

SPECIAL EDITION

Europe's Christmas Markets

Prague, Vienna & Budapest Winter Wonderland

CLASSIC JOURNEYS
THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



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*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Shimmering Holiday Traditions

Celebrate the warmth, colorful tradition and shimmering sense of expectation that can only be found in Europe's most legendary Christmas markets. This remarkable trip takes you to the finest ones in Prague, Vienna and Budapest and, en route, it offers a lovely, more intimate contrast with smaller-town fairs in Cesky Krumlov and České Budějovice in the Czech Republic. You'll almost feel like you're time traveling as you explore cities that have remained remarkably unchanged over the centuries. And with your friendly local guides, you'll learn about the vivid history, experience rich cultural traditions, and get just the kind of advice you want if you're shopping the stalls or looking for the perfect wooden toys, Bohemian crystal or even fresh-baked holiday pastry. There's no more perfect way to capture the season's spirit.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ACTIVE HIKING & WALKING
- LOCAL WELL-CONNECTED GUIDES
- PREMIERE HOTELS
- FOODIE FOCUSED
- HANDCRAFTED TRIP DESIGN
- MORE IS INCLUDED

What's Included

- All breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 5 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

→ PRIVILEGED ACCESS EVENTS

One-of-a-kind access to remarkable people, places and activities arranged just for you.

→ WINE ON US

In many regions, we uncork wonderful local wines at every dinner, compliments of Classic Journeys.

→ INVISIBLE CHECK-IN

When your group arrives, we whisk you and your bags to your room immediately. No waiting – no tipping.

→ PERFECT PAIRINGS DINNERS

A special dinner prepared by one of our favorite chefs with a procession of wines tailored to each course.

Terrain

Easy to moderate, with van support.

CLASSIC JOURNEYS ITINERARIES MAY BE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT CHANGES, HOTEL SUBSTITUTIONS, AND OTHER MODIFICATIONS.

DAY 1 »

Prague

We meet in what may well be the most walkable city in Europe – not to mention the site of one of its most legendary holiday markets. Wenceslas Square – named for the good king of Christmas carol fame – is transformed in season with brightly decorated market stalls, the scent of grilled cinnamon pastries, the sounds of local choirs, and a huge tree that towers over it all. The merchants sell everything from wooden toys and Bohemian crystal to mulled wine. The locals shop for their Christmas feasts here, too, and you'll see roasted hams and barrels of fish. It's tradition to tuck a carp scale into your wallet to ensure a New Year full of prosperity.

Best of all the markets are right in the heart of this compact city, so it's easy to explore all that Prague has to offer as you stroll with your guide. Prague is your guide's hometown, and he loves to show it off. Your first visit is to the Royal Castle of Hradcany and St. Vitus Cathedral. Along the way, your guides share personal stories as you walk down into the winding alleys of the medieval Mala Strana district. You'll cross the famous Charles Bridge (popular with artists, musicians and vendors), culminating at the Old Town Square where there's a second, equally wonderful, market.

Dinner tonight includes some of the local seasonal specialties that appear on menus at this special time of year.

MEALS: D

OVERNIGHT: PRAGUE

DAY 2 »

Cesky Krumlov / Salzburg

Say "CHESS-key KROOM-loff" and you're close to passing your first test in the Czech language. In any language, this village is a remarkable place. Like Prague, it too is a UNESCO historic site, but of a different sort. The Vltava River snakes around the heart of the town. Over it all floats a magnificent castle that was the family seat of the Rozmberk family for over 300 years.

Today, you can choose your adventure. If that means all things Christmas, then spend your time exploring the markets. The Christmas market here is on a smaller, quieter scale for a real sense at how the lead-up to the holidays has always played in areas away from the big cities. Of course, you'll have plenty of time to browse the small stalls in the picturesque town square. Cafés hang out over the banks of the river.

If your adventurous side tends more to castles, then join your guide for an exploration of one of the town's special wonders: the massive castle that dates back to the 13th century. You'll explore the complex of courtyards, Renaissance and Baroque fortifications for a revealing look at how the Bohemian founder and later the Habsburg princes lived. Later in the middle afternoon, continue through the Czech countryside to the border with Austria, and end your day in Salzburg.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: SALZBURG

DAY 3 »

Salzburg

Salzburg is synonymous with The Sound of Music and Mozart. As you stroll the narrow streets with your guide, it's easy to imagine yourself in the movie as you walk past several of the iconic filming locations around town, including Mirabell Gardens, Hellbrunn Palace, Residenzplatz and Felsenreitschule. The most traditional chocolate treat in Salzburg is the aptly named Mozart balls (or Mozartkugel). Paul Fürst, a local confectioner, devised these chocolate-covered marzipan and nougat balls in 1890, and you'll find them for sale all over the city. As you walk around town, the Salzburg Fortress works as a kind of compass to keep your bearings. Located at the top of the Festungsberg, it's easy to spot, as it's one of the largest medieval castles in all of Europe. Access to the fortress is by way of walking up Festungsgasse. If you'd rather not make the ascent in the snow, no worries, the Fortress Funicular is a great alternative, with terrific views.

