



**RAILWAY
ADVENTURES**

2023

THE BALKANS BY PRIVATE TRAIN

On the Continental Classic Express Train de Luxe



With Scott McGregor and Bernadette Eichner

20 September – 4 October 2023

• HUNGARY • SERBIA • MONTENEGRO • BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA • CROATIA
• BUDAPEST • BELGRADE • ZLATIBOR • PODGORICA • DUBROVNIK • SARAJEVO • ZAGREB •

Dubrovnik

INTRODUCTION

Railway Adventures and the Continental Classic Express Train de Luxe have come together to bring you one of our greatest adventures yet.

The great Rail Renaissance of the 21st century has embraced the previously neglected and battered Balkans countries and is beckoning us to be part of it, exploring lines that have recently been re-opened and upgraded.

Our train itself is a Phoenix. Rescued from derelict rolling stock and meticulously restored, the Continental Classic Express Train de Luxe has been lovingly fitted out to create a classy and comfortable space for rail cruising in real style complete with our own Chef on board and a fully stocked bar.

We'll celebrate this magical marriage of revitalised rolling stock and re-opened rail lines with numerous train journeys, weaving our way through, Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, on main lines, branch lines and narrow-gauge railways to experience great culture, a haunting history and some of the most stunning scenery you can imagine.

We'll start with a wonderful welcome dinner in magnificent Budapest, the great twin city on the Danube and the eastern gateway to our journey, and then see first-hand the turbulent history and inspiring recovery of the former Yugoslavia. While conflict has raged, the rich history of the region and the incredible natural beauty of the landscape has been a constant through the years. So much has been achieved in recent years to reconstruct and revitalise the towns and cities in this region to create picture book scenes rivalling the most charming vistas to be seen anywhere in Europe.

Welcome aboard your Balkan adventure where your private train will be your window to a world of contrasts; of tragedy and beauty, of conquest and hard-won freedoms, of privation and opulence.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Six separate cross-country journeys on our privately chartered Continental Classic Express – Train de Luxe
- Tea, coffee, fully stocked bar, private Chef and dedicated staff on our private train
- 3 unique heritage train journeys, including a private steam charter on the famous Sargan Eight
- Personalised guided tours in each city, including Pecs, Belgrade, Dubrovnik Old Town, Zagreb, and Mostar
- Boat trips on Lake Skadar and Kotor Bay
- A special private train to an exploration of the Grand Palace of Gödöllő followed by dinner at the historic Queen Elizabeth Restaurant
- 500-kilometre privately negotiated journey across the Balkans on a line not open to the public
- Three nights mid-tour at the Dubrovnik Riviera on the stunning Adriatic coast
- Tour numbers capped at 25 passengers to ensure your comfort

