

# Budapest to Prague: A Pilgrimage Feast for the Senses and the Soul

10 days / 8 nights

Saint John XXIII called history, "The great teacher of life." This unique pilgrimage from Budapest to Prague combines the richness of our Catholic tradition with the cultural life, spirit, art, and architecture of Europe. Prepare to be nourished in mind, body, and spirit!

## Day 1: USA - Budapest

*A pilgrimage is a journey toward holiness (Scott Peck, In Search of Stones).*

Our pilgrimage begins as we depart the USA on an international overnight flight to Hungary. Dinner and breakfast are served on board.

## Day 2: Budapest, Hungary

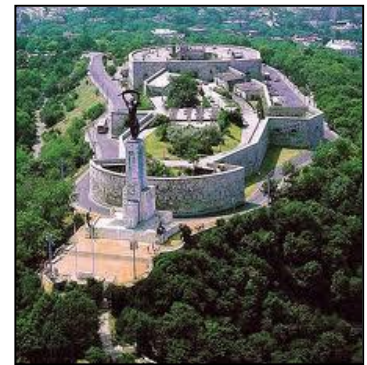
*World's light, Flower's flower, They torment you bitterly, They pierce you with iron nails! (Ómagyar Mária-síralom, Lamentations of Mary, oldest existing Hungarian poem, copied in about 1300).*

Upon arrival in a city described as one of the most beautiful in all of Europe, we transfer to our hotel after which we'll begin our exploration of unforgettable Budapest. It won't take long for us to understand why 2.3 million people visit here each year. Tonight: dinner and an overnight stay.

## Day 3: Budapest

*And so I've found my native country, that soil the gravedigger will frame, where they who write the words above me do not for once misspell my name (Attila Jozsef, famous Hungarian poet).*

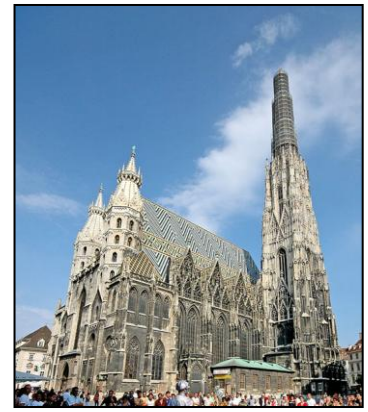
After a satisfying breakfast, we'll be enchanted by the culture, history and spirit of Budapest as we tour the oldest sections of the city. Nestled in the heart of Buda's Castle District, we'll find one of the city's jewels: St. Matthews (or Matthias) Church (Hungarian *Mátyás-templom*)--constructed in the florid late Gothic style and extensively restored in the late 19th century. It is here we will celebrate Mass. We will also explore the Citadel on Mount Gellert, the Royal Castle (The first royal residence on the Castle Hill) and Fisherman's Bastion--situated on the Buda bank of the Danube; with its terrace of stairs and walking paths, it takes its name from the guild of fishermen responsible for defending this stretch of the city walls. The castle was built between 1247 and 1265 and is located on the northern spur of the hill. Its lavishly decorated interiors were all destroyed during World War II, but many of the statues in the Royal Garden survived. The Budapest History Museum is located in the southern wing of Buda Castle and it eloquently presents the history of Budapest from its beginnings through the modern era. We'll see the imposing Parliament building, one of Europe's oldest legislative edifices and resting place of the Hungarian Crown Jewels. Next, we'll take a stroll down Heroes' Square (*Hősök tere*), which lies at the end of Andrassy Avenue. Lastly, we'll take in St. Stephen's Basilica. Named for Hungary's first Christian king, it is the largest church in Hungary and contains the country's most prized sacred relics. After its completion, St. Stephen's was considered so sturdy that important documents and artworks were stored there during World War II bombings. After a wonderful day, we'll enjoy dinner and another overnight in beautiful Budapest.



