

Code EEBX **Balkans Explored**

Tour Dossier Introduction

Dossier Last Updated: 26-03-2015

Tour Code: EEBX

Duration: 22 nights / 23 days

Joining City: Sofia

Departure City: Budapest

Nearest Joining International Airport: Sofia Airport (SOF)

Nearest Departing International Airport: Budapest Ferenc Liszt Intl Airport (BUD)

Please check this document just before departing in case of last minute changes to your tour.

Tour Documents

 PDF Document  Web Page

 Albania Dossier

 Bosnia and Herzegovina Dossier

 Bulgaria Dossier

 Croatia Dossier

 Hungary Dossier

 Macedonia Dossier

 Montenegro Dossier

 Slovenia Dossier

What's Included

- > Free time at Lake Ohrid
- > Entry to Ostrog Monastery
- > Entry to Kotor
- > Entry on to Dubrovnik City Wall
- > Entry & Guided Tour of Diocletian's Palace
- > Entrance to Plitvice Lakes National Park
- > Guided Tour of Ljubljana
- > Transport to Lake Bled

- > 19 nights in hotels, hostels & guesthouses, 3 nights in apartments
- > 14 breakfasts
- > Travel by Public Bus, Private Vehicle, Train, Minibus, Taxi, Foot
- >

Tucan Travel tour leader, English-speaking local guide(s) on included excursions

What's not Included

- International flights and departure taxes
- Domestic flight taxes if applicable
- Tips on included excursions, visas, travel insurance, personal items and single rooms.
- Airport transfers and pre and post tour accommodation
- Spending money – budget for meals, snacks, drinks, limited souvenirs, laundry, tips and any extras
- Optional excursions - Please see our optional excursions guide on the dossier page for a comprehensive list of optional activities and excursions available on this tour.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 to 1 - Arrive Sofia

The first day of your tour is simply an arrival day with no pre-organised activities. In order to allow time to relax and see some of the sights you may wish to add pre tour accommodation. On arrival please ask at the reception for information on when the pre departure meeting will be held.

Bulgaria's capital Sofia offers a wealth of cultural entertainment, including Byzantine churches, museums full of ancient archaeological treasures, towering monuments and numerous mineral baths adjacent to the magnificent Mount Vitosha. Laid back and cosmopolitan, Sofia offers a thriving and diverse street life, including open-air cafés, busy markets such as the famous Ladies' Market, rattling trams and buskers all adding to the ambience. At the foothills of Mount Vitosha about 8 kilometres from the city centre you can visit the 900 year-old Boyana Church, considered among the masterpieces of medieval European painting, which features murals and frescoes dating back to 1259 AD, medieval architecture and monumental art. Also at the base of Mt. Vitosha is the splendid National History Museum, with antiques dating back to the Thracian period.

Sofia also offers many beautiful gardens to relax in, such as Boris Gardens and the South Park, which starts just behind the Palace of Culture.

Optional Excursions: Ethnographical Museum – BGN 3 • National Art Gallery – BGN 6 • Alexander Nevski Cathedral – free • St Alexander Nevski – BGN 4 • National Museum of History – BGN 10

Day 2 to 2 - Skopje

In Skopje, Macedonia's capital, you can enjoy 2,000 years of history spanning Oriental and Western cultures, neatly divided by the Vardar River through the centre of the city. Skopje has many historical monuments including the Kale Fortress dating back to the 6th century, the Daud Paša Amam, a 15th century bathhouse now converted into the city art gallery. You can also see the Mustafa-pasha's mosque, the 16th century Clock Tower and the Kamen Most (Stone Bridge) over the Vardar River.

Optional Excursions: Mother Teresa statue and memorial room – free • National Museum & Icon Gallery – MKD 50

Day 3 to 4 - Lake Ohrid

We travel on to the gorgeous lake side town of Ohrid, perching on the Macedonia/Albania border. This unassuming, picturesque settlement has been the setting of thousands of years of human history and the ancient churches, fortress walls, bazaars and old quarters are testimony to its past. Lake Ohrid itself is Europe's oldest lake having formed over three millions years ago. Wander the streets and squares of its compact centre before hiking up to the ancient walled fortress that overlooks the day to day life of the city and explore the famous old churches, monasteries and basilicas.

Included Excursions: Visit Lake Ohrid

Optional Excursions: Sveta Bogorodica Bolnicka, originally a hospital church where plague victims were quarantined – free of charge • Sveti Nikola Bolnicki – free of charge • National Museum – MKD 100 • Samoil's Fortress – MKD 50 • Sveta Bogorodica Perivlepta, a 13th century painted church – MKD 100 • St Pantelejmon monastery – free • Boat trip around Lake Ohrid - €15 per person (based on 6-8 people)

Day 5 to 5 - Tirana

We then head to Tirana, the trendy capital and largest city of Albania, which has transformed from a grey, dismal ex-communist city, isolated by the regime until the 1990s, to a colourful capital buzzing with life. While the city has a long history, you can enjoy its modern outlook, with fashionable bars, and wander boulevards lined with relics of the city's Ottoman, clubs and boutiques, Italian and communist past. Tirana's massive main square, Sheshi Skënderbej, is bordered by the National History Museum, the Palace of Culture, the National Bank, the Et'hem Bey Mosque and Skanderbeg's statue. A short bus ride from the centre city, the Martyr's Cemetery offers marvellous panoramic views over the city. If time allows we may have an opportunity for a morning trip to Kruja.

