

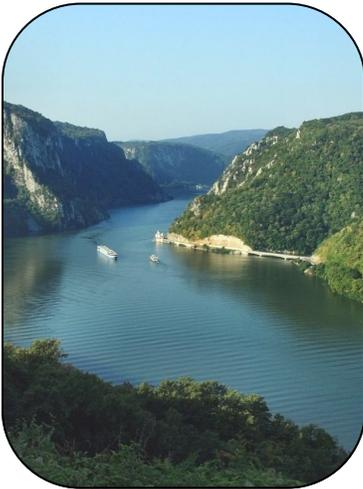
DANUBE RIVER CRUISE

On Avalon Passion from Bucharest to Budapest

August 4, 2018 - 18 Days



a world to experience



Fares per Person: based on double/twin

\$9,795 twin, \$10,520 single Category E Cabin

\$10,065 twin, \$10,790 single Category D Cabin

\$11,395 twin, \$12,125 single Category A Cabin



> Please add 0.2% GST.

> **Early Bookers:** \$250 discount on first 8 seats; \$125 on next 4 seats;
Additional \$600 discount if you book by June 6, 2017.

> **Experience Points:** Earn 180 points from this tour.
Redeem **180 points** if you book by April 3, 2018.

Includes

- Transportation to/from Vancouver Airport
- Flight on Lufthansa from Vancouver to Bucharest, Romania
- Current air transport taxes and fuel surcharges
- Transfer from Bucharest airport to hotel
- Coach transportation for 4 days in Romania
- 3 nights accommodation in Bucharest
- 1 night accommodation in Brasov
- English-speaking guide for 4 days in Romania
- Driving tour of Bucharest with People's House
- Walking tour of historic district of Bucharest
- Tour of Transylvania region
- Peles, the Royal Castle of Romania
- Tour of wine cellars and tasting at Azuga
- Brasov Philharmonic music program
- Tour of Brasov
- Bran Castle, fictional home of Count Dracula
- Bucharest folkloric program
- Village Museum
- 8 night cruise on the Danube from Bucharest to Budapest, Hungary on Avalon Passion
- Cruise gratuities for the ship's crew
- Port charges and cruise taxes
- Danube Delta natural history excursion
- Tour to Constanta on Black Sea
- National History & Archeological Museum
- Tour to Veliko Tarnovo and Arbanassi with Tsarevet's Royal Fortress, Ethnographical Museum and Church of Nativity
- Tour to Belogradchik with Vidin's Fortress
- Iron Gates of the Danube
- Lepenski Vir archeological exhibition
- Tour of Belgrade with St. Sava Church
- Tour of Pecs, Hungary, with Underground Tombs and organ concert
- 3 nights accommodation in Budapest
- Coach transportation for 3 days in Budapest
- Tour of Budapest with St. Stephen's Basilica and Opera House
- Ride on the Budapest Eye Ferris Wheel
- Hungarian Folkloric show
- Matthias Church and Fisherman's Bastion
- Illuminated dinner cruise on the Danube
- Transfer from hotel to airport in Budapest
- Flight from Budapest to Vancouver
- 1 night accommodation in Vancouver
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Gratuities for local guides
- Luggage handling at hotels and ship
- **43 meals:** 16 breakfasts, 12 lunches, 15 dinners

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Cruising the Legendary Danube with Avalon Waterways

As Europe's second-longest river and a vital means of transportation for 2,000 years, the Danube is the only major European river to flow from west to east. The Danube rises in Germany's Black Forest and flows through or along the borders of 10 countries – Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania, where it divides into an expansive delta, the northernmost branch of which continues along the border of Ukraine and Moldova, before entering the Black Sea. Many of Europe's major capital cities are along this river, a testament to its importance in the history of civilization in this area. Our cruise takes in a very scenic portion from Bucharest in Romania to Budapest in Hungary with eight relaxed days to enjoy the vistas from the river and local excursions. A highlight is the Iron Gates gorge.

Avalon Waterways is the river cruise company we are using. One of the youngest fleets on the rivers today, Avalon is part of the Globus Family and is backed by 80 years of itinerary planning experience. They boast a 98% satisfaction rate among their clientele in post-cruise surveys, an impressive track record. The passion for detail is evident in the design of the ships, from the placement of windows to the comfort of the lounges. Off the ships, the award-winning land programs help you experience each destination, with guided sightseeing in every port (complete with headsets), engaging port lectures, VIP access into key destinations, no waiting in lines, and great cultural immersion and storytelling thanks to skilled cruise directors and guides. This is the 4th river cruise that Wells Gray has offered with Avalon.