#### **Day 4: Vienna, Austria**

*In the fourth year of his age, his father, for a game as it were, began to teach him a few minuets and pieces at the clavier. He could play... with the greatest delicacy, and keeping exactly in time. At the age of five, he was already composing little pieces, which he played to his father who wrote them down (re Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in the words of his sister, Nannerl, who was three years his senior).*

This morning we take a motor coach through the picturesque Austrian countryside to its capital, Vienna, where we celebrate Mass at St. Stephen's Cathedral. The *Stephansdom*, as it is known, was first built in 1147 AD and has survived many wars to become a symbol of Vienna's deep spirituality and treasured freedom. There is much to see at St. Stephen's, from its many altars and chapels, beloved 23 bells and the Maria Pötsch Icon which shows the Virgin Mary pointing to the Christ child to signify "He is the way" (the child holds a three-stemmed rose to symbolize the Holy Trinity). It is said that the composer Ludwig van Beethoven discovered the totality of his deafness when he saw birds flying out of the bell tower of St. Stephen's Cathedral as a result of the bells' tolling, and he did not hear their music. We won't be able to pass up some delicious Viennese pastry and coffee before seeing the State Opera House, home to the Vienna Boys' Choir. We'll also visit impressive, imperial Schonbrunn Palace, one of the most important cultural monuments in Austria. The palace and gardens of Schonbrunn (the name *Schönbrunn* means "beautiful spring") illustrate the tastes, interests, and aspirations of successive Habsburg monarchs. We may not see each of the 1,441 rooms, but we hope to glimpse the Hall of Mirrors where Mozart performed at the age of six before a young Marie Antoinette. We'll enjoy a sumptuous dinner and overnight stay in Vienna.



#### **Day 5: Vienna**

*The name "Vienna" is thought to be derived from the Celtic word "windu", meaning bright or fair, but opinions vary on the precise origin.*

This morning we'll be treated to an excursion of the majestic Belvedere Palace complex, built as a summer residence for Prince Eugene of Savoy. The museum tells us much about the ruling dynasty and the history of the imperial capital. Upon entering the sweeping grounds of the complex, with inspiring sculptures, wrought iron gates and tiered fountains and cascades, our sense will be delighted. We'll also visit Hofburg Palace which had a very illustrious history of its own and currently serves as the official residence of the President of Austria. During the Habsburg dynasty, Hofburg Palace was the principal winter residence--just as the Schonbrunn Palace was the preferred summer residence. This afternoon, hang on! We'll get a bird's eye view of Vienna from our seat on the Prater's enormous Ferris wheel, and tonight, enjoy dinner and another overnight stay in this 'bright, fair' city.



#### **Day 6: Mariazell, Salzburg**

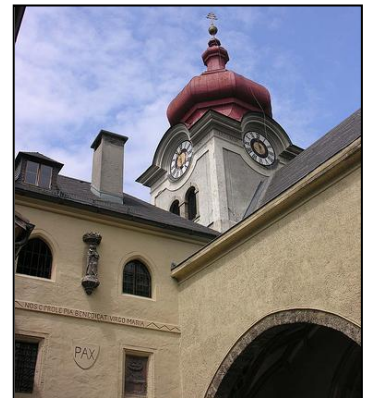
*On the evening of December 21, 1157, a Benedictine monk named Magnus, looked for a place in the forest to build a monastery. When his path became blocked by a huge boulder, Magnus took a small wooden statue of the Virgin Mary from his knapsack, knelt in prayer, and asked the Virgin Mary for guidance. Soon there was a great rumble and the rock split in two, allowing him to pass.*

This morning we journey west to Mariazell, a small city picturesquely situated in the valley of Salza and the most important pilgrimage site in Austria. Its object of veneration, brought to this place in 1157, is a miracle-working image of the Virgin carved in lime-tree wood. We resume our drive west through the lush Austrian countryside to beautiful Salzburg, birthplace of Mozart, and home to castles, palaces and grand halls. We'll see the Mirabelle Palace, one of the most-visited places in Salzburg, with its geometrically arranged gardens and mythological statues dating from 1730. Some of us might remember that several scenes from *The Sound of Music* were recorded in Mirabelle Gardens. Before enjoying dinner and an overnight stay in Salzburg, we'll hear the bells of the great Glockenspiel Tower play a Mozart melody.