Included Excursions: Kruja

Optional Excursions: National Art Gallery – Lek 200 • National Museum of History – Lek 200 • Muzeu Onufri (Onufri museum) – Lek 200 • Muzeu Etnografik Lek 200 • Sky Bar & Restaurant – €2

Day 6 to 7 - Budva

Our next visit is to the seaside town of Budva in Montenegro. Budva (not to be confused with the Czech beer Budvar) is 2,500 years old, one of the oldest and most popular settlements on the Adriatic coast of Montenegro. This vibrant seaside town is well known for its sandy beaches, historic old town, diverse nightlife, and beautiful examples of Mediterranean architecture.

We will take a day trip to the picturesque Kotor, a walled city nestled at the bottom of Europe's deepest fjord. Stari Grad, the old town, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a tricky labyrinth of cobbled alleys, squares and ancient churches, including St Tryphon's Cathedral built in 1166. The mountains provide a dramatic backdrop to this beautiful town as they come down steeply, almost to the waterfront. You could spend the day drinking espresso in the shade of the medieval walls watching people go by. You can climb the walls of the ancient fort of Sveti Ivan which spans some 4.5 kilometres above the city on almost vertical cliffs. Your efforts will be rewarded by an excellent view of Kotor and the bay.

We will visit Ostrog Monastery, clinging precariously to an almost vertical cliff face. Ostrog Monastery is a famous Serbian Orthodox Church built in the 17th century to honour one of the four Montenegrin saints, Vasilije Jovanovic, who fled here from the Turks in 1665. The greatest spiritual centre of Montenegro and the most visited Orthodox shrine in the Balkans, the sanctuary still attracts pilgrims who hope to cure their illnesses and other problems by praying over his remains. You may also have time to take in the Old Royal Capital of Cetinje, visiting the Monastery and many museums showcasing some of Montenegro's prosperous past.

Included Excursions: Kotor • Ostrog Monastery

Optional Excursions Budva Museum – €3 • Discover the picturesque old town – free • Boka Kotorska (Bay of Kotor), a full day trip of Mamuladska beach and Blue cave – price TBA

Day 8 to 9 - Sarajevo

Crossing the border into the 'heart-shaped land' of Bosnia and Herzegovina we visit the capital Sarajevo, a fascinating mixture of western and eastern cultures. Known as the 'Jerusalem of Europe', the city was once famous for its religious diversity, with people of Islamic, Orthodox Christian, Catholic and Jewish faiths coexisting relatively peacefully for centuries. The atmosphere of calm and tolerance changed dramatically when violence erupted in the mid 1990s and the city underwent the longest siege in modern military history during the Yugoslav War.

Today the city is largely recovered and is packed with fascinating museums bazaars, markets and bridges. During your time here you could explore the cobbled streets, mosques and Oriental style shops of the Old Town, visit the Bosnian Historical Museum to learn about the siege of Sarajevo and visit the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum, the tunnel which was used to ferry supplies into the besieged city during the conflict, next to the airport. For history buffs a must see is the "Latin Bridge" spanning the river in the down-town area. The bridge bears a plaque commemorating the assassination of Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Franz Ferdinand, the event that sparked the beginning of World War I. Today the city is largely recovered and is packed with fascinating museums

Optional Excursions: Tunnel Museum, the entrance to the tunnel used during the Bosnian War – BAM 30 • Jewish Museum – BAM 2 • Jewish Tour BAM 32 every day at 2pm • Communism Tour – BAM 38 (minimum 2 people) • Orthodox Church Museum – free but donations welcome • History Museum – B

Day 10 to 10 - Mostar

Widely felt to be the prettiest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina Mostar is situated on the Neretva river and is the fifth-largest city in the country. Mostar was named after the bridge keepers (natively: mostari) who kept the Stari Most (Old Bridge) over Neretva river. The city is particularly famous for this beautiful single span bridge, Stari Most, which collapsed into the Neretva River during the Yugoslav War in 1993. Built in 1556 by the Ottoman ruler Suleiman the Great, Stari Most had been a globally recognised landmark and a national symbol for Bosnia-Herzegovina. It had survived centuries of conflict including both world wars and proved that, whatever happened, the mainly Christian west bank and mainly Muslim east remained united. The destruction of the bridge was a huge blow to the local people, but in 2004 the bridge was rebuilt as a replica of the original using pieces of masonry salvaged from the riverbed. Its reopening represented the hope that Muslims, Croats and Serbs could once again live side by side and that Mostar would be healed after a decade of ethnic division.

