



17220 Newhope Street #203, Fountain Valley, CA., 92708, USA @ [800.795.1633](tel:800.795.1633)

2019 - TIPS ON TRAVEL

DANUBE DISCOVERY CRUISE

M/S "RIVER DISCOVERY II" & M/S "RIVER NAVIGATOR"

(AUSTRIA, SLOVAKIA, HUNGARY, CROATIA, SERBIA, BULGARIA, ROMANIA)

To Our "**Valued**" Guests!

Welcome to the fascinating world of cruising the Southeastern reaches of Europe!
We are excited to welcome you to this unique itinerary and the fascinating cultures and people of

7 European Countries in one leisurely sailing!

Do bear in mind that except for Austria, the recent changes in the economic and political ideologies in the countries of the former Eastern Block, have contributed to rapid economic growth – and to all the growing pains that go with it. Your participation in traveling to these countries not only helps their economy but also spreads the friendship and understanding between our people. **Therefore, you act as an "Ambassador" of the United States/Canada when visiting these foreign lands that were, until recently, off limits to visitors from the west. The impression you leave will have an everlasting effect on future relations between these countries and your own.**

It is therefore important that we advise and prepare you for some of the cultural and social differences you will encounter. These **Tour and Travel Tips** have been designed to provide useful information and helpful suggestions to ease your adjustment and help you get around any obstacles you may encounter. Your journey will be greatly enhanced **if you take the time to prepare for it.** Thoroughly acquaint yourself with the information provided herewith - but also talk to others who have been, study one of the many comprehensive guide books available – and **browse the Internet.** The effort you put into planning your trip before you go will make all the difference. **Thank you!**

A few courtesy reminders:

Make it your responsibility to be on time so as not to hold up the group. Be attentive and refrain from talking to your neighbor while the guide/s are speaking or providing information regarding the tour. Wait for all information to be given before asking questions. Any special requests regarding group activities should be directed to the Cruise Director who is responsible for representing the interests of the whole group. Your local guides will refer all requests back to the Cruise Director. Your cooperation in these matters will not only be greatly appreciated but will increase both the groups and your personal enjoyment of the tour.

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GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Vouchers: If traveling within a group or on any **set program** vouchers will **not be required** or issued. If traveling as an individual and/or deviating from the regular itinerary, we may issue vouchers for services paid for.

Air Tickets: Whenever tickets are issued by our company, they will be sent/**emailed** with your final documents. **In some instances, when tickets are issued directly by the airlines involved, they may be sent to you under separate cover – or forwarded electronically.**

Transfers: If you have purchased your airfare or have **prepaid your arrival transfers** through us, please look for our Tour Escorts holding name signs or our yellow triangle Global Tours & Cruises (GTC) Signs *after exiting* the Customs Area of the airports!



If you have purchased **land/cruise only** and are arranging for your own arrival and departure transportation, the names and addresses of your hotel and the port locations will be listed on the Contact Sheet enclosed and sent with your final documents.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS: Before leaving home, please ensure that you have a valid **US PASSPORT** and appropriate **VISAS**. Based on the countries visited, at the time of printing, US citizens do not need visas for this cruise itinerary. Please make sure your passport has a validity of at least 6 months beyond your scheduled travel dates and check for visa updates with the U.S. or the appropriate foreign consulates at least 90 days prior to your departure. If you are a foreign national – please check with each country's consulate as rules may be different. **Please remember: Obtaining a visa and proper travel documents are YOUR responsibility!**

BAGGAGE: Make a detailed list of everything you pack for the trip and then leave this list at home. We cannot be responsible for lost baggage, but most airlines will make every effort to recover baggage or make proper compensation if you are able to **itemize** the suitcase contents. It is also a good idea to tape a piece of paper **INSIDE** your luggage, which shows your full name, home address and telephone number. **The purchase of Travel Insurance is always strongly recommended!**

BAGGAGE WEIGHT: Please remember that weight allowances vary and are lower when flying domestic and intra-continental routes, utilizing smaller aircraft. Check with the respective airlines for instructions and pack accordingly – or you may face overweight surcharges!



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4. **Bureaucracy** - Expect a little bit of red tape, and try not to be bothered by bureaucratic rituals, which may be different from country to country.
5. **Do not compare things you see by North American standards.** The diverse river vessels were all specifically built for cruising the narrow rivers, low laying bridges and tight locks that dot the Southern Danube route. Therefore, although quite luxurious, they should not be compared with huge ocean faring vessels. Above all, keep your sense of humor and enjoy the cultural legacies, physical geography and rich variety of the people as you sail through these unique and different lands!

