

# PRESIDENT'S CRUISE

*On the Danube from Black Sea to Budapest with Avalon*

June 10, 2020 - 18 Days



## a world to experience



**Fares per Person:** based on double/twin

**\$10,675** twin, \$13,565 single Category E (window)

**\$12,345** twin, \$16,850 single Category B (French balcony)

**\$12,605** twin, \$17,350 single Category P (French balcony)



> Other cruise categories are also available.

> Please add 0.4% GST.

> **Experience Points:** Earn 190 points from this tour.

Redeem **190 points** if you book by February 5, 2020.

### Includes

- Transportation to/from Vancouver Airport
- 7 nights of hotel accommodation in Romania and Slovakia, and taxes
- 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
- English-speaking guide for 4 days in Romania
- Driving tour of Bucharest with People's House
- Walking tour of historic district of Bucharest
- Bucharest folkloric program
- 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
- Prejmer fortified church
- 9 night cruise on the Danube from Fetesti to Budapest, Hungary on Avalon Passion
- Cruise gratuities for the ship's crew
- Port charges and cruise taxes
- Danube Delta natural history boat excursion
- Tour to Constanta on the Black Sea
- National History & Archeological Museum
- Tour of Rousse, Bulgaria, with Holy Trinity Church
- Tour to Veliko Târnovo 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
- Walking tour of Osijek, Croatia, & Tvrđa Fortress
- Tour of Pécs, Hungary, with Underground Tombs and organ concert
- Tour of Budapest with St. Stephen's Basilica
- Coach transportation for 3 days in Slovakia
- Hronek Wooden Church & Bystrianska Cave
- Walking tour of Banska Bystrica
- Tour of Banska Stiavnica with falconry demo
- Slovakian Folkloric show
- Transfer from Bratislava hotel to Vienna airport
- Flight from Vienna to Vancouver
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Gratuities for local guides & drivers
- Luggage handling at hotels, ship & airline
- **46 meals:** 16 breakfasts, 14 lunches, 16 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 nine relaxed days to enjoy the vistas from the river and local excursions. A highlight is the Iron Gates gorge.

For 2020 and the 7<sup>th</sup> President's Cruise, Wells Gray Tours is returning to Avalon Waterways. 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.

### 7<sup>th</sup> President's Cruise

Roland and Anne Neave invite you to join them for this exciting cruise from the mouth of the Danube River on the Black Sea upstream to Budapest, Hungary. About once a year, the Neaves choose a cruise route somewhere in the world and host their President's Cruise. Roland founded Wells Gray Tours in 1972 and is the company's President. Previous President's cruises have featured the Eastern Mediterranean, Panama Canal, Norway Fjords, Dubai to Singapore, Sydney to Auckland, and four rivers of Europe (Moselle, Rhine, Main, and Danube). The first five cruises were all on ocean ships and the 2019 cruise was the first river cruise. The 7<sup>th</sup> President's Cruise is also on the Danube, but we have been careful to avoid duplication; there will be a half-day tour of Budapest highlights, but the rest of the itinerary is all different, featuring the lower Danube, plus land tours before and after the cruise in Romania and Slovakia.

During this 7<sup>th</sup> President's Cruise, Roland and Anne will host several receptions and social gatherings. Since the *Passion* carries about 160 passengers, this will be a more intimate experience than on board a large ship. Most receptions are held in the Club Lounge at the ship's stern on Royal Deck, with appetizers, beer, wine, some mixed drinks, and soft drinks offered, along with lots of conversation.

Roland and Anne look forward to renewing old acquaintances or meeting you for the first time.

### On Board the *MV Passion*

Our ship, the *Passion*, was launched in 2016 and is one of Avalon's newest vessels. The floor to ceiling windows and French balconies on the Royal and Sapphire 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 Danube experience. Two or three tours are offered at each port and you choose one based on your activity level. Some of these tours are on a motorcoach and some are walking tours. Sometimes a paid excursion with more elaborate inclusions is offered, and you can reserve for these 3 months before sailing.

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 Club Lounge are on Royal deck.

## Itinerary

### Wednesday, June 10:

Transportation is provided to Vancouver airport and we fly on Lufthansa in late afternoon.

### Thursday, June 11:

*Meals: D*

We change planes in Munich and continue to **Bucharest**, arriving about 6 pm (10 hours ahead of Pacific Time). **Welcome to Romania!** Our local guide and coach meet us at the airport. We drive to the 5-star Intercontinental Hotel and stay two nights.

### Friday, June 12:

*Meals: B,L,D*

**Bucharest** is the capital and largest city of Romania, as well as its 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". 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 through the historic streets of Bucharest. After dinner, a folkloric program is offered.

### Saturday, June 13:

*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 two nights in **Brasov** at the Aro Palace Hotel.

