

DANUBE HOLIDAY MARKETS

8 Days | *Budapest to Passau*

★★★★★ 4.6/5 140 reviews



8 days



4 countries



UNESCO

Celebrate the season in the birthplace of many beloved holiday traditions.

Budapest has celebrated Christmas for a thousand years, since the reign of St. Stephen, the king who founded Hungary and encouraged the spread of Christianity throughout his realm. As you ramble through the Christmas Market on Vörösmarty Square, admiring the handmade porcelain, stop to watch as *kürtos kalács* (a pastry) is baked on rods over an open fire and then coated with sugar before it's handed to you.

In Bratislava, where a lively young art scene is revitalizing the compact city core, stalls abound with traditional Slovakian Christmas items such as *medovníky* (spiced ginger cookies) and *šúpolie* (figurines made from corn husks). Experience Uniworld's exclusive "Taste of Christmas" program in the heart of Vienna during the day.

Glorious baroque architecture, delightful concerts and ravishing scenery will make this Christmas season unforgettable as you sail through the holidays on the Danube.

Please note that most Christmas Markets in Europe end their season on the 23rd of December and will not be available after that date.

[BUDAPEST TO PASSAU](#)

Note: The itineraries presented are subject to modification due to water levels, closures because of public holidays or other uncontrollable factors. Every effort will be made to operate programs as planned, but changes may still be necessary throughout the cruise. This day-to-day schedule

is subject to change. Your final day-to-day schedule will be provided onboard on the first day of your cruise.

DAY 1 BUDAPEST (EMBARK)

Arrive at the Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport. If your cruise package includes a group arrival transfer, or if you have purchased a private arrival transfer, you will be greeted by a Uniworld representative and transferred to the ship.

Note: For Arrival, Departure and Transfer details, please visit [Uniworld.com/transfers](https://uniworld.com/transfers). For Port Location details, please visit [Uniworld.com/ports](https://uniworld.com/ports).



DAY 2 BUDAPEST

Located on opposite sides of the Danube, Buda and Pest each have their own distinctive character and allure. You'll get a taste of this dynamic capital city with your choice of tours, and visit Budapest's celebrated Christmas Market—one of the largest in Europe. Christmas has been celebrated in Budapest for a thousand years, since the time of St. Stephen, the king who founded the nation of Hungary and encouraged the spread of Christianity throughout his realm, but the city began as a Roman encampment almost a millennium before that. Over the centuries it was controlled by Germans, Austrians, Ottomans, and Communists, all of whom have left traces.

A special Captain's Welcome Reception and Dinner will be prepared for you this evening.

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Choose between...

BUDAPEST CITY TOUR WITH CHRISTMAS MARKET

A panoramic tour will carry you from Heroes' Square, created in 1896 to honor the thousand-year anniversary of Hungary's founding and its greatest historical figures, past some of the city's most striking architectural sights, and on to Vörösmarty Square. Here, you'll find Budapest's most celebrated Christmas Market, one of the largest in Eastern Europe. The enticing aromas of cinnamon, baking bread, and meats grilling over open fires drift among the 100 or so gaily decorated stalls.

Only the finest Hungarian craftspeople are invited to participate in this market, so you can be assured of finding unique and beautifully made gifts.

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BUDAPEST WALK WITH LOCAL TREATS AND CHRISTMAS MARKET

Meet your local guide outside the ship for a short walk to the metro station, where you'll hop on a train towards the Parliament Building, Budapest's most iconic architectural marvel. From there, you'll make your way to your first treat of the tour, a slice of strudel from a local bakery.


Marvel at St. Stephen Cathedral's intricate tile rooftops and walk down Fashion street to arrive at the Vorosmarty Square Christmas Market. Here, your guide will order you a hot drink to sip as you wander around the market on your own. We suggest checking out the enchanting gingerbread ornaments decorated with Hungarian folk motifs.

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Masterpiece Collection

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CAVE CHURCH WITH HOME HOSTED COFFEE AND CAKE

 Duration:
3.5 hours

 Activity Level:
Intermediate

 £69 pre-purchase
€69 EUR onboard

Start your Budapest immersion today with a walk towards Cave Church, popping by the Gellert Hotel on the way for a peek at the famous Gellert thermal baths. We'll climb a little slope together to reach Cave Church, run by Hungary's only monastic order, the Pauline Monks. Carved into Gellert Hill, Cave Church was forced to close during the communist era. In fact, a 2-meter thick wall was built to block off the entrance. After your visit to Cave Church, we'll drive to a flat in town owned by a local resident who will welcome you into their home for a slice of cake, coffee or tea.