Optional Excursions: Koski Mehmed Pasha Mosque - €2.5 (includes minaret) • Karad-zozbegova Mosque - €2.5 (includes minaret) • Turkish House BAM 2 • Memorial Museum of Herzegovina – BAM 1.5

Day 11 to 12 - Dubrovnik

Into the south of Croatia, we visit the 'Pearl of the Adriatic', the UNESCO World Heritage listed walled city of Dubrovnik.

With a paved town centre enclosed in fortress-like 13th century stone walls, the city is easy to explore on foot and is full of character. A great start to your exploration of Dubrovnik could be with a walk around the city walls. Stretching almost 2 kilometres around the old town, the walls offer stunning rooftop and city views out to the turquoise blue Adriatic Sea. Founded in the 7th century, for a time in its glorious past the city was a serious rival for Venice in terms of maritime trade. It is hard to believe now but in 1991, two out of every three buildings were damaged during the bombardment of the Yugoslav War. Since then the buildings and walls have been painstakingly restored to pristine condition and represents one of the most beautiful and solid fortress systems on the Mediterranean. There are several other historic attractions worth a visit near the main street (Stradun), such as the 14th century Franciscan monastery which houses a treasury full of sacred art and artefacts, as well as one of the oldest continually working pharmacies in the world, dating back to 1317.

Included Excursions: Dubrovnik City Wall

Optional Excursions: Museum of the Orthodox Church – HRK 10 • Synagogue – HRK 10 • 14th century Dominican Monastery – HRK 15 • Republic of Dubrovnik Palace – HRK 20 • Lokrum Island – ferry HRK 80 • Half day kayaking – €40 • Scuba diving – one boat dive €46, two dives €83, wreck dive €55 • Dubrovnik 24 hour City Card – HRK 100

Day 13 to 13 - Korčula

Heading now out to the islands of Croatia, we hop to Marco Polo's birthplace, sunny Korčula which offers numerous secluded beaches and bays with stunning views over the Adriatic. The main town on the island is also called Korčula, featuring medieval walls and forts as well as many fine museums housing priceless works of art. While you're visiting the island you may have the chance to see a Moreska dance, a spectacular combat dance performed with swords.

Optional Excursions: Korčula Moreska Sword Dance – HRK 100 • Marco Polo House where the explorer was believed to be born – HRK 25

Day 14 to 15 - Hvar Island

Boasting more sunshine hours than any of the other sun-soaked Dalmatian islands, Hvar Island offers fairytale Venetian architecture, a waterfront promenade fringed by palm trees and centuries old walls. With all of this and an historic fortress overlooking it all, it's no wonder picturesque Hvar Town is considered a chic destination for the rich and famous, and you may be lucky enough to see one or two familiar faces here.

Built by the Venetian Doges in the 13th century, Hvar Town is a maze of cobblestone streets and sunny squares bordered by al fresco cafés and restaurants. The most important sights such as Cathedral of St Stephen, Clock Tower and the Arsenal flank the main square, while a picturesque expanse of terracotta-roofed houses and tiny streets cover the hill behind. One of the simplest pleasures on the island is to take part in the evening stroll around the town and take in the views - don't forget to buy an ice cream from a local slasticarna, the Croatian equivalent of the Italian gelateria. You may also enjoy a stroll around the harbour, which is often filled with multimillion-dollar yachts, a reflection of the lavish lifestyles of the wealthy visitors to the island. You will have time to explore smaller villages of Stari Grad, Jelsa, taking in lavender fields, Vrboska and Brusje, wineries, eco villages and experiencing the local culture.

Optional Excursions: Franciscan Monastery Museum – HRK 25 • Return bus to Stari Grad, one of the oldest towns in Croatia – HRK 54 • Municipal Theatre and Art Gallery – HRK 20 • Scuba diving – €35 shore dive. Boat dives will cost approximately €46 for one dive or €83 for two dives. For certified divers only.

Day 16 to 16 - Split

We then take the ferry and arrive late morning at the coastal city of Split, built around the remains of the Diocletian Palace which dates back to the Roman era. Wander inside and take in Peristil Square where you can see an original Egyptian sphinx which was brought from Egypt by Roman emperor Diocletian. Another sphinx can be found near St John's Church, which was originally a Roman temple. Take a tour of the Diocletian Palace or climb the campanile bell tower next to the palace's mausoleum for spectacular views from the top.

If you want to relax there are plenty of al fresco bars and restaurants to choose from along the seafront, as well as gelati bars and cheaper pizzerias off the main roads. There is plenty of delicious Italian-influenced local cuisine to choose from, often at very reasonable prices. If you want to hang out with the locals, head for the beach at Bacvice. There are many cafés and places to eat icecream and it's a great place to get a feeling of 'real' Croatia as the vast majority of people who go there are from Split.