M/S "RIVER DISCOVERY II" & M/S "RIVER NAVIGATOR"

Our 5* deluxe "Navigator" (built in 2002, renovated in 2012) and the newer *River Discovery II*, (built in 2013), represent a new generation of river cruise vessels sailing the rivers of Europe! Their public areas consist of a one seat elegant restaurant, a 1950's themed Rat Pack bar including an original **juke box and statue of Frank Sinatra**, wonderful panorama lounges, cozy reading rooms and oversized covered sun decks offering fabulous views of the passing countryside. With a maximum load of **only 134/168 passengers** serviced by a crew of **38/42** both vessels are sure to please even the most discriminating passengers! **Non-smoking interiors – on board currency – Euro.**

CABINS: Both ships feature spacious staterooms, every one with a river view, **165sq ft** in size and include: hotel-style beds that can be converted to a double, private bathrooms with glass-enclosed showers and plugs for men's razors plus a hair dryer, in-room combination safety deposit boxes, telephone, a U.S. plug in every stateroom, iPhone/iPod docking stations, **WiFi**, large **flat-screen TVs** with international news channels and movies, individual climate control, and excellent storage space. Cabins are spread over **3 decks**. Low deck cabins have twin windows that cannot open, the Middle decks have either big picture windows (*Navigator*) or full floor to ceiling **French Balconies (Discovery) and Upper Decks on both vessels have French balconies.** Suites are 225/250 sq ft in size and include DVD's, mini bars and bathtubs along with showers. **An elevator connects all 3 decks (both vessels).**

LINEN/TOWELS: While cabins are cleaned every day, due to limited storage and cleaning facilities on board **and in order to conserve water**, bed linen is washed and changed every 3 days. For ecological purposes, **towels are exchanged when you put them in the washbasin.** If you don't, they will be automatically replaced every other day.

LAUNDRY: Basic washing and pressing can be provided through your cabin maid for an additional fee. Dry cleaning, however, is not available, so **please pack accordingly.**

COMMUNICATIONS: There are no telephone lines for outgoing calls on our vessels. Communication from ship to shore can only be done through the Captains radio. Although our Cruise Manager and Cruise Directors may have cell phones, these are used for business and emergency services **ONLY.** If bringing your own US cell phones – **BE SURE THEY ARE "UNLOCKED"** by your US service provider **so they will operate abroad!**



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FREE INTERNET & WIFI: Are available ship wide and computers are provided near the bar. The service is free but the level of signal may vary depending on sailing itinerary and location of ports.

RESTAURANT, TABLE AND SEATING ASSIGNMENTS: There is one restaurant onboard. For buffet breakfasts and lunches, open style seating is available. For sit down dinners, **you may be assigned a table**, which will be yours for the duration of the cruise. For those passengers wishing to share their table with friends and companions, it is important to make these arrangements during your first meal. Also, if you have **special dietary requirements**, you must advise our Guides and Maitre D' of any such requirements at this time - requests will be honored as much as possible. Although our staff will attempt to honor all passenger requests for specific seating, we must reserve the right to assign meal seating based on the availability, passenger profile and capacity of the restaurant.

MEALS: Meals are world class! Our European Chefs provide varying daily menu's using locally sourced ingredients! Breakfasts are buffet, featuring an arrangement of cereals, bread, cold cuts, jam and cooked to order eggs. Lunches are either buffets with a wide choice of hot and cold meals and carving stations or depending on port calls are sit down with three to 4 course menus. Dinners are sit down, 5 course elegant affairs. Water, tea, coffee and local house wine/beer/soft drinks are **FREE** for both lunch and dinner! **Bon Appétit!**

COFFEE STATIONS: Are available 24 hours offering a choice of brews, teas, chocolate milk etc.

WATER: Water is purified and fine for use for washing but for those with "*touchy tummies*" we suggest purchasing bottled water.

ELEVATOR: Connects the Middle and Upper decks and a pull lift connects the Upper deck to the Sun Deck. Low deck cabins have a few steps that lead to the elevator.

VALUABLES: There is a safety deposit box **in each cabin** on board. However, we recommend that you do not bring valuables on your trip, including excessive jewelry (you won't need it!)

GIFT SHOP: Small with basic items, such as postcards, stamps etc can be obtained from the reception desk. But do not fear! Plenty of shops are available during the excursions in various cities!

PUBLIC AREAS: There are several public rooms on the ship such as the **Dining Room, Reading room, Bar/Panorama Lounge** etc (please check each vessels descriptions and deck plans online) On the large **Sun decks**, you will also find lovely covered as well as open sitting areas from where you can observe the lovely passing vistas!

