

# CHRISTMAS IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

## 14 DAYS



- Each departure limited to 20 guests
- Luxury hotels or best in each location
- Three a la carte meals a day (table d'hote, if unavailable), including beverages of your choice
- Professionally escorted
- All sightseeing, including entrance fees and special events as indicated in the itinerary
- Arrival and departure transfer by private car
- All gratuities included (also your tour manager's)
- Porterage of 2 suitcases per passenger
- Airport departure taxes

Sleigh bells, the fresh smell of pine boughs on doorways, crystal chandeliers shining through lace curtains, cups of hot coffee, and warm mulled cider or wine - these are the winter holidays in central Europe.

Your journey begins as you arrive in Berlin; a city rich in history. You travel south to Dresden and stay in a beautifully restored Baroque palace. At the renowned spa center of Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) in the Czech Republic, you can relax in herbal baths and saunas after shopping for fine Moser crystal and Pirkenhammer porcelain.

During your stay in Prague, you visit the lovely historical landmarks in this "city of a thousand spires"; stroll across the Charles Bridge and down the cobblestone streets of Old Town. You stop in the incredibly lovely town of Cesky Krumlov in southern Bohemia on your way to Austria and the charming city of Salzburg, where you spend Christmas Eve. And the concert you attend in Vienna on Christmas night marks the beginning of your stay in this wonderful romantic city.

### Day 1 (December 15, Friday)

#### USA – BERLIN

Depart the USA for your overnight flight to Berlin.

### Day 2 (December 16, Saturday)

#### BERLIN

You are met upon your arrival in Berlin and driven by private car to the **Four Seasons Hotel** - the most luxurious in the city, one block from the Friedrichstrasse boutiques. The afternoon is free for your leisure; however, your tour manager will be in the lobby to answer any questions. This evening, join your travel companions for a private cocktail reception and à la carte dining in the open-hearth restaurant of the hotel. (D)

### Day 3 (December 17,

### Sunday)

#### BERLIN

This morning, you tour this fascinating city that still reveals the different lifestyles of the East and the West. The largest city in Germany, it is eight times the size of Paris, and more than a third of the city is comprised of forests, parks, and

waterways. You see the huge Neo-Renaissance palace (the *Reichstag*), the infamous Brandenburg Gate, and travel along the famous avenue, Unter den Linden.

On your visit to the distinguished Pergamon Museum, you see the renowned Collection of Antiquities – including the Greek Altar and the processional way to the ancient Babylonian Gate of Ishtar. (B,L,D)

### Day 4 (December 18, Monday)

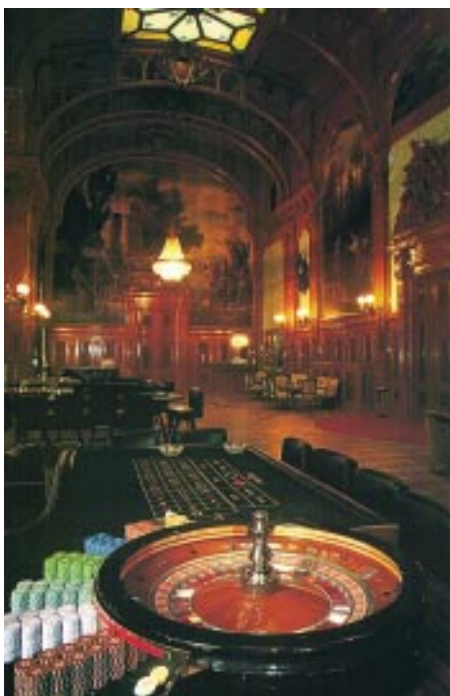
#### BERLIN – DRESDEN

After your breakfast, you journey southward through the beautiful green forests and silver lakes of Saxony to Dresden, set on the banks of the Elbe River. Before its devastation during World War II, this city was called the "Florence of the Elbe". You see the glorious German Baroque



The Baroque 'Zwinger', Dresden

ACCOMMODATIONS



Where kings and queens once played, Casino, Karlovy Vary

Zwinger in the historic center - with its exhibit of the famous Old Masters and the Green Vault, with one of the finest jewelry collections in the world, and the Semper Opera House.