On Board the *MVPassion*

Our ship, the *Passion*, was launched in 2016 and is currently Avalon's newest vessel. The floor to ceiling windows and French balconies on two decks make for bright staterooms, with a contemporary design. With just 83 staterooms and only 4 decks, including the huge open Sky Deck, the experience is intimate yet diverse enough that you can meet people from around the globe. Comfort is essential — dress code is relaxed and casual with just one dressy yet not formal night on the gala final evening. There is a large open seating dining room, and a spacious lounge with bar that is open all day. Dining is also relaxed with breakfast and lunch buffets, and nightly four course dinner with open seating. Complimentary wine, beer and soft drinks are offered with lunch and dinner. All day coffee service is available, plus there is afternoon tea, social hour in the lounge, open air bistro on the Sky Deck, and Night Fare at 10:30 each evening. There is a fitness centre and hair salon on board, and free internet access. Your cruise director keeps you informed about the daily entertainment, the upcoming lectures on ports of call, and various on board activities to enrich your European river experience. There are five categories of staterooms. Category D and E are on the Indigo or lowest deck with small windows and measure 172 square feet. Categories A and B on Sapphire deck and Category P on Royal deck measure 200 square feet and have floor to ceiling windows and a sliding door to the French balcony. The dining room is on Sapphire deck and the Panorama Lounge and Observation Lounge are on Royal deck.

Tour Notes:

- Because the size of the ship is so small, we must commit to the number of staterooms needed 6 months prior to departure. **It is essential that you book early for this cruise. It is unlikely that we will be able to secure more space after Avalon recalls our unsold rooms.**
- This tour is being released for bookings 15 months before departure. Airfare, departure taxes and fuel surcharges are estimates only and are based on rates at time of planning. These can change up to the time of departure and tour fare will be adjusted accordingly.
- A valid passport is required with at least four blank pages and must not expire until three months after return date. Visas are not currently required for any country we are visiting.
- For the flight, specific seat selection or requests are not permitted. Although name lists are submitted in order of who wishes to sit together, this is not guaranteed. Adjustments may be possible at check-in or on board the aircraft.
- Gratuities for cruise staff, local guides and transfer drivers are included. The customary gratuity to your Wells Gray tour director has been left to your discretion.
- The Euro is an accepted currency in all the countries we visit. You should have local cash on hand for smaller purchases and gratuities. On board currency is the Euro. Purchases can be charged to your ship account and paid at the end of the cruise by credit card.
- Single bookings are very limited and we recommend that you book early to get one.

Itinerary



Saturday, August 4:

Transportation is provided to Vancouver Airport. Our flight on Lufthansa leaves about 6 pm.

Sunday, August 5:

Meals: D

We arrive in Frankfurt in late morning and change planes, continuing to Bucharest, Romania, arriving about 6 pm. We stay two nights at the 5-star Grand Hotel Continental.

Monday, August 6:

Meals: B,L,D

Bucharest is the capital and largest city of Romania, as well as its cultural, industrial, and financial centre. It was founded in 1459 and grew to become the centre of Romanian culture and art. Its architecture is a mix of neo-classical, interbellum, communist-era, and modern. In the period between the two world wars, the city's elegant architecture earned Bucharest the nickname of "Little Paris". In recent years, the city has experienced an economic and cultural boom. During a city tour, our local guide explains Bucharest's cosmopolitan buildings and leads a walk through the ornate Palace of the Parliament or **People's House**, the second largest office building in the world after the Pentagon. Later, there is a walking tour of the historic streets of Bucharest.

Tuesday, August 7:

Meals: B,L,D

We head into the Transylvania region and visit **Peles, the Royal Castle of Romania** which was built by King Carol I between 1873 and 1914 as his summer residence. With 170 rooms, the palace is a fantasy mixture of German neo-Renaissance and neo-Gothic architecture and contains a colonial-style display of 4,000 weapons. At Azuga,

we tour the **Rhein wine cellars** which date from 1892 and produce a sparkling wine that was once supplied to the Royal family of Romania. We stay overnight in **Brasov**. Tonight's dinner is accompanied by members of the Brasov Philharmonic playing a symphonic program.