PASSENGER MIX: **English speaking Americans or Canadians** and an international mix of people from all over the world – Norway, Scandinavia - even local folks! Its great way to meet the people of the world and make new and long lasting friends! Whatever the mix, however, **English is always the primary language used.**



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Smoking:

Especially in the Balkans is still a mass habit. Our ships, however, are NON-SMOKING. Smoking is allowed in designated outside areas. Smoking inside the vessel and on busses is not allowed.

ELECTRICITY: Electrical current in hotels and on board ships is the European 220 volts/50MHZ. Although our ships also **have 110 US plugs in each cabin**, it is a good idea to **bring 2 things:**

- 1) **UNIVERSAL TRANSFORMER** to convert from the US 110 Volts to the 220.(Note that some more recent electronics will automatically convert. Please check your item in question.)
- 2) **UNIVERSAL ADAPTER PLUGS** for sockets, which are **different than at home**. Since there are no supplies of converters/ adapters on board we highly recommend you purchase a transformer/ adapter plug set at a travel or appliance store before you leave.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS: Due to limited services for the disabled on board and because of extensive walking on our excursions, **we do not recommend these cruises to people with severe disabilities**. Those passengers with *lighter physical disabilities* must report them to us at the time of booking. Most cabin doorways and public restrooms are **not wide enough to allow access by standard wheelchairs**. **Staircases connect all the decks**. Passengers with severe walking or other disabilities may find certain areas of the ship inaccessible. **Passengers with any physical impairment must be self-sufficient since the vessel's crew or staff cannot provide services of a personal nature.**

DOCTOR: While there is **no doctor on board**, our staff is trained in first aid, and in case of any emergency, our ships are always close to land and nearby medical facilities. However, our staff cannot offer care for conditions requiring specialized expertise or equipment. Passengers with such conditions, or in the event of an emergency, may be evacuated to a medical care facility ashore at the passenger's own expense. Existing medical problems, which may require treatment by a physician, must be brought to our attention at the time of booking. **If you require special medicines, it is essential that you bring them with you from home, as only a limited range of general type medication is available!**

CURRENCIES: While most of Western Europe has adopted the **EURO**, some of the former Eastern European countries still use their own (**Croatia-Kuna, Serbia-Dinar, Bulgaria-Lev, Romania-Lei**). For the rate of exchange to the **US dollar**, please check online a few days prior to your departure as some of these currencies fluctuate daily. Updated advice on the currency situations will be provided to you by our Cruise Directors upon arrival.

Due to varying foreign currency laws, our ships do NOT have exchange offices on board. Therefore, we highly recommend that you BRING A SUFFICIENT QUANTITY OF EUROS OR DOLLARS in CASH. This will save you both time and hassle in searching for banks/ATM. You will then have ample opportunity to change **CASH to local currencies!** Also,



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Credit Cards are now widely accepted in most of the major cities along your route – **BUT PLEASE NOTE – EUROPEANS NOW REQUIRE CREDIT CARDS WITH CHIPS OR DEBIT CARDS WITH PIN NUMBERS –CALL YOUR BANK TO GET A CREDIT CARD WITH A CHIP!**

*The official currency used aboard our ship is the **Euro!****

Credit Cards: Visa & MasterCard Only!* or DEBIT CARDS**

Traveler and Personal Checks are not accepted. There is no exchange office on board. In some of the former EE countries *CASH is preferred.*

**Credit Card Note: As of May 2015, European Credit Card processors require credit cards with chips. Your USA magnetic strip cards may NOT work at local ATM's requiring a PIN. Ask your bank for a chip card and/or bring along a Debit card with your PIN...or enough cash to cover your expenses!*

Credit Card Payments: On board expenses are signed to your cabin and may be paid by Visa or Mastercard at the end of the cruise. However – cash is still “King” in most of the former Eastern European countries.

How much cash to bring with you? Although everyone is different, we suggest that you set aside at least 800 Euros/\$1000 USD per person – to cover your optional tours and shopping expenses. If you are planning on purchasing more expensive items you may want to bring more....