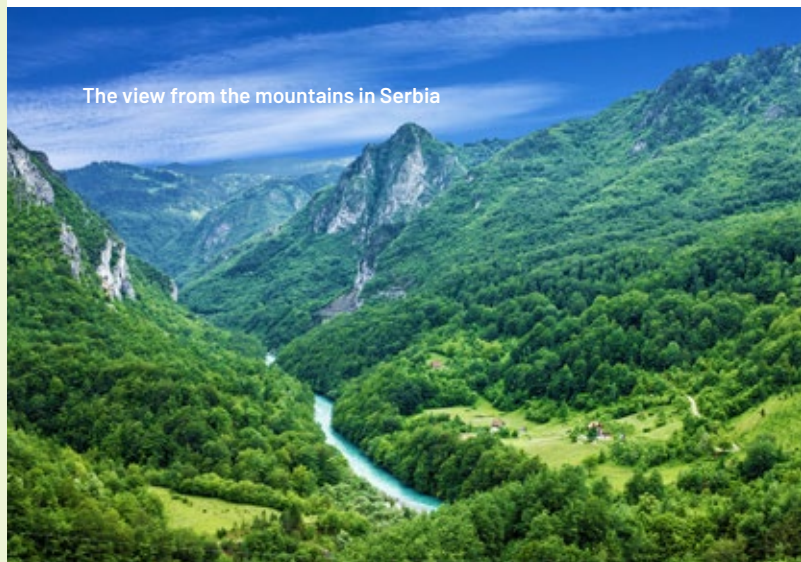
MEET YOUR TOUR LEADERS



A message from Scott and Bernie

This invitation-only adventure has been a long time coming, on and off again due to the Covid travel bans that kept us all knobbled for a couple of years, only just a couple of months after we did the reccie! But we are back and beyond thrilled to invite you again on this, the very first of what we hope will be many private, invitation-only tours across the globe over the next few years. Throughout the lockdown, we kept this dream alive with long chats to our collaborators, and exploring what else we could include when the journey actually happened. So, we did our usual thing and “hatched a plan” to expand on the original itinerary and take Serbian Railways up on the option to travel in a loop around the Balkans, going via Belgrade down the mountain railway through Serbia and Montenegro. This is a most scenic and rarely travelled route, having only recently reopened after a massive rebuild. The end result is an itinerary that we think you'll love - more countries, great cities and towns, and magnificent scenery, all accessed from our well-appointed and fully catered private train.

We're over the moon to present this special tour with our 'good mates' and hope you are able to join us. The idea of these private and curated tours came to us from our friends, Phil and Kaye Asker who founded Captain's Choice and love what we're doing at Railway Adventures with our small-group tours. Ten years of running Railway Adventures and hosting over 150 highly rated domestic and international tours has taught us three things about travel - reach for the stars when it comes to private trains, go with your instincts to build interesting itineraries, and honour the privilege of traveling with like-minded people to interesting destinations.



TOUR MAP



Nights at the Hotel Train Coach

SOME WAYS **YOU'LL TRAVEL**

The best train trips possible, private luxury coach for off-train travel, guided walking where suitable, and other appropriate and appealing options to make exploration easy.



Continental Classic Express Train de Luxe



Sargan Eight Railway



Kotor boat cruise



THE STORY OF YOUR SPECIAL TRAIN **THE CONTINENTAL CLASIC EXPRESS TRAIN DE LUXE**

The company that created and operates the Continental Classic Express was founded in 2014 with the mission to build and run high-quality passenger services for specialist tourism operations. It also has a freight rail division with locomotives provided for logistics and support. The train we ride on this adventure is made up of a selection of restored rolling stock that has been assembled from a variety of sources and backgrounds. Including the following:

- The Continental Dining Car**
 This car was originally a Trans Europe Express (TEE) dining car, equipped with all the available luxuries of the 1960s. TEE trains were the predecessors of today's InterCity trains, offering a premium connection between West European cities. Continental Railway Solution bought the car in 2015 from Germany and completely renovated it. All the wood coverings and smaller details of the interior (handles, moldings, etc.) remain original. The car has 42 seats which is almost 2 seats per person on this tour, and the kitchen is modern and fully equipped for all the variety of dishes our on board chef will prepare.
- The Continental Salon Z**
 This saloon car with an exclusive interior layout has four cabins with two berths, a suite with shower and a bar. The interior is from 1994 and was used by the Austrian Prime Minister. After its governmental career, the ÖBB Erlebnisbahn ran it in special trains in its fleet. It was purchased by the company in 2015, and then immediately received a new livery matching the company's image. Polishing and a smaller interior renovation was also carried out.
- The Continental Lounge and Bar**
 This wagon has the same body as the Continental Pullman coaches and is the social hub of the train, an excellent place to get to know our fellow passengers and make new friends.

Day 1 • Wednesday 20 September: ARRIVE BUDAPEST

On arrival in Budapest make your way to the hotel and check in. In the evening we gather at the hotel to head out together for a celebratory welcome dinner with your tour leaders and our Hungarian hosts, the owners of the Continental Classic Express Train de Luxe.

Overnight: Hotel Moments (D)

Day 2 • Thursday 21 September: BUDAPEST - BELGRADE

After breakfast at the hotel, we transfer to Keleti railway station to board our private train for this adventure - the Continental Classic Express Train de Luxe. We travel south across the great Hungarian Plain to the ancient city of Pecs in southern Hungary. Here we have time for a city tour exploring the old Turkish monuments and the China Museum. Back on our private train, lunch is served in the Dining Car with complimentary Hungarian wines to keep us relaxed as the countryside rolls by. We cross the Serbian border late in the afternoon and roll into the sprawling capital city of Belgrade. Dinner this evening will be at the hotel.

Overnight: Hyatt Hotel, Belgrade (B, L, D)

Day 3 • Friday 22 September: BELGRADE

Today we start with a walking tour of the city which includes the historic old town of Beograd, visiting, among other things, the house of flowers and Tito's grave. After enjoying lunch together at a local restaurant, your afternoon and evening is free to explore more of what the city has to offer.