### Sunday, June 14:

*Meals: B,L,D*

We drive to Bran village for 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 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, Stoker's description of Dracula's crumbling fictional castle bears no resemblance to Bran Castle. Another stop is at the Prejmer fortified church, completed in 1240. Back in Brasov, our local guide shows us the charms of the city which was settled by German colonists as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Brasov is

still a mix of minorities with a medieval centre boasting colourful facades, old ramparts, narrow cobbled streets, guard towers, and the largest gothic church between Vienna and Istanbul. Dinner is accompanied by members of the **Brasov Philharmonic** playing a symphonic program.

### Monday, June 15:

*Meals: B,D*

We return to Bucharest, meet the rest of the travellers going on the ship, and drive to the Danube River port of Fetesti where the **Avalon Passion** is docked. We settle into our cabins, home for the next nine 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.

### Tuesday, June 16:

*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. A guided boat tour through some channels of the delta is also included. 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.

### Wednesday, June 17:

*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.

### Thursday, June 18:

*Meals: B,L,D*

The border between Romania and Bulgaria follows the Danube. This morning, we dock in **Rousse** and a tour of Bulgaria's largest inland port is included. After cruising to Svistov, we ride a coach south for 1½ hours 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Friday, June 19:** *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. Tonight's entertainment on the ship is a Bulgarian folkloric show.

**Saturday, June 20:** *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.

**Sunday, June 21:** *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 1<sup>st</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Monday, June 22:** *Meals: B,L,D*  
When we awake this morning, the ship is in Croatia at **Osijek**. You can choose either a city tour visiting Tvrđa, the best preserved fortress of Croatia, or attend a musical concert performed by the talented young artists of the music school of Osijek at Franjo Kuhac.

**Tuesday, June 23:** *Meals: B,L,D*  
We cross the border into Hungary and dock in **Mohács**. After lunch, an excursion travels to **Pécs**. Established by the Romans in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, this was a flourishing and important town for Christianity by the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 mosques.

**Wednesday, June 24:** *Meals: B,L,D*  
This morning, we dock in **Budapest** 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, Royal Palace, Statue of Liberty, Heroes' Square, the Opera House, and St. Stephen's Basilica. This afternoon, we drive 2½ hours north to Sielnica in central **Slovakia**. We stay two nights at the Kaskady Hotel, a spa resort which boasts exceptional sources of healing mineral water. As a guest, you have unlimited access to the Wellness & Spa facility including the huge indoor pool with thermal waters.

**Thursday, June 25:** *Meals: B,L,D*  
This morning, we visit the Hronsek wooden church which was built in 1726 without a single nail and can hold 1,100 worshippers. Later we venture underground at the splendid **Bystrianska Cave**, noted for its stalactites and flowstone. Parts of the cave have been used for speleotherapy since 1971. Only about a fifth of this huge cave, over 2½ km long, has been opened to the public. Next we enjoy a walk around **Banska Bystrica**, one of the oldest towns of Slovakia, founded in 1255 and the centre of the Slovak National Uprising in 1944.

**Friday, June 26:** *Meals: B,L,D*  
Heading west from Sielnica, we reach the remarkable town of **Banska Stiavnica**. Founded in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, the medieval buildings around the town square have been fully preserved and the area was declared a World Heritage Site in 1993. A tour is highlighted by a traditional falconry presentation. Lunch is in Svaty Anton, accompanied by a Slovak folkloric show. Then we drive into **Bratislava**, the capital of Slovakia, and stay overnight at the Hotel Devin. A walking tour of historical highlights is offered after arrival.

**Saturday, June 27:***Meals: B*

It is less than an hour's drive to **Vienna airport**. Our Lufthansa flight leaves about 9 am to Frankfurt where we change planes and arrive in Vancouver in mid-afternoon. Transportation is provided to Victoria and your pickup point.

## Tour & Cruise Notes

**Please book early.** Avalon has confirmed a block of staterooms for this tour. Our sales will be reviewed in December 2019 and some unsold staterooms may be recalled if the ship is getting full. River cruises are extremely popular and most are sold out long before departure, so it is not a good idea to delay booking this tour. Our President's cruises are also popular and all the recent tours have been sold out far in advance (the 2019 cruise was full over 6 months before departure). Please book as early as possible.

**It is unlikely that we will be able to secure more staterooms after Avalon recalls our unsold rooms.**

As an additional incentive, Avalon is offering an early booker discount of \$900 each which is already deducted from your fare, but this will end on February 14, 2020 and fares will increase \$900 for bookings after that. Avalon is also offering a reduced single supplement on the first 8 staterooms booked.

**Documentation:** A valid passport is required with sufficient blank pages and must not expire until three months after return date. Visas are not currently required for any country we are visiting.

**Gratuities** for cruise staff and European guides and drivers are included. As well as hosting this cruise as Wells Gray's President, Roland Neave is your tour director and gratuities to him are respectfully declined.