GRATUITIES:

Tipping today has become commonplace in all former East European countries. Due to the volatile nature of these new economies, salaries for regular folk are pitiful compared to the rising costs and inflation - let alone if we compare them to western standards. **Consequently, for the majority of the people working in the service industries (hotels, restaurants, travel, crews on ships), tips and gratuities have become large sources of their income. Therefore, your gracious generosity will be appreciated throughout your trip. Since we repeatedly get asked to provide a guideline - here it is:**

TIPPING SUGGESTIONS: Tips should be divided in 2 separate segments:

- 1) ***Individual tips:*** To staff/personnel on **land portions** who have earned your gratitude (Our Cruise & Tour Directors, Local Guides leading local tours, drivers of busses, specific waiters at hotels or other ground personnel that have gone beyond the call of duty to help you). **These should be provided directly to each individual service provider.**
- 2) ***Pooled tips:*** For a group of individuals working as a team to service you on a specific portion of a trip (*such as the ship's crew*).



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- 1) INDIVIDUAL TIPPING: While you are in cities or on shore excursions, local guides and drivers will escort the local tours. The so called **standard tip should be 3 EURO per person** for the **guide and 2 EU for the driver**. A 1 EU tip will also be appreciated by porters and a 1 EU per person/per day should be left at hotels for your maids. For taxi-cabs or at restaurants add 10% to 15% to your final bill.

CRUISE DIRECTORS are the Travel Experts **we employ** who pick you up and stay with you from the **moment you arrive to the moment you depart**. They will be your guiding “angels” throughout the trip. They will lead you, educate you, entertain you and if need be, scold you ☺ but we are certain you will find their assistance indispensable in providing you with the utmost travel experience possible!

Since they are essentially at your disposal 24 hours a day, **we recommend an amount of € 7 EURO per person/per day or € 70 EURO per person for a 10 day cruise.**

- 2) POOLED TIPPING (ship's crew): For ship crews we implement a *share system* whereby all the crew members, from the Captain to the "lowly" deck hand *share in the gratuities* collected from all passengers. The reason for doing this is that during the course of your cruise, you will actually see and meet some members of the crew - mainly the entertainers, the restaurant and bar staff and maybe your cabin maid. However, there are more crew members you will not see whose good work is equally important to the smooth operation of the cruise - from the **engine crew who keep us afloat**, to the many staff and crew members who arrange for our buses & excursions, to the catering people who travel to our ports in advance of the ship in order to obtain and provide us with the best available food and beverage supplies. Therefore, to ensure **equality for all**, we ask that *one day before your Captain's Farewell Dinner*, you place your total gratuities for the cruise portion in an envelope and drop it in our "CREW Gratuities" box. The gratuity box will then be delivered on behalf of all passengers, to the Captain during the Farewell Dinner Toasts. Suggested amount: € 10 per person/per day = €100 Euro per/person for a 10 night cruise (which will then be divided among ALL the crew members).

DAILY SCHEDULES AND INFORMATION

Information regarding sightseeing, meal hours and updated on-board activities for the next day, are printed and **distributed to each cabin or during dinner the previous evening**. In addition, updated information may be displayed on notice boards, found near the reception area.



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TYPICAL WEATHER

Average Temperatures in Fahrenheit Degrees

CITY	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT
	H/L	H/L	H/L	H/L	H/L	H/L
Vienna, Austria	63/54	65/56	70/58	76/62	72/58	65/46
Bratislava, Slovakia	64/55	66/57	74/60	82/68	78/66	68/54
Budapest, Hungary	68/56	70/56	74/61	82/65	72/62	70/55
Belgrade, Serbia	68/56	68/58	76/64	84/69	80/67	71/58
Vidin, Bulgaria	72/54	79/60	89/66	92/68	75/52	72/58
Bucharest, Romania	69/57	71/60	92/67	94/69	75/65	72/60

PACKING TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

Items You may Wish to Bring Along:

- **Skin cream and other cosmetics for sun protection.**
- Insect repellent.
- **Spare set of eyeglasses for emergencies.** If you wear contact lenses, bring a pair of eyeglasses for occasions when contacts are bothersome to wear, such as in strong wind or dust.
- **Medications** which are vital to your health. A letter should accompany these from your doctor (signed and dated), certifying that such medications are vital to your health. Dosage should be indicated. *Always pack any personal medications in your carry on luggage, not in your checked baggage.*
- **Common remedies such as laxatives, indigestion tablets, aspirin and travel sickness pills** (However, the latter will probably not be needed while in the protected waters of the inland rivers and waterways).
- Sunglasses.
- **Bring plenty of film or digital memory cards.**
- Sewing kit, first aid kit, hand sanitizer, and paper towelettes.
- Binoculars (excellent for viewing scenes from the rivers).
- **Batteries for cameras, shaver etc.**
- Electrical extension cord (if needed)
- Transformer/converter and plug adapters (at K-Mart, Thrifty, or appliance stores)

BON VOYAGE!