



17220 Newhope Street #203, Fountain Valley, CA., 92708, USA @ 800.795.1633

## 2024 TIPS ON TRAVEL: DANUBE DISCOVERY CRUISE

M/S "RIVER SAPPHIRE"

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

### TO OUR VALUED GUESTS: WORDS OF WISDOM PRIOR TO YOUR TRIP

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**. By booking this program, please remember that you act as an "Ambassador" of the United States/Canada when traveling abroad. The interactions you have will leave an everlasting impression on the places you visit and people you meet along your journey.

It is therefore important that we advise and prepare you for some of the cultural and social differences you may encounter. These **Travel Tips** have been designed to provide useful information and suggestions to ease your adjustment and help prepare accordingly. Thoroughly acquaint yourself with the information provided herewith and don't be afraid to do your own research. There are numerous reliable sources available online and in trusted guide books to use in conjunction with these Tips – preplanning will make all the difference. Your enjoyment of the trip will depend in large part on your preparedness and positive attitude. Here are a few pointers that will get you ready to go ☺ **Thank you!**

### 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. When included, vouchers will be **sent/emailed** with your final documents.

**Airfare:** May be purchased through our company or arranged on your own. E-Tickets issued by our company will be sent (EMAIL) with your final documents. In some instances, when tickets are issued directly by the airlines, they may be sent to you under separate cover – or forwarded electronically. Check with your personal airline carrier for any information about seat assignments, baggage allowances, mileage benefits etc., as rules differ dependent on the airline. In the event of lost luggage, contact the airline/airport directly as we are not responsible for any lost or stolen luggage.

**Transfers Included:** If you have purchased your airfare or have prepaid your arrival transfers through us, please look for your Cruise Director and/or local Guides **after exiting** the Customs Area of the airport. **They will be holding our yellow Global Tours & Cruises Signs or other signage relating to your group.** In the event that you have trouble locating the Cruise Director/Guide upon arrival, please contact them directly on the number provided on the Contact Sheet included with your final documents. It is highly recommended you save their contact for the remainder of your cruise, in case of emergency.



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**Transfers NOT Included:** If you have NOT purchased airfare through us and are arranging for your own arrival/departure transportation, we will provide you with the names and addresses of the hotels and port locations which will be listed on the Contact Sheet sent with your final documents.

**Travel Documents:** Before leaving home, please ensure that you have a valid **PASSPORT** and appropriate **VISA**. Based on the countries visited, at the time of printing, US citizens do not need visas for this cruise. 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 proper travel documents are your responsibility.

**Baggage:** When packing your suitcase, make a detailed list of all items you pack for the trip, and then leave this list at home. 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. 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. 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 your airline for instructions and pack accordingly or you may face overweight luggage surcharges. We recommend packing lightly to be safe.

### **Cruise Dress Code: Informal**

The dress code onboard is informal/casual. The only time you may wish to “dress up” is for the Captain’s Farewell Dinner or when taking an evening cultural performance (theater, ballet, or similar); on these occasions, “business smart” style is acceptable. Basic laundry services can be provided through your cabin steward for an additional fee. Dry cleaning, however, is not available. DO pay particular attention to footwear – our cruises involve extensive walking during visits ashore, so comfort is key.

### **HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS**

**HOTELS:** Whenever we offer land programs in conjunction with a cruise, we always use First Class properties, or best available, and breakfast is included (for further information consult your itinerary). Other meals are provided as specified in your tour itinerary. In all cases, hotels are carefully selected to provide the best combination of location, comfort and value. For actual hotels used on your particular departure, please check the "Contact List" included with your final documents.

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## FINAL DOCUMENT DELIVERY

**ELECTRONIC DELIVERY (FREE):** Once final payment is received, all documents including day-by-day itinerary, travel tips, airline tickets, contacts and other related documents will be sent via email.

**HARD COPY (DELIVERY FEE):** If you do not have email OR prefer to receive paper documents along with our special travel gift set, you must notify us at the time of booking. These items will be sent approximately 2 weeks prior to your departure via registered or overnight mail. While the travel gift set is complimentary, the cost of delivery service (approx. \$25 per address) will be added to your invoice.

