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INSIDER

CZECH REPUBLIC & AUSTRIA

Old World Charms and the Danube River

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6 DAYS, 5 NIGHTS

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Get ready to leap into the pages of the Czech Republic and Austria for a storybook adventure. Our unique Insider journey begins in magical Prague, whose spires, turrets and onion-shaped domes top the list of surprising pleasures. Travel through the stunning Bohemian landscape, from peaceful countryside and the authentic Czech city of Tabor to perfectly restored Český Krumlov. Discover the terraced vineyards of Wachau, Austria's premiere wine region, and the historical and architectural gold along the Danube River, including Melk Abbey and Dürnstein Castle. Our regional experts and guides, all longtime friends of Backroads, help uncover the history and culture of these two intriguing countries, highlighted by World Heritage sites and subtle treasures.

Day 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads T-shirts) at 9 a.m. at the Grand Hotel Bohemia in Prague. The hotel is located at Kralodvorska 4, in the city center. **Please arrive wearing shoes comfortable for walking.** See "Arriving & Departing" for additional logistics information.

Shuttle to Kutná Hora 1 Hour, 45 Minutes

Visit to Sedlec-Kostnice Ossuary 1½ Hours

Free Time in Kutná Hora 1 Hour

Shuttle to Tabor 2½ Hours

Welcome to the Czech Republic! Of all major European capitals, only Prague was largely untouched by both World Wars, and so the city's wealth of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque buildings remains incredibly intact. With its graceful spires, spacious plazas, magnificent cathedrals and charming houses, the city shines as a living architectural museum. The heart of Prague is Old Town Square (Staromestske Namesti), a dazzling space in the middle of the medieval quarter. During the 15th century, this area was the focal point of conflict between the Hussites and the Catholics, and it was here that Czech national hero Jan Hus was burned at the stake. (Followers of Hus founded the town of Tabor, where we stay tonight.) Although the square's physical appearance has changed little over the centuries, its festive ambience is decidedly contemporary, thanks to cheery open-air cafés—each replete with a klatch of cappuccino-swilling hipsters—thronging of wide-eyed tourists, and a lively array of vendors and artists. While our trip doesn't explore this gem of a city, we highly recommend that you do before or afterward.

After meeting, we shuttle by private coach from Prague through the Czech countryside to Sedlec, a suburb just outside the World Heritage town of Kutná Hora. We tour the Sedlec-Kostnice Ossuary (bone house), a small Roman Catholic chapel that houses a fascinating, albeit macabre, artistic display of over 40,000 human bones. Located beneath the Cemetery Church of All Saints, the chapel was created in the early 1500s to hold the remains from graves that had been abolished in order to make room for new residents. In 1870, wood carver František Rint was employed to arrange the bones into the works of art you see today—make sure to check out the Chandelier and the Femur Stack. Afterward, it's a 5-minute shuttle to

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Our Accommodations: CASUAL INNS

HOTEL NAUTILUS

(1 night) Located in the center of town, this artful hotel resides in a recently restored historic building and features a unique design style combining elements of Art Deco and Art Nouveau with ancient rock and fossils.

Tabor, Czech Republic
phone: 420-380-900-900
www.hotelnautilus.cz

HOTEL ZLATY ANDEL

(2 nights) Three Gothic-style buildings compose this spacious hotel set on the town's historic main square. Stylish rooms with all the amenities and three restaurants make this one of the most appealing locations on the square.

Ceský Krumlov, Czech Republic
phone: 420-380-712-310
www.hotelzlatyandel.cz

ROMANTIK HOTEL RICHARD LÖWENHERZ

(2 nights) Offering fabulous views of the Danube, this former convent is surrounded by the remains of the medieval city wall.

Dürnstein, Austria
phone: 43-(0)27-11-222
www.richardloewenherz.at

**EACH YEAR,
3 OUT OF 4 OF OUR
GUESTS HAVE
PREVIOUSLY
TRAVELED WITH US OR
BEEN REFERRED BY
SOMEONE WHO HAS**

Kutná Hora's city center for lunch at a local restaurant, followed by a stroll through its cobblestone streets and among whimsical spires. This picturesque medieval town once challenged Prague in importance and wealth, owing to the silver mining industry that reached its apex in the 14th and 15th centuries. One of Kutná Hora's crowning glories, and a rival to Prague's St. Vitus Cathedral, is the exquisite Santa Barbara Cathedral, built in Gothic style with pinnacles, finials and flying buttresses supporting a roof of three tent-like towers and needle-sharp spires of varying heights. You'll have time to admire the exterior and interior of this famous church, as well as other notable architectural structures, before we depart for Tabor and Hotel Nautilus, our home for tonight.