Wednesday, August 8:

Meals: B,L,D

Our local guide shows us the charms of Brasov which was settled by German colonists as early as the 12th century. Brasov is still a mix of minorities with a medieval centre boasting colourful facades, old ramparts, secret narrow cobbled streets, guard towers, and the largest gothic church between Vienna and Istanbul. Next we drive to Bran village and have lunch at a farm. Afterwards, we have a guided visit to the imposing **Bran Castle**, one of the world's most famous castles because it is often erroneously identified as Dracula's Castle. Bram Stoker's character, Dracula, was a Transylvanian Count based on Vlad Dracul, the ruthless ruler of Wallachia region in the 15th century. However, Stoker's description of Dracula's crumbling fictional castle bears no resemblance to Bran Castle. Then we drive back to **Bucharest** and stay another night at the Grand Hotel. Dinner with a folkloric program is included.

Thursday, August 9:

Meals: B,D

This morning, we visit the Village Museum which exhibits original peasant houses brought here from all over Romania for preservation. At noon, we leave Bucharest and drive 1½ hours east to Fetesti where the **Avalon Passion**, our river cruise vessel, is docked on the Borcea branch of the Danube. We settle into our cabins, home for the next eight nights. Meet the captain and crew at a welcome reception, then enjoy your first succulent meal in the dining room. Take in the tranquil scenes as the ship cruises downstream on the mighty Danube.

Friday, August 10:

Meals: B,L,D

We dock in **St. Gheorghe** on one of the branches of the Danube Delta, and take a drive through the delta. A UNESCO World Heritage Site and the best preserved of Europe's deltas, this area hosts over 300 species of birds and 45 species of freshwater fish. From its source in the Black Forest to the Black Sea, the Danube measures 2,845 kilometres. The distance markers can be clearly seen along the river banks throughout its length. After leaving St. Gheorghe at noon, we enjoy a celebration to mark "**Km 0**" — the end of the Danube's journey. During the afternoon, we cruise upstream.

Saturday, August 11:*Meals: B,L,D*

We dock at Cernavoda and drive to **Constanta**, the most important commercial centre in Romania, situated on the **Black Sea**. A local guide shows us highlights such as the Genoese Lighthouse, Roman Mosaics, and House with Lions, and a visit to the National History and Archeological Museum is included. This afternoon, relax on board while we cruise west towards Rousse.

Sunday, August 12:*Meals: B,L,D*

The border between Romania and Bulgaria follows the Danube. This morning, we dock in Rousse, Bulgaria's largest inland port. We drive 1½ hours south to the ancient Bulgarian capital of **Veliko Târnovo**. Situated on three hills surrounding the Yantra River, the city was a natural fortress with ancient stone houses clinging to the steep slopes. The oldest part is Tsarevets Hill, home of the Royal Fortress and the Patriarch's Church. We continue to **Arbanassi**, founded in the 15th century and best known for its Bulgarian Revival architecture. We visit the Ethnographical Museum, located in a 400 year old house, and the Church of the Nativity which has an outstanding collection of frescoes. This is an all-day excursion, but if you want a shorter day, a morning tour of Rousse is offered, then an afternoon cruising up the river to Svistov, where the all-day tour rejoins the ship.

Monday, August 13:*Meals: B,L,D*

Part of the morning offers leisurely river cruising before arriving in **Vidin**, Bulgaria. Its medieval Baba Vidin Fortress is the town's primary landmark. It served as Vidin's main defensive installation during the Middle Ages and is the only entirely preserved medieval fortress in the country. In nearby **Belogradchik**, we admire the eclectic group of rock formations on the western slopes of the Balkan Mountains which were sculpted 200 million years ago.

Tuesday, August 14:*Meals: B,L,D*

During the morning, we enjoy spectacular scenery while the *Avalon Passion* cruises through the dramatic gorge of the **Iron Gates**. This narrow and once dangerous passage, now tamed by dams, divides Europe's Alps from the Carpathians, and forms a natural border between Serbia and Romania. Everybody is sure to be on deck while the ship is lifted about 100 metres by two locks to get past the Iron Gates dams. This afternoon, we dock at **Donji Milanovac** and drive to the impressive Lepenski Vir Exhibition Centre which houses archaeological artifacts found here and provides unique views of the Iron Gates.

Wednesday, August 15:*Meals: B,L,D*

We arrive in **Belgrade** this morning. One of the oldest cities in Europe, the capital of Serbia is situated at the confluence of the Danube and Sava Rivers. A locally-guided tour shows its most significant attractions including St. Sava, the world's largest Orthodox church. We visit the city's principal landmark, **Kalemegdan Fortress**, built in stages between the 1st and 18th centuries and the scene of many battles. The surrounding park is the largest and most beautiful in Belgrade. During the rest of the afternoon, check out the city's lively pedestrian area and charming outdoor cafés, visit one of the many art galleries or museums, relax in the park, or browse the local shops. Our ship sails late this evening.