You check into the **Taschenberg Palais – Kempinski**, the most illustrious accommodation in the city. Originally the 18<sup>th</sup>-century home of Countess von Cosel, it was restored after the war; the yellow Baroque exterior is complemented by fountains and statues. Inside, you enjoy all the modern conveniences of today. You dine à la carte this evening in a restaurant at the hotel that features delicious international and Saxon dishes. (B,L,D)

**Day 5 (December 19, Tuesday)**

**DRESDEN - KARLOVY VARY**

Today, you have a real treat – a trip to a spa! You cross the border into the Czech Republic and drive on to Karlovy Vary. Better known to some by its German name of Karlsbad, it is a very well-known spa and tourist center located in the Tepla River valley. Legend tells us that the local warm springs were discovered by Emperor Charles IV during a hunting trip in the mid-1300s. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, water was being carried into more than 200 local spa houses by way of wooded troughs.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, aristocracy from all over Europe came to Karlovy Vary for treatments. It was also a favorite destination for Goethe, Schille, Beethoven, and Chopin, among others. There is splendid architecture here – large monumental

**Berlin – Four Seasons Hotel (2nights), Condé Nast Traveler Gold List '99**  
 Adjacent to the magnificent concert hall and 18th-century cathedrals, the Four Seasons is the most luxurious hotel in the city center, blending modern and elegantly preserved architecture around a quiet garden courtyard.

**Dresden – Taschenberg Palais (1), Leading Hotels in the World '99**  
 Completed in 1709 under Augustus the Strong and destroyed in 1945, the former "guest house of the kings" was re-erected as the Kempinski Hotel Taschenbergpalais Dresden. Located in the heart of Dresden's historic city center, next door to the world famous Semper Opera and the Zwinger, the Baroque palace is ideally situated.

**Karlovy Vary – Grandhotel Pupp (1)**  
 The most beautiful hotel of Western Bohemia has been taking care of its guests since the year 1701. The quiet green valley with therapeutic power of hot springs brings fascination to every visitor.

**Prague – Hotel Intercontinental (3)**  
 Located in the medieval Old Town, close to unique historical monuments and with marvelous views of Prague Castle, the hotel reflects the ambiance of the royal past. The spacious guest rooms offer luxurious accommodation.

**Salzburg – Hotel Österreichischer Hof (2), Condé Nast Traveler Gold List '99**  
 This dignified inn offers five beautiful dining rooms with a wonderful variety of décor and gourmet menus and elegant guest rooms.

**Vienna – Hotel Imperial (3), Condé Nast Traveler Gold List '99, Leading Hotels of the World**  
 At one time, this building was Vienna's most prominent ducal palace. The spacious opulence of the Baroque marble lobby with its glittering chandeliers offers a vivid picture of "old Vienna".

buildings line the riverbanks and the hillside above; the façades of most of the houses are richly decorated with stucco. Checking into the **Grandhotel Pupp**, you can relax in the Belle Epoque atrium lounge, with intricate stucco detailing and inlaid marble floors gleaming under the massive chandelier. You are free to take full advantage of everything the hotel has to offer, including the sauna, solarium, massages, and mineral or herb bubble baths.

There is also time to go shopping in the village for some of the marvelous Moser glass or fine bone china and Pirkenhammer porcelain figures. This evening, you continue to be pampered in the hotel's lavish and highly regarded restaurant. (B,L,D)

**Day 6 (December 20, Wednesday)**

**KARLOVY VARY - PRAGUE**

After a relaxing morning at the spa, you continue on your journey today to Prague, "golden" capital of the Czech Republic, and the crossroads of Europe. Located on the Vitava River, the city was originally five separate towns that today represent various districts of Prague. It was one of the few central European cities that did not suffer significant damage during the two World Wars; as a result, there is a host of lovely historical buildings that remain in their original state.