### **Day 7: Salzburg**

*Although the movie, "The Sound of Music" (filmed in and around Salzburg) portrays Maria von Trapp as the epitome of religious devotion, she was raised to be cynical towards all religions. Those beliefs quickly and dramatically changed by the chance meeting of a visiting Jesuit priest to Maria's college. Maria had entered a crowded church assuming she was about to enjoy a concert by Bach. Instead, a well-known priest, Father Kronseder, has just begun preaching. Caught in the middle of a standing-room-only crowd, Maria soon found herself caught up in the words of this preacher. In Maria's words, "Now I had heard from my uncle that all of these bible stories were inventions and old legends, and that there wasn't a word of truth in them. But the way this man talked just swept me off my feet. I was completely overwhelmed by it..." When he finished his sermon and came down the pulpit stairs Maria grabbed his elbow and loudly asked, "Do you believe all this?" A meeting between the Priest and Maria changed her beliefs and the course of her life (Excerpts from the Trapp Family Lodge website).*

Mozart often directed the orchestra and choir at St. Peter's. In fact, his famed *Mass in C Minor* premiered here in 1783, with his wife, Constanze, singing the lead soprano role. Mass at St. Peter's is a fitting way to begin our day. St Peter's houses the oldest library in Austria. Through continual acquisition, the library has grown to 100,000 volumes. The best way to explore Salzburg, with its narrow lanes, is on foot. We'll appreciate the rich heritage of the Church made evident in the Archbishop's Residence, the decoration of the state rooms, and the mighty Romanesque Cathedral. We'll also have the opportunity to visit the Nonnberg Convent of Benedictine nuns. Located just below the south side of the Hohensalzburg Fortress, it is one of the oldest continuously-functioning nunneries in the world. Finally, we'll stop at Hellbrunn Palace to enjoy its lovely gardens before gathering for dinner and enjoying another overnight stay in Salzburg.



## **Day 8: Prague, Czech Republic**

*Nicknames for Prague include: Praga mater urbium ("Prague – Mother of Cities") and Stověžatá Praha ("City of a Hundred Spires"); today's count is estimated at about 1,000.*

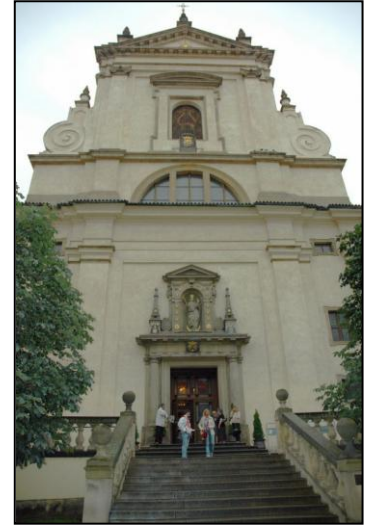
Our next destination is Prague: an important political, cultural and economic center of Europe for over 1,100 years. This “City of a Thousand Spires,” with its onion domes, old-town cobblestone, and artistic richness will provide us with a veritable feast for our souls. We’ll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in anticipation of all that we will see and do tomorrow.



## **Day 9: Prague**

*No one doubts that, rising every night from his noble bed, with bare feet and only one chamberlain, he went around to God's churches and gave alms generously to widows, orphans, those in prison and afflicted by every difficulty, so much so that he was considered, not a prince, but the father of all the wretched (the chronicler Cosmas of Prague, writing in about the year 1119 about Saint Wenceslas (aka Good King Wenceslas of Christmas carol fame) who in 925 AD founded the original St. Vitus Cathedral).*

A good breakfast will launch us into our exploration of beautiful Prague. We begin the day with a celebration of Mass at the Church of Our Lady Victorious, a destination for many pilgrims from all around the world. People come from all over the world to pay homage to the Infant Jesus of Prague (the statue of the Infant Jesus originally came from Spain and is especially venerated by believers from Hispanic countries). There is a Museum of the Infant Jesus behind the main altar. The statuette of the Infant Jesus has 46 different robes including one decorated by Empress Maria Theresa herself. We’ll then visit Old Town by way of Golden Lane before seeing Malá Strana, meaning "Little Side." We’ll see that Lesser Town is conjoined to the larger towns of Prague by the ancient Charles Bridge, which is adorned with many baroque statues. We will also take in St. Nicholas Church, the Astronomic Clock (the third-oldest astronomical clock in the world and the only one still working), and the Prague Castle district where we tour St. Vitus Cathedral (the biggest and most important church in the country, exemplifying Gothic architecture and containing the tombs of many Bohemian kings and Holy Roman Emperors), St. George Basilica, Loreto Church, Strahov Monastery, and Wenceslas Square (the square named after Saint Wenceslas, the patron saint of Bohemia). Tonight we’ll enjoy dinner and another overnight stay in Prague.



## **Day 10: Prague – USA**

*Let all your things be done with charity (1 Cor. 16: 14).*

Our pilgrimage has delighted our senses and fed our souls. We have memories to treasure as we depart from Prague Airport for our return flights to the USA.

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