Located on Tabor's main square, Hotel Nautilus is setting new standards for accommodations in Bohemia. The décor is a refreshing blend of England and Bohemia, contemporary design and restored furnishings. Each room features distinctive touches, such as a unique rock or fossil, inspired by the owners' geology backgrounds. After arriving we have dinner at the hotel's Restaurant Goldie to celebrate the beginning of our journey. *Lodging: Hotel Nautilus*

Day 2

Explore the Tunnels of Tabor 1 Hour

Shuttle to Český Krumlov 2 Hours

Cultural & Historical Q&A by Dr. Helena Nechlebova 45 Minutes

After breakfast this morning, we explore Tabor's Old Town, located on a hilltop that offers wonderful views of the surrounding countryside. Tabor was originally founded by Hussites in 1420 as a utopian community, and on its surface it's a charming town filled with cobblestone streets, quaint houses and shops. But its most intriguing feature lies below the winding roads: a system of tunnels and cellars originally built to store goods. As time went on, Tabor's citizens linked the cellars via a network of tunnels, which provided a means of escape from the city when a threat loomed.

After emerging from underground, we shuttle to Český Krumlov, whose medieval center is a labyrinth of cobblestone streets, Baroque and Renaissance houses, shops, cafés and hidden squares. The entire town is a World Heritage site, with 82 percent of its buildings registered as cultural monuments. You'll immediately notice Krumlov Hrad, the second-largest castle in the Czech Republic, whose ornately painted tower points skyward like a pastel-colored rocket. The castle complex is a World Heritage site and its incredible Baroque gardens are some of the largest in Central Europe. After you enjoy lunch on your own, you have time for some independent exploration before we meet up with native Czech historian Dr. Helena Nechlebova, who presents an informal Q&A on her country's history and culture at our hotel, the Zlaty Anhel.

Tonight's dinner at U Dubroka is a Backroads favorite, not only because the food is delicious and the atmosphere festive—the warm hospitality of owners Alois and Judita is what really makes this a special experience. Bring a sweater because it tends to get a little chilly in the restaurant, or perhaps a dose of local spirits will do the trick, which Alois always has at the ready. During dinner we're treated to a folk music and general merriment by the band Jozan Dvorak a kdo ma cas, which translates to "Jozan Dvorak & whoever has time." Singing and dancing is highly encouraged! *Lodging: Hotel Zlaty Anhel*



Top Reasons Why
you should take this trip

Traveling with Backroads is about getting inside and making connections: with places and people, history and culture, fellow travelers—perhaps you'll even discover something new about yourself.

You don't have to sweat the details! Backroads takes care of everything—from making sure your luggage is waiting for you in your room to appearing with a cool drink when you need it most—allowing you to enjoy a carefree vacation full of discovery, fun and relaxation.

Our Trip Leaders have undergone hundreds of hours of training and are the best in the industry.

**WHEN YOU SIGN UP
FOR A TRIP, YOU'LL
RECEIVE A
COMPREHENSIVE
TRAVEL PLANNER
WITH ALL THE
INFORMATION YOU
NEED TO PLAN
AND PREPARE**

Day 3

Optional Maiden's Stone Hike 1.9 Miles

Lunch in Kremze with Milos & Alena

Carp Fishing with Milos & Family 45 Minutes

Free Time in Cesky Krumlov 3–5 Hours

Today's outing takes us away from the busy city center and off the beaten path on an optional countryside hike. After taking the train to Trisov, walk along a gravel dirt road through pastoral land to the ruins of the Gothic castle Divci Kamen (Maiden's Stone), which lie on a rock spit above the confluence of the Křemežský Potok (Křemže Stream) and the Vltava River. Divci Kamen is one of the few Bohemian castles whose foundation documents have survived through the centuries. Permission for construction was granted to the Rožmberks in 1349 and took 10 years to complete. The last of the Rožmberks abandoned the castle at the beginning of the 16th century and it soon fell into disrepair.