Included Excursions: Diocletian Palace Tour

Optional Excursions: The City Museum of Split – HRK 20 • Split tour - €72 (plus €5 for entry to basement of Diocletian's Palace and €2 for Jump Palace) • Bus to Trogir – HRK 21 • Cathedral of St Lovro in Trogir – HRK 25 (including cathedral tower) • Church of St John the Baptist in Trogir – free

Day 17 to 17 - Plitvice

Continuing our diverse journey through Croatia, our next stop is to explore Plitvice National Park, a beautiful reserve featuring 16 spectacular blue lakes surrounded by forest.

The lakes are linked by natural dams which create beautiful low level waterfalls joining one lake to another. Due to the varying mixtures of minerals in the

water, each lake has a distinctive colour ranging from azure to green, grey or blue. The surrounding forest features a mix of beech, spruce, and fir trees and is home to 126 species of birds and a number of rare animals including European brown bears, wolves, eagles, wild cats and eagles. Due to its natural beauty and significance, a 78 metre high, the park was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1979. The entire park can be seen in about 4 hours and you can get beautiful views from almost any vantage point. Don't miss the Veliki Slap, 50 metre wide waterfall surrounded by boulders - a great place for photos.

Included Excursions: Plitvice Lakes National Park

Day 18 to 19 - Zagreb

After our time exploring the national park we continue to the Croatian capital of Zagreb, a vibrant cultural centre with a long history, located on the crossroads of important routes between the Adriatic coast and Central Europe. Originally established as two fortresses on two neighbouring hills in medieval times, the city has withstood numerous invasions, earthquakes and political upheaval to grow into a prosperous centre of industry. In your free time you can explore Ban Jelacic Square surrounded by grand buildings or visit the Zagreb Cathedral with its fountain of Madonna surrounded by golden angels. You can visit colourful open-air markets such as Dolac Market and discover the historic Upper Town with its palaces, monasteries and churches from the 17th and 18th centuries. There are also dozens of museums, theatres, galleries and art collections to visit, or take a tram to the medieval fortress of Medvedgrad on the southern side of nearby Mount Medvednica for beautiful views over the city., including Museum Mimara. Another interesting museum to see is the City of Zagreb Museum covering every facet of its long history. You could take a picnic to Maksimir Park about 3 kilometres from the city centre.

Optional Excursions: Lotrscak Tower – HRK 10 • Funicular, constructed in 1888, it connects the lower and upper towns – HRK 3 • Museum of the City of Zagreb – HRK 20 • Ethnographical Museum – HRK 15 • Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters – HRK 10 • Archaeological Museum – HRK 10 • Bridge Walking Tour – €13

Day 20 to 21 - Ljubljana & Lake Bled

Crossing into Slovenia we visit the capital Ljubljana and enjoy a city tour of the main sights. In your free time you may enjoy a visit to the botanical gardens, Dragon bridge, Križanke or French revolution square, Tivoli park, Ljubljana city museum, Ljubljana castle (Ljubljanski Grad) on Castle Hill and the viewing tower in the castle courtyard for views across the Old Town. When you need to relax, sit down at one of the many outdoor riverside cafés in the Old Town, check out the Habsburg and Baroque architecture and enjoy the young fun vibe of Ljubljana's large student population.

During our time in Slovenia we take a day trip to Bled, a magical little town about an hour and a half from Ljubljana, set near an emerald green lake. Perched on a cliff high above the lake on a bluff is the Bled Castle, dramatically framed by the snowcapped peaks of the Julian Alps. Dating back to the 11th century, Bled Castle is the epitome of a medieval fortress and has a fairytale appeal, with towers, ramparts, moats and a terrace offering magnificent views. Part of the castle houses a museum with an interesting collection of armour and weapons, carvings, jewellery, tapestries and paintings which trace the history of the castle from the Bronze Age to the 19th century. A walk around Lake Bled (about 6 kilometres) shouldn't take more than an hour or two, including a short climb to a viewing point. The most romantic way to enjoy it is to hire a boat and row over to the island in the middle of the lake or for the non-rowers of the group you can take a Pletna boat and be taken across. On the island you can visit a small 17th century Baroque church called Church of the Assumption, complete with a 'wishing bell' which you can ring to ask a favour. If time permits you can also visit Vintgar Gorge, a raised timber walkway that tracks the gorges river for 1.6 kilometres to a beautiful waterfall.

Included Excursions: Ljubljana City Tour • Lake Bled

Optional Excursions: Funicular to the castle – €4 return, €2.20 one way • Slovenian Ethnographic Museum – €3.5 • City Museum – €2.5 • City of Ljubljana Museum of Contemporary History – €2.5 • Ljubljana Castle Belvedere – €6-8 • Bled Castle – €8 • Church of the Assumption – €12 for the pletna boat to the island

Day 22 to 22 - Budapest

We then travel to our final destination, Budapest. You will have the rest of the afternoon to explore Hungary's stylish capital. However, with travel times sometimes extended due to traffic, you may want to book post-tour accommodation to make sure you have enough time to see all the sites of this fascinating and beautiful capital city.