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DAY 3 CRUISING THE DANUBE RIVER, BRATISLAVA

Once hidden from the world behind the "Iron Curtain," Slovakia retains an air of mystery and intrigue, and its small capital city has an unexpectedly colorful history. You'll learn more about Bratislava's past from a local expert and also visit the local Christmas Market—a relatively new (and thoroughly delightful) tradition for Slovaks. How do you say "Merry Christmas" in Slovak? "Veselé Vianoce!" The heart and soul of Slovakia, Bratislava is full of surprises. The city straddles the mighty Danube and has played a leading role in the politics and culture of the region for many centuries. Unlike cities with venerable Christmas Markets, Bratislava just established its first holiday market in 1993. But the Slovaks have quickly embraced the seasonal traditions of their Austrian and Hungarian neighbors—and you'll get to embrace them as well.

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Featured Excursion

BRATISLAVA WALKING TOUR WITH CHRISTMAS MARKET

St. Martin's Cathedral gives you a hint of the surprising history of this surprising city. The Gothic church was built into the medieval city's fortifications, and 19 Habsburg rulers were crowned inside it, including Empress Maria Theresa. Close to the cathedral you'll find St. Michael's Gate, the last remaining portal in the medieval wall—and your entryway to Bratislava's Old Town, which blends Gothic, baroque, and art deco structures with some less graceful reminders of the Communist era. The stately 18th-century Primatial Palace, in the center of Old Town, was the site where the Pressburg peace treaty was signed in 1805. Another 18th-century palace, Grassalkovich, is now the president of Slovakia's official residence. Your tour ends in the heart of Old Town, where the Christmas Market is in full swing. Vendors at this charming market specialize in small handcrafted items, such as figurines made from corn husks, bells, lace, wire jewelry, and pottery from specific regions of Slovakia. Try a mug of a local honey wine, which is served hot; as you browse through the offerings and listen to schoolchildren sing Christmas carols.

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DAY 4 VIENNA

Renowned for its art and architecture, its classical music, its decadent pastries, and its lengthy list of famous former residents, the refined city of Vienna is a cultural treasure trove. Experience the city with your choice of tours, as well as something extra special—VIP access to an extraordinary collection of art.

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Featured Excursions

“MORNING WITH THE MASTERS” AT THE VIENNA ART HISTORY MUSEUM & CHRISTMAS MARKETS

The Vienna Art History Museum (Kunsthistorisches Museum) is home to an astonishing collection of artistic treasures. Its doors open early especially for you as you join an art historian for a tour of some of the masterpieces gathered here: View a unique group of works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Vermeer's *Allegory of Painting*, Raphael's *Madonna in the Meadow*, and portraits by Rembrandt, Velazquez, Rubens, Titian, Tintoretto, and Van Eyck, among others, in the Picture Gallery before moving on to the Kunstammer galleries, where you can see Benvenuto Cellini's legendary salt cellar (the only gold sculpture he created that has survived to the present day) and hear its remarkable story. You'll also have time to explore on your own and to visit the Christmas market.

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“TASTE OF CHRISTMAS” VIENNA WALKING TOUR

Vienna is a delicious experience for visitors (and for locals too, of course) at any time of the year, but it's especially inviting during the winter holidays. Join an exclusive excursion that combines delectable treats of the season with a look at some of the highlights in the Innere


Stadt—the historic city core. This district offers a stunning array of Vienna's gems in just a few blocks.

Stroll with your local guide down elegant shopping streets, including the Graben and Kohlmarkt (don't miss the dazzling display of holiday confectionary art in the windows of Café Demel, which once supplied Empress Sissi with candied violets), step into a newly restored 15th-century courtyard house, see where Mozart once lived (though he moved often as his finances changed), peek into some of the Hofburg's courtyards and churches, and discover as you go along the luscious flavors of Vienna's favorite holiday sweets and savories, some of which will be available for you to sample. Vienna also cherishes its New Year's traditions, so you'll find market stalls offering the good-luck charms Viennese people exchange on New Year's Eve: You may spot marzipan pigs, chocolate chimney sweeps, plush mushrooms, tiny metal ladybugs, even lucky pennies—they all symbolize prosperity and good fortune for the coming year. Pick up some good luck and a mug of mulled wine and roam on your own through this short-lived market before returning to the ship.