Thursday, August 16:*Meals: B,L,D*

When we awake this morning, the ship is in Croatia, then we dock in **Mohács, Hungary**. After lunch, an excursion travels to **Pécs**. Established by the Romans in the 2nd century, this was a flourishing and important town for Christianity by the 4th century. These early Christians left behind many underground burial chambers with memorial chapels above ground. Our local guide takes us into these tombs, now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and many have splendidly decorated murals with Christian themes. Later, enjoy an Organ Concert. Pécs is a rich showcase of Turkish architecture and Turkish mosques, striking churches, and an enjoyable atmosphere around its restaurants and cafés.

Friday, August 17:*Meals: B,L,D*

This morning, we dock in **Budapest, Hungary**, and say farewell to the *Avalon Passion*. The country's capital spans the banks of the Danube and is one of Eastern Europe's liveliest cities. We meet our Hungarian guide who conducts a tour of highlights: the Parliament Building, Hero's Square, the Opera House, and St. Stephen's Basilica. This afternoon, we go to Erzsébet Square and enjoy a ride on the new **Budapest Eye**, a Ferris wheel which offers an awesome view from the top at 65 metres high. We stay three nights at the Continental Hotel. Dinner includes a traditional Hungarian Folkloric show.

Saturday, August 18:*Meals: B,L,D*

We spend the morning at Bálna, the Budapest Whale, which is the city's state-of-the-art cultural, entertainment and shopping centre. The afternoon is free time — walk along Andrásy Avenue and the banks of the Danube; shop for handcrafted embroidery or Herend porcelain; bask in the

coffee house culture over a rich cream cake in the renowned Gerbeaud Café; stroll one or more of the city's eight bridges which connect ancient Buda on the right bank with Pest on the left; admire the Chain Bridge, built in 1849 and a symbol of the city. Budapest's unique energy is positively palatable.

Sunday, August 19:

Meals: B,D

In the morning, we visit the Royal Castle district which is noted for historic buildings, cobblestone streets, and Castle Hill. We visit the 700-year old **Matthias Church** which was the scene of several coronations including that of Charles IV in 1916, the last Habsburg king. Next, we enjoy the panoramic view from the **Fisherman's Bastion**. This afternoon, we visit Margaret Island, a peaceful hidea-

way from downtown Budapest with large green areas, flowery gardens, old trees, and entertainment. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure. Tonight, we board a boat for a **dinner cruise** on the Danube past illuminated buildings, our last experience with this storied river.

Monday, August 20:

Meals: B

Our flight on Lufthansa leaves Budapest in mid-morning to Frankfurt, where we change planes and arrive in Vancouver in mid-afternoon. We stay overnight at the Fairmont Hotel in Vancouver Airport.

Tuesday, August 21:

Meals: B

Transportation is provided to your pickup point in Victoria.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$800 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due April 3, 2018.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 8 seats and \$125 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. This discount is not offered after April 3. In addition, Avalon Waterways offers a \$600 per person discount for all bookings received by June 6, 2017.

Cancellation Policy: Up to April 3, 2018, your tour payments will be refunded less a cancellation charge of \$300 per person. From April 4 to May 2, the cancellation charge is 30% of the tour fare. From May 3 to June 1, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From June 2 to June 30, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After June 30, there is no refund.

Changes to tour: As this tour has been planned 15 months in advance, changes to foreign currency exchange rates and taxes, and surcharges from airlines, the cruise ship and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours. Lufthansa will not confirm 2018 fares until September 2017, so the air fare included in this tour has been estimated, based on 2017 fares and could be higher or lower. For all these reasons Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure. Hotels named in the itinerary could change, but substitute accommodation will be of similar or better quality.

Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons (Iron Gates)

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups and dropoffs may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and the size of the chartered vehicle. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

Activity Level: Light activity on the ship and moderate activity during most shore excursions and pre- and post-cruise tours. Due to the historic nature of some attractions, it may be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces such as cobblestone streets, and walk up to a kilometre at an easy pace. Sometimes the coach cannot drive all the way to an attraction. There is an elevator on the ship. There can be longer walks in the airports so you should request a cart or wheelchair in advance if this could be an issue for you. If you are not able to participate in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, local guides, and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. Please consider these mobility issues prior to booking this tour.

e-points: This tour earns 180 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until April 3, 2018.

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