The lively Christmas market is held in the town square, ringed by stately Renaissance, Gothic and Baroque buildings. As you'll see, the crafts and food items have interesting regional differences from the other markets you've already visited. Buglers, pipers and folklore groups make the spirit especially bright. When you want a break from the winter chill in the air, go underground at Salzburg Cathedral, to explore the crypts beneath that date back as far as the 11th century. Inside you'll find an eerie art installation, a tiny chapel, and several historic tombs.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: SALZBURG

DAY 4 »

Vienna

Fuel up on muesli and yogurt...or go the sausage-and-cheese route for breakfast. This morning you'll travel through scenic farmland and densely wooded hills to magnificent Vienna where you arrive in time for lunch.

Vienna is a terrific city for walking as you'll discover as you strike out for a guided stroll. You'll walk on the Ring, the famed circular boulevard lined with monumental buildings that capture the glory of the Habsburg Empire. You'll explore the medieval lanes of the Inner City to Saint Stephen's Cathedral, Austria's pinnacle of Gothic architecture. Wander down The Graben, Vienna's famous street home to beautiful shops and cafes. Spend some time in a coffeehouse for lunch and live as the Viennese do. About 25 Christmas markets are underway in the city, so it's not unusual to bump into one of them around any corner. The splashiest is the Christkindlmarkt on Rathausplatz where the emphasis is on tradition. You won't find representations of modern-day Santa Claus here. The Christ Child is at the center of it all and, keeping to tradition, a young blonde woman always plays the role. You'll want to grab a packet of hot roasted chestnuts to nibble as you roam the aisles.

MEALS: B, L

OVERNIGHT: VIENNA

DAY 5 »

Vienna

There is no finer expression of the power and glory of Imperial Vienna than Schönbrunn Palace, and it is the spectacular centerpiece of a day full of memorable activities. Enjoy a privately guided tour of the 22-room apartments of Emperor Franz Joseph and his charming wife, Elisabeth, known as Sisi. It's truly one of the world's most remarkable residences, the ultimate expression of the Habsburgs who ruled a vast swath of Europe for six centuries.

The most romantic of all of the Viennese holiday markets happens right here in front of the palace. A giant Christmas tree is silhouetted against the baroque palace façade. Usually, there are 60 stalls or so and in keeping with the setting, the offerings are especially opulent.

Music has always been an essential element of Vienna's heritage, dating back to Mozart himself performing here. So, you'll want to join your guide this evening in the city center to attend a concert. The orchestra and ensemble will play the works of classical composers, and the performance also includes dance and vocal performances. This is a cultural experience you'll always remember.

MEALS: B,D

OVERNIGHT: VIENNA

DAY 6 »

Vienna To Budapest

At the end of this morning's drive, cross the Hungarian border and arrive in Budapest where you make the most of your time on a guided visit in the company of your new friend Zsofi. The colorful hills of Buda lie on one side of the Danube; the cosmopolitan streets of Pest crowd up against the other bank. Together, they offer wonderful sights from Europe's largest synagogue to Hero's Square, narrow cobbled streets to the Royal Palace atop Castle Hill.

Of course, you'll explore the Budapest Christmas fairs on Vörösmarty Square and at the Basilica. It's a fun final chance for some shopping. But if your luggage is already full, have no fear. One of the best treats at this market is chimney cake – dough wrapped around a pole, baked and then showered with sugar and cinnamon. After an expansive day of discovery, you may want to make a detour to the Gellért Hotel, the oldest spa hotel in Hungary. Tonight, enjoy a festive farewell dinner. Then, if you're up for a lively last night, venture over to Vörösmarty tér, the impressive square where street musicians rule and you can relax with an after-dinner coffee at a café.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: BUDAPEST

DAY 7 »

Budapest

On your own, you may want to get in some shopping or see the collection of Flemish and Dutch Old Masters at the Museum of Fine Arts as it opens after its renovation. When you're ready to head home, Budapest airport is less than 45 minutes from downtown.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



[Hotel Paris Prague](#)

A landmark Art Nouveau structure, this beautifully restored hotel is located in the heart of Prague's Old Town. From the generously proportioned rooms, guests are just steps away from the gothic Powder Tower and the premier arts and shopping district.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



[Hotel Imlauer and Brau](#)

Perfectly located in the center of Salzburg, this modern hotel offers comfortable rooms and warm hospitality. This family-operated property is eco-friendly a proud part of the Austrian Ecolabel for its sustainability.

NIGHTS: 2 nights



[The Harmonie Vienna](#)

The Harmonie Vienna boutique hotel is a hotel that marches to a different tune. At the heart of the hotel's design is a visionary art concept that combines dance and art in a unique way.

NIGHTS: 2 nights



[Aria Hotel Budapest](#)

The Aria Hotel is a captivating boutique hotel whose design was inspired by music. Located in the heart of Budapest, this luxurious property has modern amenities, a rooftop bar with city views, an upscale spa and an indoor courtyard with live piano music.

NIGHTS: 1 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

START LOCATION: **Lobby of Hotel Paris Prague**
START CITY: **Prague**
START TIME: **10:00 AM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Lobby of Hotel**
END CITY: **Budapest**
END TIME: **9:00 AM**