As lunchtime approaches, we take a short shuttle ride to Křemže and the home of our friends Milos and Alena. Milos created a popular local hangout in his homey restaurant—though that was never his intention when he moved here from Prague over 15 years ago. He provides us with a special opportunity to learn the local lore and savor traditional homemade cooking. After saying goodbye, we return to Český Krumlov, where the rest of the afternoon is yours explore the fairy-tale city. Linger into the evening and enjoy dinner on your own at one of the many restaurants or cafés, and take a stroll through the dimly lit streets of historic Old Town, serenaded by the sound of music from nearby pubs. *Lodging: Hotel Zlaty Andel*

Day 4

Shuttle to Austria 2½ Hours

Melk Abbey Visit 1 Hour

Boat Cruise to Dürnstein 1½ Hours

Schnapps Demo & Tasting 1 Hour

Dance Performance at Hotel Richard Löwenherz

En route to Austria this morning, the mountainous scenery is beautiful, especially the Waldviertel ("Forest Quarter"), the breadbasket of the region. The Waldviertel is bordered on the south by the Danube River, which winds through the castle-dotted landscape. As we near Melk, you'll see the abbey, which served as inspiration for Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, towering on a bluff above the river. In the 10th century, Emperor Leopold gave the castle to the Benedictine monks, who converted it into a fortified abbey. It is one of the most magnificent Baroque buildings in the world and serves as a cultural, spiritual and intellectual center for the region. Today it also houses a secondary school for over 900 girls and boys. Eat lunch on your own on the abbey's grounds before we meet up for a tour.

This afternoon, we continue our journey by boat to Dürnstein, a charming town where we stay for the next two nights at Romantik Hotel Richard Löwenherz, a former monastery. Now a unique and elegant hotel, it features a *klostergarten* (monastery garden) that is partially enclosed by the original city walls.

This evening includes a schnapps demo and tasting, followed by a feast of Austrian delicacies at the hotel's restaurant. A group of Schuhplattler dancers provide dinner entertainment. This lively folk dance of Bavaria and Austria was traditionally performed as a display of courtship and dates back to the mid-19th century. *Lodging: Romantik Hotel Richard Löwenherz*



Note

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

Day 5

Free Time in Dürnstein 2 Hours

Optional Dürnstein Ruins Walk 1.5 Miles

Picnic Lunch at Heuriger Hartl

Tour & Tasting at Freie Weingartner Wachau 1 Hour

Our last full day in Austria allows time for leisurely exploration of Dürnstein on your own. Stroll the narrow cobbled street, past pastel-colored buildings dating back to the 16th century, their wrought-iron signs and wooden doors left intact. Take the opportunity to shop for souvenirs and enjoy a wine tasting in the courtyard garden of a local bar. You can also go on the short optional hike to the impressive castle ruins above Dürnstein, where Richard the Lionheart was imprisoned in 1192 after being captured while fleeing to England after a battle.

We stop midday at an Austrian *heuriger* (tavern), perched high above the vineyards overlooking the River Kamp, for a hearty Backroads picnic accompanied by some of the tavern's house-made wine—a fine example of the wines produced in this region. After lunch, you can return to the hotel and relax by the pool or amid the convent gardens.

This evening we take a short walk from the hotel to Freie Weingartner Wachau (Free Winegrowers of the Wachau), one of Austria's showcase wineries, where we're treated to a private tour and tasting of three classic regional wines. Back at the hotel, we enjoy the sumptuous farewell dinner. *Lodging: Romantik Hotel Richard Löwenherz*

Day 6

Shuttle to Vienna 1½ Hours

This morning, sleep in and enjoy an unhurried breakfast at the hotel. Or you may want to take one last stroll around the village. Our trip ends with a shuttle to Vienna. Please see "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics.

Arriving & Departing

Please note that meeting and departing times provided here were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change. PLEASE DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON YOUR VACATION AND HAVE VERIFIED THE DETAILS OF ARRIVING & DEPARTING WITH YOUR TRIP CONSULTANT.

MEETING TIME & LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders at **9 a.m.** at the **Grand Hotel Bohemia in Prague**. The hotel is located at Kralodvorska 4 in the city center, approximately half a mile from the main train station (Hlavni nadrazi) and not far from Staromestske namesti, or Old Town Square. (See "Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip for more information on this hotel.) **Please arrive dressed in comfortable walking clothes and shoes.**

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day of the trip, a private coach takes you from Dürnstein to **Westbahnhof** (the western train station in Vienna), arriving around 12:30 p.m. From here you can take a 35-minute trip by shuttle bus, taxi or train to Vienna's International airport (airport code: VIE; www.viennaairport.com), take a taxi to the city center or catch a train to another European destination.