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SCHÖNBRUNN PALACE WITH CHRISTMAS MARKET

 Duration:
3.5 hours

 Activity Level:
Intermediate

 £69 pre-purchase
€69 EUR onboard

Perhaps the apex of baroque design in Vienna, Schönbrunn was Empress Maria Theresa's favorite palace, and, beginning in 1740, she made it the social and political center of her empire. Your visit will concentrate on the rooms occupied by Emperor Franz Joseph and his empress, Elisabeth (known as Sissi). Franz Joseph restored the state rooms to their rococo splendor, but his private rooms reflect his rather severe nature, making for an illuminating contrast. You will also have some time to explore the charming Christmas Market set up right in front of the Schönbrunn, which is spectacularly illuminated for the season.

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DAY 5 KREMS, MELK

Enjoy a handful of delightful excursions that inspire the holiday spirit in this beautiful millennium-old town and surrounding valley—both of which have been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

You'll want to find a comfortable seat in the lounge or on the Sun Deck today as your ship cruises through the Wachau Valley. Over the eons, the Danube cut a gorge through the foothills of the Bohemian Mountains, resulting in a 19-mile (30-kilometer) stretch of riverine scenery so beautiful; UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Landscape. Castle ruins dominate hilltops; baroque church towers appear on the riverbanks, marking historic villages and splendid abbeys;

and vineyards and apricot orchards cling to the rocky slopes. Some of Austria's finest white wines are produced from grapes grown on the dry-stone terraces above the river, where grapes were first planted 2,000 years ago.



Featured Excursion

MELK VILLAGE STROLL

Choose between...

DÜRNSTEIN VILLAGE STROLL WITH SPICED WINE TASTING AND ORGAN CONCERT IN A MONASTERY

Considering its diminutive size, the village of Dürnstein offers much to explore. The famous blue baroque tower of the abbey church is doubtless its best-known landmark, but the ruined castle above the town provides its most romantic tale. There Richard the Lionheart was imprisoned until he was found by his faithful bard, Blondel, and ransom could be raised—or so the legend goes. Walk with the Cruise Manager through the Kremser Gate, which dates to the 15th century, and past 16th-, 17th-, and 18th-century houses; it's an up-close look at over 300 years of local architectural styles. The inhabitants of this region have grown apricots and grapes for many centuries, and they have happily turned both into delectable beverages through the years. Taste a local spin on mulled wine—spiced with Wachau Valley saffron—after your walk, then sit back and enjoy an organ concert inside a rococo Augustine monastery.



KREMS TOWN VISIT

Stroll around charming Krems as it takes on the most festive of forms. A local expert will take you on a tour of the town, including a visit to the Christkindlmarkt featuring local crafts. During this time of year, baroque and medieval houses are stunning backdrops for alleys and streets lined with stalls for the market and storefronts adorned with holiday décor. Spend your free time this morning wandering along Museum Mile, perhaps stopping in one of the many fascinating museums for a tour, such as the Gozzoburg. This 13th century merchant mansion is a testimony to Krems as a trade center and features wonderfully preserved fresco paintings, including the largest preserved medieval fresco and graffito paintings north of the Alps. Or, opt for grabbing a bite to eat and something to drink at a cozy bar or café in the Krems Stein, a lively student town. Then, peruse the local shops for a souvenir to commemorate your time in Krems before heading back to the ship.

DAY 6 LINZ (SALZBURG)

Your ship docks at Linz, a modern yet historic city that extends across the shimmering waters of the Danube. From there, you'll head to Mozart's birthplace of Salzburg, which is nestled in a glorious alpine setting that sparkles like a winter wonderland this time of year. Fans of "The Sound of Music" may recognize locations from the Oscar-winning film in the city's Old Town, the site of the grand cathedral and absolutely enchanting Christmas Market.

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Choose between...

FULL-DAY SALZBURG WALKING TOUR WITH CHRISTMAS MARKET

Salzburg's musical heritage is apparent everywhere in its UNESCO-designated Old Town. The birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Salzburg celebrates its most famous son in many forms—with statues, with chocolates, with concerts—but there are other musical associations to discover too. Walk with your guide through the Mirabell Garden, the beautiful formal gardens where Maria sang "Do-Re-Mi" with her young charges in the movie *The Sound of Music*, and through the heart of the Old Town, which lies on both sides of the river. Because Salzburg belonged to the archbishops, the splendid cathedral has been the focal point of the city for nearly 600 years. The archbishop's magnificent residence faces the square now named for Mozart, and the house where Mozart was born is nearby. (Mozart worked for the archbishop of his day—whom he despised—before he moved to Vienna.)

After your walking tour, you have some leisure time to explore the enchanting Christmas Market located in the square in front of the cathedral. Here you'll find everything from Austrian lace to cinnamon-marbled cakes. Shop, nibble, browse, and sing along with the carolers as you celebrate the holidays in this magical part of the world. Your guide can also suggest some great restaurants in the area: Café Tomaselli has hosted musical notables, from Mozart to Max Reinhardt, since 1705.