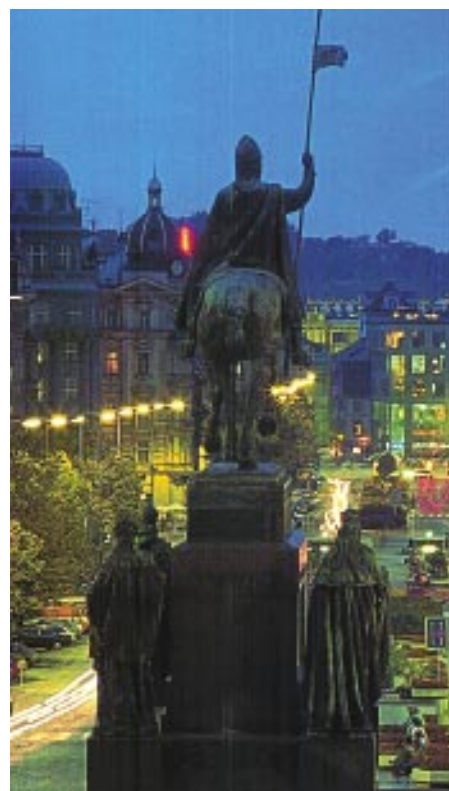
You check into the **Hotel Intercontinental**, where its central location provides you with easy access to the city's key sights. This evening, you make your à la carte selections in the hotel's top-floor

restaurant, with lovely illuminated views of the city at night. (B,L,D)

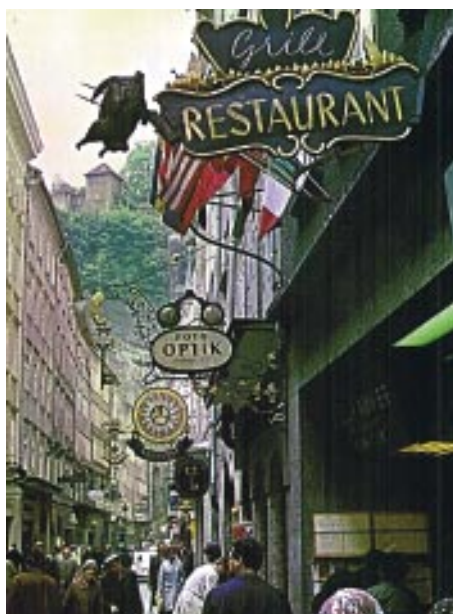
**Day 7 (December 21, Thursday)**

**PRAGUE**

Prague is filled with rare delights – religious masterpieces from the Middle Ages and wonderful history museums occupying old landmarks that are, in turn, works of art. The city also has an incredible number of cathedrals, palaces, and gardens dating back over half a millen-



"Good King" Wenceslas Square, Prague



Shopping in Salzburg's Getreidegasse

nium. Along the cobblestone streets and bridges, while visiting the Old Town Square, New Town, and the historic Jewish Quarter, you find an older, quieter Europe. This afternoon, you have leisure time for window shopping in some of Prague's best shops, featuring such articles as Bohemian crystal, china, wooden toys, and antiques. Many of these stores are conveniently located in the city's center, especially in the area around Wenceslas Square. You have a most enjoyable activity this evening – you go to a performance at the Opera after your à la carte dinner in a local restaurant. (B,L,D)

### Day 8 (December 22, Friday)

#### PRAGUE

The history of Prague begins with the Prague Castle that was founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Its assorted sharp spires and roofs are the definitive landmark of the city. The complex sits high above the Vltava River; and within its walls are a palace, a monastery, three churches, and various chapels and towers, representing the architecture of every period of its history.

You see St. Vitus's Cathedral, the Royal Palace, St. George's Basilica and Convent, and the Golden Lane, among other sights. There is a wonderful view of Prague from the terraces laid out along the former ramparts of the Castle. Today, Vaclav Havel, president of the republic, has his offices here. After a free afternoon to explore the city on your own, join your travel companions for dinner at a restaurant featuring such typical local dishes as potato and mushroom soup, beef goulash, veal stew, and green beans with paprika,

followed by very tasty dessert crepes or sweet dumplings. (B,L,D)

### Day 9 (December 23, Saturday)

#### PRAGUE - SALZBURG

After breakfast this morning, you journey southward from Prague through the rolling green hills and medieval towns of Southern Bohemia. Germans and Czechs have lived together on this land for centuries; since the end of World War II, the area has been considered a "close family relation" to nearby Austria and Bavaria. You stop in the town of Tabor, named after a Biblical mountain and settled for the sole purpose of receiving Christ on his return to earth in the Second Coming. You have lunch in Cesky Krumlov – a town that is described in UNESCO's World Heritage List as "second only to Venice in terms of its beauty and cultural significance". Post-cards of this village will never do it justice. The picturesque, narrow, winding streets cling like ribbons to the hills as they follow the terrain around and down to the Vltava River that, in turn, winds around it. Standing watch from above is the majestic castle of the Rozmberk family (one of the wealthiest and oldest noble families in the area).