**ASK FOR REFERENCES
FROM PAST GUESTS
WHO HAVE TAKEN THE
TRIP THAT INTERESTS
YOU**

If you're continuing on by train, please note that Vienna has two main international train stations (listed below) and three additional domestic stations that have a few international departures. **Westbahnhof** services mainly: Amsterdam, Berlin, Bregenz, Hamburg, Innsbruck, Munich, Paris, Salzburg, and Zurich. **Sudbahnhof** services mainly: Budapest, Graz, Krakow, **Prague**, Rome, and Venice. Make sure you know your departure station—it may be necessary to take a taxi from Westbahnhof to a different station.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

This trip begins in Prague, Czech Republic and ends in Vienna, Austria. We suggest that you fly into Prague's Ruzyne Airport (airport code: PRG; www.prg.aero). You can return to Prague by train at the end of the trip, or book your return flight out of the Vienna International Airport (VIE: www.viennaairport.com).

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent, please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

GROUND TRANSPORTATION FROM RUZYNE AIRPORT TO CENTRAL PRAGUE

Taxis are a convenient way to get from the airport to central Prague, and there are plenty of cars waiting outside the arrivals terminal. The trip takes 20–30 minutes and costs \$25–\$30, depending on the city zone. If you are returning to the airport from central Prague at the end of the trip, you can usually have someone from your hotel arrange for taxi service.

Important: Prague is swarming with taxi drivers who make a habit of taking advantage of unsuspecting tourists. To minimize the chance of getting cheated, ask the driver beforehand how much the fare will be. At the airport and train station, only use the taxis that are parked along the curb at the official taxi station. Avoid taxi stands near Wenceslas Square and other touristy spots. Fares significantly increase after 10 p.m.

The Cedaz minibus shuttle runs every 30 minutes from the airport to central Prague, from 6–9 p.m. The standard drop-off location is near Old Town Square at Namesti Republiky, and from here it's about a 5-minute walk to the Grand Hotel Bohemia (where we meet on Day 1). Prices are negotiable for door-to-door service. For more information, please contact Cedaz Ltd. at 420-220-114-296, or visit their Web site at www.cedaz.cz.

Where to Stay Before & After Your Trip

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents charge a fee for their consulting services.)

Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels that we visit on this trip; see the sidebar above for details.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide in the sidebar for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the chart reflects the Internet and/or Best Available rates, which were accurate at the time of printing, but hotel rates are always subject to change.

Hotel Room Rate Guide	
(U.S. dollars per night)	
Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

PRAGUE

Grand Hotel Bohemia (Our Meeting Location on Day I)

A beautifully refurbished Art Nouveau town palace conveniently located in the heart of Prague, within walking distance of the Powder Tower, Wenceslas Square and the Old Town Hall. The Grand Hotel Bohemia combines modern amenities with the charm and flair of old Prague. Three rooftop suites provide magnificent views over the Golden City. Kralodvorska 4; Phone: 420-234-608-III; www.grandhotelbohemia.cz; 78 rooms and suites. Rates: ◆◆◆

U Krále Karla

Perched on a hill with proximity to Prague Castle, this intimate picturesque hotel blends modern luxury with a historic past. Once held by the Benedictine Order, it resembles a nobleman's home with its hand-painted vaulted ceilings, stained-glass windows, Baroque accents and antique furnishings. Nerudova-Uvoz 4; Phone: 420-257-531-2II; www.romantichotels.cz; 19 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

Hotel Josef

Located near the old Jewish Quarter (within walking distance of the Old Town Square and Charles Bridge), Hotel Josef's two buildings—Pink and Orange Houses—are designed around a peaceful landscaped courtyard. British-based architect Eva Jiricna brings a dramatic and contemporary effect to every room with her use of glass walls, tables and chairs, all bathed in light from modern fixtures. Rybna 20; Phone: 420-221-700-III; www.hoteljosef.com; 110 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

Hotel Intercontinental Praha

Catering to business travelers, this recently renovated modern hotel appears devoid of charm on the outside, but once inside, your impression will change. As one of the "most efficient hotels in the Czech capital," it provides every feature an international traveler would need, including a helpful English-speaking staff and tastefully decorated rooms with all the amenities, a fish-shaped indoor pool, Jacuzzi and three restaurants, including the romantic Zlata Prava, located on the rooftop with views of the city. Namesti Curieovych 43/5; Phone: 420-296-631-III; www.icprague.com; 372 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

Hotel Adria

Hotel Adria is ideally located in a 14th-century building on Wenceslas Square, near the Franciscan Garden. Guest rooms are modern and equipped with satellite TV and High Speed Internet. Be sure to peek inside the hotel's Triton Restaurant, which features an unusual "stalactite cave-style" interior designed in 1912. Vaclavske namesti 26; Phone: 420-221-081-III; www.hoteladria.cz; 89 rooms and suites. Rates: ◆◆◆