Note: Today's lunch will be on your own.

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LINZ TOWN & COUNTRY: CIDER FARM VISIT AND CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Enjoy a stroll through the city's Old Town and marvel at the sights, including Old Market Square, the Plague Column, and the historic Landhaus—a lightly-colored, Renaissance-style government building. The former monastery was transformed into a meeting place for Austrian politicians, but still holds on to its 16th century roots. Embark on a short ride to the Austrian countryside to an authentic family-owned-and-operated "Mostheuriger" farm. Upon arrival, you'll be welcomed by the owner and the farm's many critters. They'll tell you the story of their family, farm, and products, and you'll indulge in a tasting of the region's most popular drink, cider, and "Brettjause," a spread of local delicacies. Then, you'll enjoy a scenic ride through the countryside en route back to the ship.

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DAY 7 PASSAU

Passau is a crossroads in more ways than one—three rivers meet here and three nations nearly do, making for a fascinating cultural mosaic. Get to know the town with a guided stroll, then visit the local Christmas Market on the square in front of the cathedral. You'll find a lot to enjoy here

—from miniature houses and blown-glass ornaments to spun-sugar confections—in more than 70 stalls.

A special Captain's Farewell Reception and Dinner will be prepared for you this evening.

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Featured Excursion

PASSAU WALKING TOUR WITH CHRISTMAS MARKET

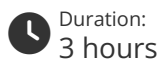
Join your local expert for a walk through picturesque lanes in the heart of Passau, stopping at the Town Hall to see its magnificent atrium, which boasts several massive works by the famous German painter Ferdinand Wagner, and pausing to admire the beautiful rococo stairway of the bishop's New Residence. After much of the town burned to the ground in 1662 and again in 1680, the reconstruction involved many Italian artists, who gave Passau the baroque and rococo touches you see everywhere. Monumental St. Stephan's Cathedral, built in glorious baroque style, forms the backdrop for the Passau Christmas Market. You'll find a lot to enjoy here—from miniature Bavarian houses and blown-glass ornaments to spun-sugar confections—in more than 70 stalls. At times, the Passau Christmas Market also features demonstrations by local craftspeople, such as glassblowers, candle makers, wood carvers, and confectioners, so you can buy your gifts directly from the people who made them.

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BAVARIAN WINTER WALK



Duration:
3 hours



Activity Level:
Intermediate



£69 pre-purchase
€69 EUR onboard

You'll want to wear sturdy hiking boots for this surprising holiday excursion; and be sure to dress warmly too: while there's no guarantee it will snow, it will definitely be seasonably chilly. Flickering torches light your path along the banks of the Ilz River and in the distance, over the sounds of the rushing water, you'll hear Christmas carolers singing. That's just one of the fun seasonal activities you'll encounter along the way: you'll also warm up with mulled wine as you listen to the singers, roast 'smores over a fire, and hear to a lively mini concert of Bavarian tunes.

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DAY 8 PASSAU (DISEMBARK)

Disembark the ship in Passau. If your cruise package includes a group departure transfer, or if you have purchased a private departure transfer, you will be transferred to Munich Airport for your flight home.



WHAT'S INCLUDED



DINING

All meals onboard, prepared using the finest and freshest ingredients

7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 7 dinners

Captain's Welcome and Farewell Receptions

Welcome and Farewell Gala Dinners

Unlimited beverages onboard, including fine wine, beer, spirits, specialty coffee and tea, soft drinks and mineral water



EXCURSIONS

6 days of excursions, including "Choice Is Yours" options, all fully hosted by English-speaking local experts

Guided "Taste of Christmas" program

State-of-the-art Quietvox portable audio-headset system on all excursions

Use of Nordic walking sticks



ACCOMMODATIONS

7-night cruise in a riverview stateroom on the stately *S.S. Maria Theresa*

Lavishly appointed riverview staterooms and suites have handcrafted Savoir® Beds of England, high thread count 100% Egyptian cotton sheets and European duvets, and a menu of pillow options

Free Internet and Wi-Fi access



EXPERIENCES

4 countries: Austria, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia

4 UNESCO World Heritage sites

Services of an experienced Uniworld Cruise Manager

Group Transfers are included on arrival and departure days (please see terms and conditions for transfer guidelines)

Gratuities for onboard personnel (ship staff, crew, Cruise/Tour Manager) are included during the cruise/tour

Captivating onboard local entertainment