Your journey continues southward into Austria, across the Danube, to Salzburg. The enormous gray castle on the hilltop, Hohensalzburg, looms over the city; it was home to prince-bishops in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The modern town is spread along one side of the beautiful Salzach River; the old town, bristling with domes and church spires, sits across the river, just below the intriguing Hohensalzburg.



Festive Dinners

Overlooking the Salzach River, your hotel, the *Österreichischer Hof* – has an elegant staircase leading up to an atrium with palms, ferns and intricate stonework. It is a perfect place to relax and sip some Austrian hot mulled wine. This afternoon, you stroll through the Christmas Market (*Christkindlmarkt*) in the main square. A beloved Austrian tradition, this is an occasion for families to get together specifically to make decorations for the holiday – advent wreaths, hand-dipped candles, tree ornaments, spice bouquets – which are then brought to market. Artists and merchants bring the old-fashioned holiday spirit to life.

Tonight, you dine à la carte in one of the local restaurants featuring typical dishes such as smoked pork, baked carp, or roast beef. For dessert, try the delicious soufflé, *Salzburger Nockerl*, that is a classic from this area. (B,L,D)

### Day 10 (December 24, Sunday)

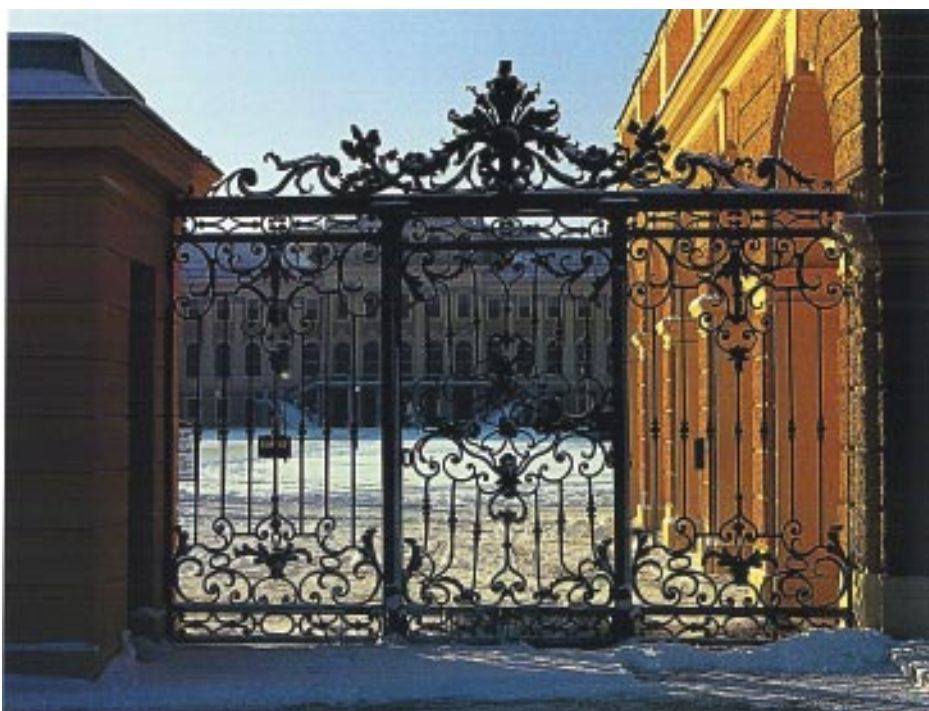
#### SALZBURG

Salzburg is magical, a fairy-tale town of charming old houses set along narrow streets, whimsical wrought-iron signs, men clad in *lederhosen*, and women wearing multi-colored *dirndls*. Its name evolves from the mining of salt – the "white gold" that historically supported the region. There are many magnificent architectural treasures here; and fortunately, numerous historical buildings have been restored rather than replaced.

