excursion and for a more relaxing option, a shorter tour can be arranged in or around the city of Brasov, including a visit to Bran Castle, often known 'Dracula's Castle.' Please contact us for further details.

### Day 9: Brasov to Bucharest and afternoon City Tour

After breakfast we will take a train at around 9am for Bucharest, a journey of two-and-a-half hours. Upon arrival at the city's Gara Nord station we walk the 1km to our hotel. After check-in and time for some lunch (payable locally), we will meet our guide for a three hour city tour travelling by private vehicle. Bucharest stands as a curious blend of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century opulence in the heart of the Old City and the extraordinarily dramatic imprint of the soviet-leaning Ceausescu's take on architecture. Discover the key sights including the grandiose Palace of Parliament and explore the city centre including the Royal Palace, Revolution Square, and Calea Victoriei. Return to our hotel. Overnight ibis Styles Bucharest City Center or similar. (B)



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### Day 10: Bucharest to Sofia, Bulgaria by Road

Given the lack of a convenient rail service, today we will need to plug the gap in our overland train adventure by traveling to our next destination, Bulgaria's underrated capital, Sofia, by road. However, this will give us the opportunity to make a short stop along the way at the rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, on the Bulgarian side of the border. Here we can marvel at a medieval church, filled with vibrant frescoes, and carved into a cliff. Later we continue about four hours to Sofia, where we will check-in at our luxury hotel for a two night stay. Overnight Sofia Hilton or similar. (B)

### Day 11: Sofia City Tour and Folklore Dinner

After a leisurely breakfast we will meet our guide for a two to three walking tour of Sofia taking in the key sights including the Central Market Hall, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, and the vibrant historical city centre. After returning to our hotel the remainder of the day will be free until we head out for dinner which we will take in a local restaurant with traditional folklore music and dance. Overnight Sofia Hilton or similar. (BD)

### Day 12: Sofia to Plovdiv and overnight train to Istanbul

As we approach the final leg of our transcontinental adventure, we take a morning train at around 10am from Sofia to Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest city and a journey of about two-and-half hours. Like Rome, Plovdiv straddles seven hills; but as Europe's oldest continuously inhabited city, it is far more ancient. With our local guide we will explore its romantic old town, packed with colourful and creaky 19th-century mansions that are now house-museums and galleries. After the tour we will take dinner (payable local), before we board the overnight sleeper train, bound for Istanbul. In the late evening, the train will reach the Bulgarian / Turkish border, and passengers must disembark to have their passport checked. Your luggage will also be examined and possibly put through an x-ray machine. After a stop of about an hour the train continues to Istanbul, arriving early the next morning. Overnight train (4 berth couchette compartment, booked for exclusive use). (B)

### Day 13: Arrive Istanbul and afternoon Food Tour

Arrive in Istanbul early in the morning. At the time of writing, owing to construction work, our train terminates at Halkali, a suburban station 25km west of central Istanbul. Rather than taking a local train into the city, we will be met at Halkali station and transferred by private vehicle directly to our centrally located hotel, the iconic Pera Palace Hotel. As our rooms have been booked for the night before, this will ensure that early check-in is guaranteed for our group. After time to freshen up you will be invited to enjoy breakfast in the hotel's restaurant which is served until 10:30. Later, and after getting some rest, we leave the hotel to meet our local guide for a private food tour. We visit the Çiçek Pasajı, originally called the Cité de Péra, a famous covered arcade with rows of historic cafes, winehouses and restaurants. And it is here we will try different food and drinks with each tasting hand-picked by our host based on their love for food, and knowledge of the city. Enjoy only the most authentic bites the city has to offer before returning to our hotel or exploring on your own. Overnight Pera Palace Hotel. (BL)

### Pera Place Hotel

As the British Telegraph newspaper said in a review of the hotel, *"They don't come more history-filled or atmospheric than this, the hotel built by Belgian entrepreneur Georges Nagelmackers to accommodate travellers arriving on his Orient Express train from Paris. Guests here have included everyone from Ernest Hemingway and Agatha Christie to Atatürk and Greta Garbo."*



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The Pera Palace fits perfectly into an area that was, in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, home to the city's Christian and Jewish minorities as well as European bankers, diplomats and traders. The elegant, restrained Neo-Classical façade of the seven-storey building does little to prepare you for the opulence of the perfectly preserved interior, which looks very much like it must have done in the 1920s when Agatha Christie stayed here en-route for Aleppo to visit her archaeologist husband, Max Mallowan (her usual room was 411). It is even said that Christie penned her famous novel *Murder on the Orient Express* whilst staying at the hotel.