Straddling the Danube River, the city is comprised of two very different historic cities, Buda on the west bank and Pest on the east bank. Highlights here include Castle Hill, Matthias Church, Fisherman's Bastion, the Liberation Monument, the fabulous St Stephen's Basilica and the much photographed Parliament Building.

Terror Haza (Terror House) is a popular museum recounting stories of espionage and atrocities committed during World War II and during the communist period. During your optional visit you can view very moving testimonial footage from survivors and visit old jail cells, torture chambers and interrogation rooms.

The Dohany Street Synagogue is the largest synagogue in Europe and features stunning decorations. You can also wander around Central Market Hall

and enjoy the intoxicating sights and smells of 'Budapest's pantry' and get an idea of Hungary's food culture - you can even buy chocolates by the kilo!

The perfect place to relax after a day of sightseeing is in a traditional bath. The Széchenyi Medicinal Baths are one of the city's more famous Neo Baroque-style baths with indoor and outdoor pools, thermal pools, saunas and massages in a beautiful setting. After a nice soak you can visit numerous restaurants and bars to visit on Liszt Ferenc for an enjoyable evening's entertainment.

Optional Excursions: Danube Cruise – €16 (drinks only). You can expect to pay approx €30 for dinner aboard. • Hop on, Hop off bus – HUF 6000
 Szechenyi baths – HUF 3600 • House of Terror – HUF 2000 • Basilica of St Stephen – free • Castle Hill – HUF 1700 • Hungarian National Museum – HUF1600

Day 23 to 23 - Depart Budapest

Your adventure of a lifetime comes to an end today. If you have a late flight or have lengthened your stay by adding post tour accommodation you will have more time to explore the sights.

Day by Day Itinerary

Day	Activity	Country	Meals	Single Room
Day 1	Sofia	Bulgaria	B	
Day 2	Skopje	Macedonia	B	✓
Day 3	Lake Ohrid		B	✓
Day 4	Lake Ohrid		B	✓
Day 5	Tirana	Albania	B	✓
Day 6	Budva	Montenegro	B	✓
Day 7	Budva		B	✓
Day 8	Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina		✓
Day 9	Sarajevo			✓
Day 10	Mostar		B	✓
Day 11	Dubrovnik	Croatia		
Day 12	Dubrovnik			
Day 13	Korčula			
Day 14	Hvar Island			
Day 15	Hvar Island			
Day 16	Split			✓
Day 17	Plitvice			✓
Day 18	Zagreb		B	
Day 19	Zagreb		B	
Day 20	Ljubljana	Slovenia	B	✓
Day 21	Ljubljana		B	✓
Day 22	Budapest	Hungary	B	✓
Day 23	Budapest		B	

(B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner included)

For tours that include the option of a single supplement, a ? will indicate in which destinations single rooms are available. The detailed and day by day itineraries above are provided in good faith and it is our intention to adhere to the published route. Changes may be made before or during your tour for operational or safety reasons or to incorporate improvements. Impromptu changes may also occur whilst you are travelling as a result of one-off circumstances such as an excursion being closed on a particular day, weather conditions or transport. Delays are rare but occur occasionally and for this reason and the reasons above this itinerary should be considered as a guide only. Published transport times are approximations and may vary depending on local conditions.

Travel Style

This is an Adventure Tour, we see a destination from the locals' perspective using a variety of transport and staying in small locally owned accommodation. There is a maximum of 16 travellers with an average group size of 8-12. All our Adventure Tours are priced per person on a shared room basis meaning there is no compulsory extra payment for those travelling on their own. Please read the Adventure Tour travel style dossier to ensure you understand the style of travel you are undertaking: <http://www.tucantravel.com/travel-styles/dossier/adventure-tours>

I'd like my own room

If you are a solo traveller, a single room is available on most occasions at an extra cost. Price information can be found on the price page of each tour. This must be booked in advance.

Joining your tour

Your joining location is:

Scottys Boutique Hotel
11 Ekzarh Iosif Street,
Sofia
Bulgaria

Tel: (+359) 889 836 777

scottyshotel@yahoo.com

www.scottyshotel.eu

There are safe deposit boxes for your use (you will get an itemised receipt). Please leave all of your important documents, money and travellers cheques here when you go out but remember to carry some form of ID and a photocopy of your passport with you.

It is not advisable to wear chains or expensive looking watches or jewellery while in major cities. You should also keep your camera concealed when not in use and carry daypacks on your front for extra safety.

Arriving in Sofia

On arrival at Sofia International Airport (SOF) in Bulgaria we recommend that you obtain some local currency, the lev. There are international ATMs inside the airport, as well as money exchange offices offering a good rate. The rate will always vary slightly depending on where you go and it may be worth changing a small amount of money at the airport for your transport, then finding a bank or money exchange within the town centre.

