It's time to finish the Centennial Celebration Incentive Travel campaign strong to ensure your spot on our spectacular Danube River Cruise.

There's no better way to see Eastern Europe. Our Danube River Cruise starts and stops in the enchanting city of Vienna, where we fly into and board our ships that we'll use as our floating hotel for our European adventure. Stops at Budapest, Bratislava, Durnstein and Melk are sure to excite the world traveler in you.

Let's talk about our two-night stay in Vienna at the end of our river cruise. Prepare your “must-see” list in advance to ensure you spend your two days in Austria's capital city experiencing the best the city has to offer.

Whether you're into music, museums, palaces, shopping, coffee shops or fine dining, the city has it all. And don't forget that most of you will have a few hours in Vienna before boarding our ships to get a “lay of the land” before coming back to spend two days in the city. Sleep well on your flight to Europe so you'll feel refreshed enough to go on a walking tour around our hotel. Then you'll know the sites you want to return to after our river cruise.

You can spend hours exploring the beautiful Hofburg Imperial Palace and its grounds. Also on this palace complex is the Treasury Chamber, where you'll find the crown jewels of the Hapsburg dynasty, which ruled for 700 years.

One of the most notable buildings in the palace complex is The Spanish Riding School. The well-trained riders can get these Lipizzaner stallions to perform intricate jumps and precision footwork to the beat of the music in this impressive summer training hall.

Visit early in the day to get tickets to watch the training, where they get the horses used to performing in the hall with music and an audience. A popular spot in the morning is the sidewalk between the stables and the training hall, where you can watch the horses cross the busy street every 15 minutes to get to their morning training.


VIENNA: THE LAST STOP OF THE DANUBE RIVER CRUISE
You will love strolling down Graben, which might just be Vienna’s most elegant street. It was originally a moat marking the city’s western border. Under the rule of Queen Maria Theresa, a street was built over the moat to alleviate water-borne illnesses for the citizens of Vienna that were using the moat for their drinking water. Nowadays you can enjoy a stroll down this pedestrian thoroughfare to find plenty of restaurants, cafes and shopping.

Be sure to stop by The Plague Column while strolling this street. In 1687 King Leopold ordered a monument in tribute to the Holy Trinity as a sign of gratitude for the end of the plague epidemic that swept through the city. In most of the villages and cities surrounding this area, you’ll find a plague column commemorating an end to this horrible epidemic.

Sitting in the heart of old Vienna, right in the center of town, you’ll find the St. Stephen’s Cathedral that dates to 1304. For our more adventurous travelers, be sure to climb the 343 steps to the cathedral’s Steffl Tower for a panoramic view of Vienna. Take notice of the beautiful enameled roof tiles repaired after being damaged in World War II. For you music lovers, Mozart was married in this cathedral in 1782; unfortunately, this was also the place of his funeral Mass nine years later.

If you need a break from the bustle of the city, simply wander across the street from our hotel. There you can grab an ice cream treat and enjoy strolling along the shaded banks of the Blue Danube in the peaceful Stadtpark. Or visit a Vienna classic, the Central Café in the city center, for coffee and decadent dessert.

We recommend the iced coffee, which in Vienna doesn’t mean ice cubes. It means ice cream with fresh whipped topping. Delicious!

You may want to use this stop as your opportunity to try the famous Viennese dessert, Sachertorte. When wandering around the city during lunch time or for a late-night treat, stop by the food cart outside the Opera House to indulge in a kasekrainer. This cheese-filled Austrian sausage is grilled to perfection.

Of course we’ve only scratched the surface of some of the fun things we did while in Vienna. We’ve put together some optional tours for you for dinner, and we have some spectacular surprises awaiting your arrival in Vienna. Finish up your qualifications and start packing your bags for your exciting trip along the Danube River!

For more information, and to view a video about the destinations, go to www.aotrips.com.