The Kubbeli Lounge on the ground floor is a real focal point, with its six glass domes, a grandiloquent crystal chandelier, Moorish-style arches and walls clad in bands of marble of contrasting colours. The original lift, installed in 1892, still works and is a masterpiece of wrought iron and mahogany. French bronze figurines dot the lobby, along with potted palms on ebony plant stands, and one downstairs room is preserved as a museum to the founder of modern Turkey, Atatürk.

#### **Day 14: Istanbul Full Day Tour and Farewell Dinner at the Pera Palace Hotel**

After breakfast we will meet our guide for the final tour of the trip, a full day excursion of Istanbul. Experience the city's timeless sights and stunning historic places. Listen for the ancient echoes of pounding hooves and charioteers at Hippodrome Square and spot the distinctive tiles of the Blue Mosque. See the Byzantine mosaics and minarets of Hagia Sophia, then follow in the footsteps of powerful sultans, courtiers, and generals at Topkapi Palace. With time for lunch (included as part of the tour) between sights, we finish our day with a stop at the vibrant Grand Bazaar, with its labyrinthine of passageways, before returning to the Pera Palace. Later join Mark and your fellow travellers as we enjoy a farewell dinner served in the hotel's Agatha Restaurant. A truly fitting way to celebrate our own version of the Orient Express. Overnight Pera Palace Hotel. (BLD)

#### **Day 15: Depart Istanbul**

After breakfast we check-out of the hotel and a private transfer will be provided to the international airport to coincide with your departure. (B)

## *Tour inclusions/exclusions*

#### **Inclusions:**

The services of an Undiscovered Destinations' tour leader

All accommodation

Daily breakfast (B), plus lunch (L) and dinner (D) where shown in the itinerary

Rail travel based on first class seats for daytime journeys and private sleeping compartments for overnight journeys.

Guided sightseeing tours as per itinerary, with the services of a private English-speaking guide or driver/guide

Transfers as per itinerary with a private car or minibus

Unless stated otherwise, entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

#### **Excluded:**

International flights

Travel Insurance

Visas – when required

Meals and drinks not stated in the itinerary

Tips (Discretionary)





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# Important Information

## Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the time of writing there are no warnings in place for areas visited on this tour. It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

## Accommodation and Meals

### Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note, excepted when stated, that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival.

### Accommodation Rating

The hotels on this tour have been carefully selected based mainly on their location and proximity to the railway stations. With some exceptions most properties of a 4 or 5 star category.

### Food and Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary, which is daily breakfast, plus lunch or dinner where indicated.

Usually, it will be impossible for Undiscovered Destinations to pre-pay for meals and drinks taken on the various trains. Therefore, it is essential that you travel with sufficient cash to pay for these services as credit and debit cards may not always be accepted. We would recommend that you have euros available as these will offer the best overall acceptance.

The food and drink available to purchase on trains, when it is available, can be limited so many travellers come prepared and choose to bring their own provisions. You will find a choice of shops and eateries at most stations. We recommend that you travel with plenty of water, and items such as fresh and dried fruits, biscuits, crackers, etc.

### Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. Whilst we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

As noted above on-train catering can be limited, particularly in Eastern Europe. Even the most common dietary requests, including vegetarian options, may not be available.

### Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs, and items of a personal nature such as laundry.



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### Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch or dinner – from £10 to £15

### Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £2 - £3

Bottle of Water £0.50 - £1

### Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. We suggest you budget to tip the guide for each of the local tours included in the itinerary. We would recommend €5 to €10 per person for each tour. This will depend on the duration of the tour.

Waiters and bar staff in most of the countries visited on this tour are generally low paid and it is customary practice to leave a small tip – around 10% of the bill.

### On Train Safety and Security

The Undiscovered Destinations' team have travelled widely by train and never experienced any problems, but you should not be complacent. It is essential that you take good care of your personal belongings. Pack wisely and store your most valuable possessions, including electrical items and of course your passports and travel documents in a separate day bag. Also remember to keep any important medicines and prescriptions or doctors' letters in the same bag. And make sure you keep this bag with you at all times. Some travellers choose to keep their passport, one or two credit/debit cards and some emergency cash in a money belt.