You see St. Peter's Abbey, founded in 696, and the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Cathedral with its three bronze doors symbolizing faith, hope, and charity. Just up the hill, you visit the Hohensalzburg castle-fortress. Begun in 1077, it was enlarged and remodeled (with the addition of state rooms) over many centuries; there are sweeping views of the city and the countryside from the terrace. Salzburg is the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; although the local citizenry didn't offer much encouragement during his lifetime, today they are pleased to recognize him. At his birthplace on Getreidegasse, you see where Mozart composed the majority of his early works. In the mid-1960s, music of another variety graced Salzburg with the filming of "The Sound of Music".

Tonight is Christmas Eve – "*Froehliche Weihnachten*"! You dine à la carte at the hotel from a menu specially prepared for the occasion. As part of your celebration, you have the option to attend an evening Christmas Mass in the Old Town. (B,L,D)

FOR RESERVATIONS, PLEASE TELEPHONE TOLL FREE: 1-888-377-8023



Palace of Schönbrunn, Vienna

**Day 11 (December 25, Monday)**

**SALZBURG - VIENNA**

After your Christmas morning breakfast, you set out through the lake district for Vienna, capital of Austria. The landscape is dotted with farms, low rolling hills, and high mountains. Numerous images come to mind when thinking of Vienna – magnificent architecture along wide boulevards, elaborate imperial palaces, coffee houses offering delectable pastries, crystal chandeliers, lace curtains, Baroque mirrors, choirboys with angelic voices, the Danube River, Strauss' waltz, and elegant shops.

Upon your arrival in Vienna, you check into the **Hotel Imperial**, which was once the city's most prominent ducal palace. The spacious opulence of the Baroque marble lobby, with its glittering

chandeliers, offers a vivid picture of "old Vienna" when this was the Wurttemberg Palais. The wealth of antiques, tapestries, polished marble, crystal, and glossy honey-toned wood provides an elite, yet warm, setting. This evening, you dine from the à la carte menu, pampered by an attentive staff and entertained by the strains of classical music. (B,L,D)

**Day 12 (December 26, Tuesday)**

**VIENNA**

For six centuries, Vienna was the residence of the imperial court, and the influence of the Habsburgs remains clearly evident. Now the seat of the neutral federal government, it enjoys considerable prestige. Set in the Danube River valley, with the hills of the Vienna Woods creating a northern and western border, the city is built on both sides of the

Danube. St. Stephen's Cathedral, with its glorious tiled roof, is at the heart of the old city in the *Innere Stadt*, which is encircled by the Ringstrasse. It was built on the site of a 12<sup>th</sup>-century church – the main entrance of the original structure was incorporated into the present building.

You visit the

Imperial Palace (*Hofburg*) – favorite residence of the Habsburgs – and see the imperial apartments as well as the treasury. There is ample time this afternoon for shopping for items such as porcelains, enamelware, and needlepoint in the shops along the pedestrian-only thoroughfares of Kärtner Strasse, Graben and the Kohlmarkt; the numerous cafes will also tempt you with coffee and pastries. This evening, you go to a typical Viennese wine tavern (*Heuriger*) to sample the local specialties for dinner. (B,L,D)

**Day 13 (December 27, Wednesday)**

**VIENNA**

Today, you visit the sumptuous Baroque Schönbrunn Palace, constructed in the late 1700s; it was home to Empress Maria Theresa (as well as Napoleon). Painted in Maria Theresa's favorite shade of yellow, there are 1,441 rooms (including a chapel and a theater). In 1918, in the Blue Chinese Salon, the last Habsburg emperor, Charles I, abdicated; and the palace became the property of the new republic. Later, in the afternoon, you have the opportunity to stroll through the city to look for your own treasures to purchase to bring home.

This evening, you drive a short distance outside the city into the countryside to an elegant hunting lodge for dinner. (B,L,D)

**Day 14 (December 28, Thursday)**

**VIENNA - USA**

Your journey comes to an end as your tour manager escorts you to the airport for your flight back to the USA. (B)



Demel, Vienna's most famous coffeehouse

**DATES**

Depart (from USA)	Return
Dec 15 - FRI	Dec 28 - THU

**COST PER PERSON**

Land Portion (Double occupancy)	\$ 6,485
Single supplement	\$ 1,460
International Airfare (New York)	\$ 780
<i>All airfares are subject to availability and to change by the airlines. Cancellation penalties and surcharges may apply. Fares from other U.S. cities, as well as First and Business Class rates, are also available.</i>	

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