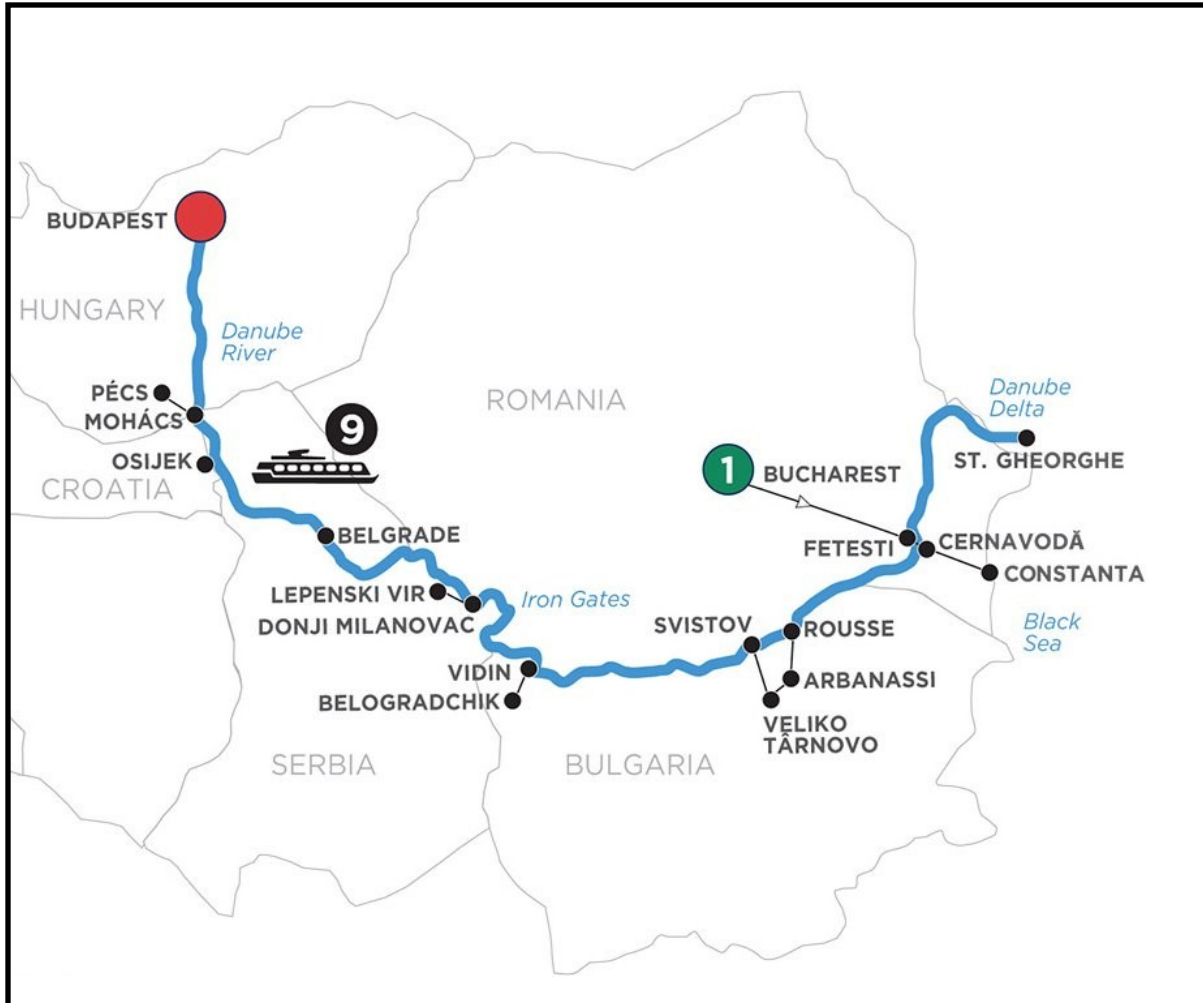
**Currency:** The Euro is accepted in all countries we visit, although some countries such as Romania and Hungary have their own currency as well. You should have Euros for smaller purchases and gratuities. You can order from your bank a few weeks prior. On board currency is the Euro. Purchases can be charged to your ship account and paid at the end of the cruise by credit card.

**Rooms for singles** are often a different style or smaller size than twin rooms in the hotels (not on the ship). Many hotels limit the number of single rooms allocated to a group. Avalon gives a discount on the single supplement and the number of singles is limited to 8 at the advertised price, then a few more singles are available for a surcharge of about \$3,000 to \$4,000 depending on cruise category. Please book early if you prefer to travel single.

**Triples** are not available on this tour.



**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. Choose shore excursions based on your ability. 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 at check-in if this could be an issue for you. The coaches cannot carry a scooter. 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. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.



## Tour Policies

**Payments:** A deposit of \$1,500 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due February 5, 2020. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to January 3, 2020, your tour payments will be refunded less a cancellation charge of \$300 per person. From January 4 to February 5, the cancellation charge is \$600 per person. From February 6 to March 5, the cancellation charge is 40% of the tour fare. From March 6 to April 3, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After April 3, there is no refund.

**Changes to tour:** As this tour has been planned nearly a year 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. For 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.

**E-points:** This tour earns 190 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 February 5, 2020.

**Consumer Protection BC Licences:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842