Making your own way

To make your own way to and from your hotel, the Sofia Public Transport Company (SKGT) operates two buses serving the airport. Both run between the airport and the university in the city centre, albeit following different routes. Bus 84 goes to the airport's Terminal 1 while bus 284 serves Terminal 2. Services are frequent during the day and available from 5am – 11pm. You can contact the company by phone on (02) 831 9071/5 or locally on 0700 3 233, or online at <http://www.sumc.bg/en/>.

An official taxi to our hotel in will cost 50-60 lev (€25-€30). The taxis should work on a metered system, please make sure they set the meter when you enter. If they refuse or do not have one, you must set the price before you begin your journey.

Our hotel is located in the heart of Sofia, opposite the synagogue and close to many of the city's main attractions.

Pre-Departure Meeting

When you arrive on day one of your trip, you should find some local information at the hotel lobby. Your tour leader will be staying in the hotel and should have put up a welcome note to let you know what room they are in. A pre-departure meeting is usually held in the afternoon or early evening of day one. You will need to bring the following important items to the meeting with your tour leader:

- Your passport, including any necessary visas and at least one photocopy to give to your tour leader
- Vaccination certificates if relevant to any destinations on your tour
- Travel insurance policy and a photocopy to give to your tour leader
- Your travel voucher
- Your local payment in US\$ cash (Budget Expeditions only)

Missing the tour departure

If you miss the start of your tour, please ask at the reception of the hotel for a message from your tour leader which will give you instructions on how to catch up with the group. Any associated costs will be at your own expense (although, depending on the reason, you may be able to claim these from your travel insurance so ensure you keep all receipts).

If you know in advance that you are unlikely to arrive on time, please contact Tucan Travel immediately so we can inform the tour leader. Tucan Travel cannot be held responsible should your airline/boat/coach be delayed and we are unable to refund any unused portion of your tour.

Time Keeping

Punctuality is very important and throughout the tour your tour leader will give you the time to meet in reception. Tour leaders will often post notes at reception with meeting times, so remember to always look out for these.

Although rare, delays can occur and we therefore advise you not to arrange your onward travel too close to the end of the tour. We take no responsibility for any missed flights or additional expenses if the group arrives late into the departure city at the end of the tour.

Emergency Contact Details

In the case of an emergency before you meet your tour leader, please contact our Tucan Travel Europe Manager:

Tel:+44 (0)7775 53 2808

Please note that this number is a service for emergency calls only. We respectfully request that you consider the urgency of your enquiry. Non-urgent enquiries should be made during office hours. Visit [contact us page](#) for office hours.

Tucan Travel London office: +44 (0)208 896 1600

Keeping in Touch

Your tour leader will point out internet cafes in all major cities and towns and Wi-Fi may be available in some hotels. Hotel details, apart from the joining hotel, are not given in advance and are subject to change, so if someone needs to contact you urgently during your tour, the best method is to contact our office who can pass a message on to the tour leader.

If you intend to take your mobile phone you should find out in advance from your network provider if your phone is set up for international roaming and if there is coverage in your destination. You may also find it considerably more expensive to send texts and receive calls if you are on a non European or British Network. A much cheaper option would be to purchase a telephone card and use local pay phones.

Money

For personal spending money you should bring Euros alongside the local currency (where applicable). Generally the most convenient way of carrying your spending money is by having at least a couple of credit or debit cards. The majority of cards (Visa, Diners Club, MasterCard, American Express and Maestro, Plus and Cirrus for debit cards) are accepted in most large cities and tourist areas. ATMs (cash machines) are widespread. It is always best to carry a mix of cards and cash with you, including notes in small denominations.

Your spending money should cover some meals, optional excursions, souvenirs, drinks, laundry, border and airport taxes and any visas obtained locally. We provide guideline prices for optional excursions in the itinerary to help you budget, but ultimately the amount you will need to budget for your trip very much depends on your individual requirements. We recommend bringing extra money to cover emergencies or unexpected situations.

Tipping

Tipping is a part of the life in Europe, but you should not feel obliged or pressured to tip if you have not received good service. A gratuity of 10% of the total bill is recommended in restaurants. Gratuities are usually expected for local guides on included and optional excursions. Tips are also appreciated by Tucan Travel tour leaders at the end of your tour and we recommend an average of \$2-\$4 per person per day for the duration of your tour. This is only if you feel that their service was up to standard and is completely at your own discretion.

Packing List

The best advice when packing is to travel light and leave space for souvenirs in your bag.

Luggage

On our tours in Europe your luggage must be strictly limited to one reasonably-sized bag or backpack with a recommended maximum weight of no more than 20 kilograms/44 pounds plus one small day pack. You will have to carry your own luggage, sometimes down cobbled streets and up flights of stairs and cannot expect your tour leader to carry your bags.

We recommend a frameless backpack or a sports type shoulder bag which fits comfortably on your shoulders, as they are less bulky and easier to handle than rigid suitcases or framed backpacks. Suitcases are not suitable for our tours and are not recommended. Tucan Travel takes no responsibility for damage to your luggage while on tour.