Hotel Jalta

Situated right on Wenceslas Square, this boutique hotel features attractive airy guest rooms stylishly decorated in contemporary colors and rich fabrics (some rooms have terraces), a restaurant and café-bar. Vaclavske namesti 45; Phone: 420-222-822-III; www.jalta.cz; 94 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

Four Seasons Hotel Prague

The elegant Four Season Hotel Prague has a prime location on the banks of the Vltava River. Luxurious rooms and impeccable service have earned it a spot on *Travel+Leisure's* World's Best list and *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List. Guest rooms, residing in three historic buildings are among the city's largest. The hotel offers in-room massages and spa services at its health club facility, and its restaurant Allegro, serving Italian and Czech dishes, has been named the best in the Czech Republic by the *Zagat Survey*. Veleoslavínova 2a/1098, Praha I; Phone: 221-427-000; www.fourseasons.com; 141 rooms and 20 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

VIENNA

Hotel Zur Wiener Staatsoper

Located near Kärntnerstrasse, this family-run hotel provides an old-fashioned atmosphere in the heart of Vienna. Its elaborate Baroque façade faces onto a quiet pedestrian street. Guest rooms are simple yet comfortable, and all feature private bathrooms. Krugerstrasse 11; Phone: 43-(0)1-513-1274; www.zurwienerstaatsoper.at; 22 rooms. Rates: ♦♦

König Von Ungarn

The enchanting König von Ungarn, occupying a building that dates back to the 17th century, is located in the center of Vienna, just steps from St. Stephen's Cathedral. Its cheery yellow exterior is complemented by its refined and intimate interior with crystal chandeliers, arched ceilings and lace-curtained windows. Worth noting is the fact that the hotel hosted Mozart while he composed *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Schulerstrasse 10; Phone: 43-(0)1-515-840; www.kvu.at; 33 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

Hotel Imperial

Featured on *Condé Nast Traveler's* and Andrew Harper's lists of top hotels, Hotel Imperial is one of Vienna's most luxurious treasures. It's earned accolades for its refined elegance, exceedingly efficient staff, palatial and meticulously adorned rooms and its prime location in the heart of Vienna. Be sure to enjoy coffee at the hotel's Café Imperial, a famed Viennese coffee house. Kaerntner Ring 16; Phone: 43-(0)1-501-100; www.luxurycollection.com; 138 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

SALZBURG

Hotel Sacher Salzburg (Osterreichischer Hof)

A member of Leading Hotels of the World and a pick on *Travel+Leisure's* World's Best list and *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List, this 19th-century grand dame sits proudly on the prestigious Salzach promenade, on the shore of the Salzach River, and offers an impressive view of the Old Town and Hohensalzburg fortress. Guest rooms are elegantly furnished; some have balconies. If you crave Austrian sweets, you'll enjoy visiting the Sacher Confectionary Shop, which is located on the premises. Schwarzstrasse 5-7; Phone: 43-(0)662-889-770; salzburg.sacher.com; 115 rooms and 3 suites. Rates: ♦♦♦

Hotel Wolf

This small inviting hotel is ideally located just off the Mozartplatz (a pedestrian zone). The same family has run the 500-year-old house since 1900. Each of the bedrooms varies in décor, yet all maintain a similar ambience, with fresh white walls and colorful rag rugs on wooden floors. Kaigasse 7; Phone: 43-(0)662-8434-530; www.hotelwolf.com; 15 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

Romantik Hotel Gmachel

Built in 1334, this charming family-run hotel has been in the Gmachel family for 23 generations, making it the oldest family business in Austria. Full of character, partially derived from its former life as a tavern for a Benedictine monastery, the inn offers a homey inviting atmosphere. There is an adjacent farm and a sausage shop, in addition to an on-site restaurant serving traditional Austrian fare al fresco, and a swimming pool to invigorate you after a long day of exploring. Located just 5 miles from central Salzburg. Dorfstrasse 14, Elixhausen; Phone: 43-(0)662-480-212-0; www.gmachel.com; 55 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

Hotel Altstadt Radisson SAS

This luxuriously converted Altstadt inn dates to 1377 and is comprised of three historic houses perched on the River Salzach. It features a finely decorated interior, outstanding service and a beautiful, glass-domed courtyard. To make the most of your stay, request a corner room with a balcony overlooking the river. Rudolfskai 28/Judengasse 15; Phone: 43-(0)662-848-571; www.austria-trend.at/ass; 42 rooms, 20 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

We hope you've found this information useful, but nothing substitutes for speaking with one of our experienced Trip Consultants. Please call 800-462-2848 Monday-Sunday, between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific time.