Overnight: Hyatt Hotel, Belgrade (B, L)

Day 4 • Saturday 23 September: BELGRADE - THE ŠARGAN EIGHT RAILWAY - ZLATIBOR

After breakfast at the hotel, we transfer to the station for our train journey through rural Serbia to the city of Uzice, located on the banks of the river Detinja in historic western Serbia, which dates back to the 2nd century BC. This time our special train will be hauled by an old Serbian class 444 from the former Yugoslavian Railways. As this lovely old loco works its way South we enjoy a light lunch on board in our dining car.

Our coach will meet us at the other end for the transfer down the road to the historically reconstructed village of Mokra Gora, one of western Serbia's most popular tourist attractions. From here, we embark on a private journey on one of the most remarkable railways in Europe, the line of the 'Šargan Eight'. Originally opened in 1925, the line ran for just under 50 years. It was re-opened in 2003, after a spectacular reconstruction effort, and continues to be a popular tourism destination today. It's easy to see why - this majestic heritage railway line passes over the Šargan Pass, giving you incredible views over the verdant forests and craggy mountains of the region. Part of the journey will be steam hauled and our private charter allows for numerous photo stops. There will be a coffee break at Yatare station, after which we venture to Zlatibor, a popular spa town near the border of Bosnia where we'll check in and enjoy dinner at our hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Tornik, Zlatibor (B, L, D)

Day 5 • Sunday 24 September: ZLATIBOR - PODGORICA

After breakfast at the hotel, we transfer by coach to the village of Branesci to rejoin our special train at the little railway station for the spectacular journey to Bar via Bielo Polje. There has been a huge investment to repair this character filled line after years of neglect and war. Today it is considered one of the most scenic train journeys in Europe.

After leaving Branesci the line dips into Bosnia, then back into Serbia and ultimately into Montenegro, reminding you that the railway was built in the 1950's as a unifying transport project in the heady days of Marshall Tito and his rambling Yugoslav Republic. After passing Beilo Polje, the line rises to its highest point at over 1000 metres near Kolasin, originally a fortress settlement first mentioned in the Sultan's Decree in 1565. We then drop down to the capital of Montenegro, Podgorica, crossing the highest railway bridge in the world while enjoying lunch in the Dining car. The last part of our train journey today hugs the spectacular Adriatic coast, rolling into the resort town of Bar in the mid-afternoon.

After a stop in Bar, we meet our coach and go on to enjoy a boat trip on Lake Skadar, the largest lake in southern Europe and bordering Albania and Montenegro, and part of the Skadarskop National Park. It's then on to Podgorica, one of the world's smallest capital cities, where we'll check into our centrally located hotel, for some time to relax before having dinner together later this evening.

Overnight: Hilton Hotel, Podgorica (B, L, D)

Day 6 • Monday 25 September: PODGORICA - KOTOR - DUBROVNIK

After breakfast, we'll journey by coach over the hills on the old Austro-Hungarian serpentine road to Kotor, a fortified town founded in 5th century BC and located in a bay near the spectacular limestone cliffs of Mt Lovcen. In Kotor, you have free time to wander and explore the maze of alleyways, shops, churches, and museums that make up this UNESCO listed town, and for those who may feel energetic, you can walk up to the fortress for stunning views around the region. We then take our coach around the Bay of Kotor to the village of Perast. Here we will have a fishermen's lunch by the sea before taking a boat trip to Perast's small island, the home of the tiny 15th century 'Our Lady of the Rocks' church. It's then an easy coastal tour to Dubrovnik Srebreno and our resort style waterfront hotel, the Sheraton Riviera. Dinner will be hosted at a local restaurant close by.

Overnight: Sheraton Dubrovnik Riviera (B, L, D)

Day 7 • Tuesday 26 September: DUBROVNIK

After breakfast, we'll head off to explore Dubrovnik, one of the largest cities in Croatia. We begin with a walking tour of Dubrovnik's magnificently intact Old Town. This section of the city is a delightful cluster of medieval buildings that, thanks to its amazing preservation, has the honour of holding a UNESCO World Heritage listing. Entrance to the Dubrovnik City Walls and the Franciscan Monastery and Cathedral is included in our tickets, giving us a great chance to have a good look around before a lazy waterside lunch. The rest of the day is yours at leisure - you may like to stay in the Old Town a bit longer and transfer back to the resort on the hotel shuttle launch boat when it suits you. Dinner tonight is at leisure, enabling you to enjoy one of the numerous restaurants in the village.