## CUSTOMS & ENTRY FORMALITIES

When entering **Austria** or **Romania**, you will have a choice of exiting through the **Green Line** (*nothing to declare*) or the **Red Line** (*yes you have something to declare*). Allowances for cigarettes (1 carton) and liquor (1 liter) are standard. For additional details contact the appropriate consulate of each country. **NOTE:** In some former Eastern European block countries (*Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia*); the customs officers are a tad more rigid with items of a **technical nature** (computers, cameras etc.). Be sure you voluntarily declare all items that are of any **greater value - if you want to keep them when returning home!** **CASH: Up to \$10,000 can now be brought in and taken out of all European countries without declarations.**

## DOCKING LOCATIONS

For those passengers arriving directly to our ships on the day of embarkation, please note the docking locations of our ships which currently are;

### VIENNA\*

Vienna NUSSDORF, Donaustationen #34

<https://www.google.com/maps?q=48.267534,16.364694>

### ROMANIA\*

1) Turnu Magurele: (2.5 hours from Bucharest)

*River Port of Bechet – only one.*

<https://www.google.com/maps?q=43.712945,24.893013>

**\*Because there are several docking locations in Vienna/Bucharest, these locations may be subject to change. Please consult your final documents which will show the correct location for your sailing date.**

## CAUTIONS FOR EXPORTING

**ART / ANTIQUES:** High end works of art such as original paintings, sculpture, icons, cannot be taken out of the countries without permission. Antiques such as old coins, weapons, furniture, samovars and musical instruments can be taken out only if you have a permit from the Ministry of Culture from each country. **YES** Items such as coats, caviar, carpets, jewelry and crystal, in reasonable quantities and purchased at legitimate shops can be taken out of the country and NO custom fees are applicable.



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**SUGGESTED SOUVENIRS:** Any types of handicrafts are usually of the highest quality. Romania also produces some excellent and inexpensive wines for wine aficionados!

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Please do not photograph people without first asking for their **permission** to do so. Do not take photographs of airports or other military bases or installations. Remember to bring all the film or memory cards that you will need, because outside of major cities, they may be hard to find!

**NOTE:** Most museums, galleries and concert halls either charge a fee for photos/videos or may not allow photography at all. Please check and respect the rules set forth by each individual establishment.

## CRUISE RULES

**Maritime Law** - As with a pilot on a plane, the Captain of a ship is the **ultimate law**. He/she is responsible for the safety and comfort of the vessel and its passengers. It is within the Captain's jurisdiction to change the sequence or duration of stops/ports if necessary due to inclement weather conditions, high or low water levels, dock and lock schedules, technical reasons, etc. The Captain has the right to remove unruly passengers, quarantine the ship in case of disease or similar. Therefore, although unlikely, certain changes in schedules may occur. Though we expect to provide sightseeing of all of the major attractions listed in our programs, there is always a possibility that the sequence of touring may be altered to take into account the operating hours at museums, galleries and monuments. Shore excursions may be changed in response to sailing conditions and other factors. ***Your understanding and cooperation in such instances will be greatly appreciated!***

**Cultural Differences** - Remember that you may be traveling through countries whose political, social and cultural backgrounds may be very different from your own. Do not let any potential differences govern your perspective or deter your overall experience. Instead, travel with an open mind, and you will satisfy your curiosity about the local people along with their land, history and culture.

**Service** - If you receive poor service at any point, try to take it in good humor and solve it directly. If you have any serious complaints, take them to your guide and/or Cruise Director who will assist you.

**Bureaucracy** - Expect a little bit of red tape, and try not to be bothered by bureaucratic procedures, which may be different from country to country.

**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!



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### 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 during the tour. Wait for all information to be given before asking questions. Any special requests regarding personal and/or 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.

### M/S "RIVER SAPPHIRE"

The gorgeous River Sapphire (*built in 2006 and refreshed in 2020*) has only 3 passenger decks, 2 of which all have floor to ceiling French Balconies offering stupendous views of the passing countryside! With a maximum of 164 passengers catered to by a wonderful crew of 40, your sailing experience will satisfy your every requirement. All spacious staterooms (161 sq ft) and Junior Suites (236 sq ft) feature private bathrooms and enclosed showers, AC units, flat screen TV's, mini safes and mini refrigerators. She also features spacious public areas including a one seat restaurant serving world class cuisine with 2 free glasses of wine/beer/soft drinks for lunch and dinner, a warm and cozy bar, an evening lounge with live music, 24/7 coffee stations, a fitness center, elevator, shaded sun deck and free basic Wi-Fi throughout the ship (subject to signal). **Non-smoking interiors – on board currency – Euro.**

**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 Captain's radio. Although our Cruise Manager and Cruise Directors may have cell phones, these are used for business and emergency services **ONLY.** **If bringing your US cell phone, make sure you buy an overseas package to avoid exorbitant fees by your US mobile service provider.**

**FREE INTERNET & WIFI:** Are available throughout the ship. The service is free but the level of signal may vary depending on sailing itinerary and location of ports.

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

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**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 menus 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 in the cabins (sink/shower) is clean and fine for use for washing. Water served in the restaurant and bar area is also purified for drinking. For those with "touchy tummies," we suggest purchasing bottled water. A small bottle of water per person is provided in cabins each evening.