When travelling by sleeper train the carriage will generally be staffed by an attendant. On newer trains you might be able to lock your compartment from the outside using a hotel type keycard. But this is still the exception. So, you will need to ask your attendant to lock the door for you if you are planning to leave the compartment. During the night you will be able to lock the compartment door from the inside. Some experienced travellers choose to bring their own padlock just in case the door lock is faulty. We can recommend a combination cable padlock as this can also be used to help secure your baggage to luggage racks.

### Foreign Exchange

**ATM Availability:** As you will be visiting major cities on this tour ATMs will be widely available.

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Cards are widely accepted in the main cities including at larger restaurants and most hotels. Card acceptance on the trains will be more limited, particularly beyond Western Europe.

**Local Currency:** Euros, Hungarian Forint, Romanian Leu, Turkish Lira.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Euros and US Dollar.

**Where to Exchange:** Exchange facilities will generally be available at the railway stations. Your local guide or the hotel reception can provide future assistance.



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### **Flight Information**

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Travel Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

### **Visa Information**

UK, US, and Australian passport holders do not need a visa for travel in EU states.

British Citizens travelling to Turkey for tourist purposes can enter the country without a visa for visits of up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Other nationals should check before booking with your nearest embassy, consulate, or visa agency.

As immigration requirements can change without notice it is essential that you check the latest information with your nearest embassy, consulate, or visa agency. It is important to check the requirements both at the time of booking and again at the time you pay your balance.

### **Passports**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country of residence.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### **Vaccinations and Protection**

We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information and advice regarding the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than month you might be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Meningitis.



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# Preparing for your tour

## Climate

The region can be bitterly cold in its winter months and fiercely hot during July and August. A pleasant time to visit is from May to September.

## Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

## Equipment and What to Bring

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is usually advisable to bring a torch/head torch in case of any electricity outages.

When travelling long distances by rail some travellers choose to bring a few games to while away the hours. A pack of cards, or travel versions of board games are popular. Something that can be played with your fellow travellers and non-English speakers is recommended.

A phrase book can of course be useful or download a translation app on your phone.

Please bring a small towel to use on the trains as hand drying facilities are not always provided. It is also wise to bring toilet paper and hand sensitiser as sanitary conditions on the trains can vary considerably.

## Wi-Fi

The majority of hotels used on this tour offer dependable wi-fi although charges may apply.

On most trains within Western Europe wi-fi is now available although charges may apply, and the service might be limited to basic internet browsing and checking of emails. Travelling beyond Western Europe most trains do not offer wi-fi. Depending on your service provider you will probably be able to access wi-fi through local mobile phone networks. But check with your provider as costs can be high.

## Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. We recommend that you bring a pair of flip-flops to wear whilst moving about on long distance trains.

## Journey times

Upon request we can provide you with the latest train schedules, although these will be subject to change.

## Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.



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This journey will be best suited to experienced travellers and to those who are comfortable in carrying their own luggage unassisted. This is important as trains in Europe do not provide an airline style checked-in baggage service. Each passenger is responsible for their own luggage, which they will keep with them on each leg of the trip. On occasions this will mean storing luggage in the racks provided above the seats. Although the group, a maximum of 12 travellers, will be escorted throughout by a tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations, his role is primarily one of managing the logistics and liaising with the locally based guides who will be responsible for providing guided tours and excursions along the way.

In addition to the need to carry your own luggage on and off the trains, it should be noted that in most locations it will be necessary to walk from the railway station to our hotel and back. Where possible the hotels will be located just a short stroll from the station, but in some cities, it might be a longer walk of 20 minutes or so. If you would rather take a taxi, these will be payable locally and cash payment might be required. Please see the itinerary above for further details and do get in touch before booking if you have any concerns.

### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

Countries visited on this tour have an electrical supply that is 220V/50 Hz and plugs usually have two round pins. On the majority of trains, you will find electrical sockets which usually have two round pins.

We would recommend that you bring a universal travel adapter as there can be exceptions to the above.

### **Tour Itinerary Versions**

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour, but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 15 April 2024.