In addition to your main bag, you will need a small daypack for your everyday excursions. Try to keep this bag as light as possible and make sure that all main sections of your bags can be padlocked. This daypack should have enough room to carry food and snacks, camera and personal items

Sleeping Sheet

Sleeping bags are not required on this tour, but a sleeping bag liner/sleep sheet is optional if you wish to bring one along. Some passengers like to use them on long bus journeys and overnight trains.

Clothing and Footwear

All clothes should be lightweight, durable and easily washable. Please do not bring any military or camouflage-style clothing as it can be dangerous to wear and occasionally illegal. Nights can be cold so it is a good idea to bring at least one pair of warm trousers or jeans plus several thinner sweaters / fleeces which you can layer.

Good, comfortable walking shoes are essential. These do not need to be expensive boots, but they should have good ankle support and grip, be worn in and ideally waterproof.

Essential items:

- A lightweight water/windproof jacket with hood
- Easy to pack wide-brimmed hat or cap
- Swimwear
- Sandals or thongs/jandals/flip flops

Suggested items:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money belt | <input type="checkbox"/> Small collapsible umbrella |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic bags for waterproofing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small calculator | <input type="checkbox"/> Inflatable pillow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Universal washbasin plug | <input type="checkbox"/> Towel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel alarm clock | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel plug adaptor with a USB port |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lip balm, sun block with high UV factor | <input type="checkbox"/> Small sewing kit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wet wipes | <input type="checkbox"/> Insect repellent (DEET 35% min) and bite cream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheap plastic watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Antibacterial hand clensing gel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plenty of spare memory cards for your camera | <input type="checkbox"/> Ear plugs and sleep mask |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare rechargeable batteries for camera | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel sickness tablets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing materials, address book and diary | <input type="checkbox"/> Spare pair of spectacles or contact lenses and solution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel games, cards and a couple of paperbacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard drive or USB stick to back up your photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small medical kit with diarrhoea remedy, rehydration salts, antiseptic cream, sterile dressings, plasters, bandages, pain-killers, safety pins etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket size phrasebook |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Pegless washing line & travel laundry detergent (bio-degradable preferable) |

Laundry

There are usually laundromats or laundry services in or near most of our hotels. Hotel services can be pretty costly however your tour leader will be able to recommend cheaper options. If you wash clothes yourself take care not to be too obvious where you hang them as most hotels do not like guests

washing and drying their clothes in the hotel rooms.

Electricity Supply

If bringing electrical equipment, make sure that you bring a two-pin/pronged, round-pin adapter/plug adapter.

Health, Fitness & Safety

Pack a Medical Kit

A medical kit is handy for minor wounds and ailments. In areas with limited or dubious medical facilities, an emergency medical kit containing sterile syringes is also advisable. By law our staff are not allowed to administer first aid or give drugs to travellers, so please be prepared with your own supplies.

If you are taking medication, please ensure you bring an adequate supply and a letter from your doctor to avoid potential issues at border crossings.

Fitness & Suitability

This is a public transport-based tour so it is essential that you be able to carry your bags over distances between bus and train stations and hotels, generally for up to 20 minutes. Disruptions happen and while your tour leader will make every effort to ensure your trip runs smoothly, patience, a sense of humour and willingness to get involved and help your tour leader are essential ingredients for a successful and happy group.

If you have any pre-existing medical conditions please let us know at the time you book or as early before departure as possible. Depending on the severity of the condition, you may be asked to produce a medical certificate from your doctor approving your participation in this tour. While this would only happen in very exceptional circumstances, if we consider you incapable completing this tour or you have concealed an existing medical condition which is affecting your ability to participate in the tour of Tucan Travel reserve the right to turn you away without reimbursement.

Safety & Security

Europe is generally very safe, even more so in a group. Reasonable precaution is advised; do not bring valuable jewellery or watches (even fakes can catch the eye of a thief), do not bring your camera equipment in a flashy camera bag, be prudent and keep your valuables in a safe secure place whenever possible, wear a money belt and distribute your valuables throughout your luggage, heed your tour leader's advice and always keep an eye and a hand on your camera and bags in public places. Tucan Travel cannot accept responsibility for any valuables left in safe deposits in hotels or on public transport.

Travel Guides

If you would like to discover more about your destination, including history, geography, climate and language, please have a read of our country travel guides available here: <http://www.tucantravel.com/destination-travel-guides/europe-travel-guides>.

Documents

Passport

Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months after you have finished your tour with sufficient blank pages for visas and immigration stamps. Photocopy your passport, leaving one copy at home and taking one with you on tour. If you lose your passport while on tour, you will be responsible for any expenses incurred such as extra accommodation and transport while replacing your passport and will not be entitled to a refund of any unused portion of your tour.

Tour Documents

Before you depart you will be issued with a voucher for your tour and separate vouchers for any extra services such as airport transfers and pre/post tour accommodation. Please print these out and bring them with you. This dossier is updated regularly, so we recommend checking our website for the latest version just prior to the start of your tour.