**ELEVATOR:** Connects all the decks.

**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. On the large **Sun deck**, you will also find lovely covered and 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 globe – Norway, Scandinavia, even local folks! Its great way to meet the people of the world and make new and long-lasting friends. Whatever the passenger mix, however, **English is always the primary language used.**

**SMOKING:** The ship is non-smoking. Smoking is only allowed in designated areas on outside decks.

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**ELECTRICITY:** Electrical current in hotels and on board ship is the European 220 volts/50MHZ. Therefore, 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. (Target)**

**HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS:** Please note that this river vessel and others have limited services for physically impaired passengers. Due to the small size and shallow draft, they sometimes anchor at remote undeveloped ports and stops. While this ability enhances the itineraries, it also means that some of our excursions require extensive walking. 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 decks. **Prospective passengers with physical impairments must therefore be self-sufficient since the vessel's crew or staff cannot provide services of a personal nature.** Regretfully, we do not recommend these cruises to people with severe disabilities or those reliant on a wheelchair.

**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!**

## **MONEY MATTERS & PAYMENT METHODS**

- **CASH: YES – PREFERRED IN EE COUNTRIES**
- **CREDIT CARDS: YES – VISA OR MASTERCARD for on board expenses**
- **TRAVELER AND PERSONAL CHECKS: NOT ACCEPTED**

**CURRENCIES:** The official currency used on board our ship is the **EURO**. While most of Western Europe has adopted the **EURO**, some of the former Eastern European countries still use their own (***Serbia-Dinar***). For the rate of exchange to the **US dollar**, please check online a few days prior to your



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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.

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

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 CASH in EUROS OR DOLLARS**. 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, Credit Cards (with chip) as well as Debit Cards are now widely accepted in most of the major cities along your route.

***IMPORTANT!*** *Optional excursions on board and Tipping to guides, drivers, especially ship crews and Cruise Managers can only be done IN EURO CASH! The reason is that optional excursions are handled by different local operators, are booked at last minute and must be paid upfront so do to time constraints it is impossible to process credit cards. For tipping please note that the crew is SEASONAL, coming from various countries and are not employees of the ship. Therefore the only way they can get their share of tips is if it is in cash. Sorry for the inconvenience!*

If “cash is king” how much should you bring? Although everyone is different, we suggest that you set aside at least **€800 EUR/\$1000 USD per person** to cover your optional tours, tipping and shopping expenses. If you plan on purchasing more expensive items you may want to bring more.

### **TIPPING SUGGESTIONS – TIPS ARE CASH ONLY**

The following suggestions are given as guidelines ONLY. While your gracious generosity will be appreciated by those working hard to make your trip a truly memorable one, gratuities are based on service and ultimately left to your discretion. You may leave as little or as much as you feel comfortable with. If you endear yourself to any particular crew member and wish to reward them directly - please feel free to do so! However, since we repeatedly get asked to provide guidelines - here they are:

**Tips should be divided into 2 separate categories:**

1. **INDIVIDUAL TIPS:** For personnel on land portions who have earned your gratitude (Cruise Directors, local guides, bus drivers, or specific staff members that have gone beyond the call of duty to help you). **These should be given directly to each individual following the service.**
  - a. **Individual tipping amounts:** The so called **standard tip should be 3 EURO per person for the guide and 2 EU for the driver** for local tours and excursions.
  - b. A 1 € tip will also be appreciated by porters and a 1 € per person/per day should be left at hotels for your maids. For taxi-cabs or at restaurants add 10% to 15% to your bill.





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**OUR 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 TIPS:** For a group of individuals working as a team to deliver services to you on cruise portions of the trip (*such as the ship’s crew*).

- a. For ship crews we implement a share system (or “pool”) whereby all crew members, from the Captain to the deck hands, 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 only about 1/3 of the crew. However, there are more crew members behind the scenes whose good work is equally important to the smooth operation of the cruise. From the engine crew who keep us afloat, to the staff members who arrange onshore services, to the kitchen team who work to obtain fresh ingredients and prepare daily meals. Therefore, to ensure equality for all, we recommend: **\$10 (USD) per person/per day = \$100 (USD) per person for a 10-day cruise.** Pooled tips will then be collected in a designated “**Gratuities Box**” at the end of the cruise to be divided among all crew.

### 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 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. Dosage should be indicated.

*Always pack any personal medications in your carry on luggage, not in your checked baggage.*

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- Common remedies such as laxatives, indigestion tablets, aspirin and travel sickness pills (*However, the latter will probably not be needed while in the protected waterways of the inland rivers*).
- Sunglasses
- Sewing kit, first aid kit, hand sanitizer, and other toiletries
- Binoculars (excellent for viewing scenes from the rivers)
- Batteries for cameras, shaver etc.
- Transformer/converter and plug adapters

## **BON VOYAGE!**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE YOUR TRAVEL AGENT OR CONTACT**

## **VALUE WORLD TOURS, INC.**

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### **OR STAY CONNECTED VIA SOCIAL MEDIA**

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