Final Balance

The balance for your tour is due no later than 60 days prior to the start of your tour and no tour vouchers will be issued until this is received. In addition please send the following details at least 60 days before you depart:

- Passport number, date of issue, date of expiry, nationality and place of issue
- Your full name and date of birth
- Flight arrival details in your starting city
- Special requirements, e.g. special dietary requirements or allergies

Please let us know if you are travelling with another person on the tour but have made separate bookings and we will endeavour to make suitable rooming arrangements.

Visas

All countries have visa requirements that are subject to change at short notice. A general guideline for visa requirements is available here:

<http://www.tucantravel.com/before-you-go/visa-guide>, but you must check with your local embassy or consulate for the very latest visa requirement information based on your nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have all necessary visas for your tour. If you would like help applying for visas, we have recommended visa agencies on our visa page that we work with regularly.

Important things to check when applying for visas:

- Does the validity of the visa cover the duration of your time spent in the country?
- Do you require a single or multiple entry visa(s) for your tour?
- Are you required to show additional documentation when you arrive in a country? (Examples include proof of onward travel and travel itinerary)

Some visas are only valid for entry within three months of the date of issue which means on some of our longer tours the visa would expire before you are scheduled to enter the country. In these cases you must obtain the relevant visa during your tour. If it is necessary for you to obtain any visas en-route, please contact Tucan Travel or your travel consultant and inform your tour leader at the start of the tour. If you do not have the appropriate visas, Tucan Travel will not reimburse any expenses incurred in acquiring visas or any unused portion of the tour.

It is best to apply for visas in your home country if possible. If applying for visas by post, please allow plenty of time before departure and send your application by registered mail. Postal applications tend to be given a lower priority than in person applications and can take longer to process.

Special Note: If you have dual nationality it is advised not to obtain different visas in different passports. Although this may sometimes be cheaper, you may encounter problems at border crossings if your exit stamps from one country are not the same as your visa for the next.

Travel Insurance Policy

Travel insurance is compulsory for all tours. You must be adequately insured for medical, hospital, baggage and personal expenses, any necessary extra travel (rejoining tour or repatriation) as well as curtailment and cancellation.

We strongly recommend that all clients carry a copy of their full policy document with them at all times, together with any certificate showing the policy number and emergency contact details. Your tour leader will also ask for a photocopy of your insurance document, so please take this to the pre-departure meeting at the start of your tour. You will not be able to commence your tour unless you can provide proof of insurance to your tour leader.

Document Checklist

- Tour Voucher & Vouchers for extra services
- Passport (with photocopies of information pages and visas)
- Tour Dossier
- Cash & credit/debit cards (best to take a mixture and more than one card in case one does not work)
- Travel Insurance Certificate and photocopy for tour leader
- Travel consultant's phone number and email address
- Proof of onward travel, ie airline ticket

Optional Excursions

Optional excursions are not operated by Tucan Travel and while every effort is made prices may not be up-to-date and are intended as a general guide to help you budget for your trip. Prices for vehicle-based excursions such as game drives are approximate based on the optimum number of participants and the actual price may vary depending on group size.

Sufficient safety equipment such as helmets and life jackets are sometimes not available and Tucan Travel is unable to provide this equipment. If you intend to participate in an optional excursion you may like to consider bringing your own safety gear.

Excursions are run by a local operator or third party with both Tucan Travel and the Tour Leader acting as a booking agent only. Optional activities are not part of the tour and Tucan Travel's booking conditions do not apply to them. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the correct travel insurance for the excursions you intend to take part in and Tucan Travel is not liable for any injuries incurred.

Responsible Travel

We work hard to ensure our tours are sustainably and ethically run. You can read our responsible travel policy and advice on how you can travel responsibly here: <http://www.tucantravel.com/about-us/responsible-travel>.

Meet Up

Our free Meet Up app, available on Facebook, on iTunes and Google Play is an opportunity to chat with other passengers before you depart or keep in touch when you arrive back from tour. Information on the app is available here: <http://www.tucantravel.com/before-you-go/meet-up>

Add-ons & Extras

On many of our Group Tours, we spend one night in our arrival and departure cities. If you want to explore these cities more we can book pre and post tour accommodation, city tours and airport transfers for you. Price information can be found on the price page of each tour. We also have **Add-ons** - short packages that can be booked alongside a tour or on their own and have been carefully designed to ensure you don't miss out on popular highlights.

Illegal Drugs

The possession or use of illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our tours. When overseas you are subject to local laws and the penalties for breaking these laws can be harsh. In order to safeguard the interests of the group as a whole, our tour leaders have been instructed to insist that any person found with illegal drugs leave the tour immediately – without refund. The tour leader's decision on this matter is final. If you need to carry certain drugs with you for purposes of medication, please inform your tour leader and ensure that you carry a copy of your prescription or letter from your doctor.