Overnight Sheraton Dubrovnik Riviera (B, L)

Day 8 • Wednesday 27 September: DUBROVNIK

Today is a complete day at leisure in and around Dubrovnik. You can stay and relax at the hotel, enjoy the available water-based activities (including a kayak adventure), have a massage or just lie around the pool. Or you might take the hotel launch into Dubrovnik for another look around. Dinner is at leisure.

Overnight: Sheraton Dubrovnik Riviera (B)

Day 9 • Thursday 28 September: DUBROVNIK - MOSTAR - SARAJEVO

We check out of our resort idyll after breakfast this morning and take our coach up the coast, across the border into Bosnia and Herzegovina, and inland to the ancient city of Mostar, named after the bridge keepers (mostari) who in medieval times guarded the Stari Most (Old Bridge) over the Neretva. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, our guide will illuminate the sometimes-tragic history of this great town and we'll view the famous arched bridge before having lunch together at a local restaurant. In the mid-afternoon we board our special train for the scenic journey following the Neretva River to the pass and the famous horseshoe railway on the section from Konjic to Sarajevo. We'll arrive early in the evening and check into the hotel before dinner together.

Overnight: Hotel President, Sarajevo (B, L, D)

Day 10 • Friday 29 September: SARAJEVO

Today we explore Sarajevo with an informative tour, on foot and by coach. An incredibly multicultural city, it is the only European capital to have a mosque, two churches of different denominations, and a synagogue, all within close range of each other. Sarajevo has been part of a number of empires since its founding in 1461, leaving the city with a wonderful array of architecture, history, and culture. We'll do a visit the Baščaršija, one of the oldest areas in the city. This bazaar was once considered the centre of Sarajevo, and it's around this square that we can find the different religious buildings that make the city so unique. We also see the Latin Bridge that stretches over the river Milijacka, built in the time of the Ottoman empire in the 16th century, and the site of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, which famously sparked WWI. We also visit some of the more modern additions to the city, including the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum, dedicated to the maze of tunnels that were constructed under the city during the 1993 Siege of Sarajevo. A traditional "Lamp Lunch" will be served at Ilidza, on the bank of the Bosna River, after which we'll transfer to the spring of Vrelo Bosne, an idyllic landmark within the buzzing hubbub of Sarajevo. In the evening there will be free time, which gives the opportunity to try out a local waterpipe bar, do some shopping, bargain in the bazaar, and have dinner in a restaurant of your choice.

Overnight: Hotel President, Sarajevo (B, L)

Day 11 • Saturday 30 September: SARAJEVO - ZAGREB

Today is a full day of train travel on board our lovely Continental Classic Express Train de Luxe on an epic 500-kilometre journey north west across the Balkans to wonderful Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. There is no regular train running on this link anymore and the Croatian railways have made special provision for us to travel between these two nations on our private charter.

There are many scenic sections on this line, especially the part from Sarajevo to Zenica. The border crossing is at Volinja later in the afternoon, and lunch and afternoon tea will be served on board the train as we roll along through these wild and rugged lands. On the last leg we cross the grand Sava River and continue across the wide fertile plains of Croatia to the grand old city of Zagreb, where we check into the magnificent Esplanade Hotel. Dinner this evening will be hosted at the hotel.

Overnight: Esplanade Hotel, Zagreb (B, L, D)

Day 12 • Sunday 1 October: ZAGREB

After a sumptuous breakfast in the hotel we take off on a guided city tour. Zagreb's history dates to Roman times but almost every era of its colourful past is on show from the Medieval Square to the grand Boulevards and buildings of the golden age of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and 20th century communist functionalism. It's an accessible city full of variety and an appealing artistic Bohemian quality, including plenty of great restaurants!

The afternoon and evening are yours to enjoy at leisure.

Overnight: Esplanade Hotel, Zagreb (B)

Day 13 • Monday 2 October: ZAGREB - BUDAPEST

After breakfast and check out, we'll wander to the railway station for the last part of our epic train trip heading east to Budapest via Varasdin and Murakeresztúr. We will take a break to visit Varasdin old town, and then enjoy lunch on the train while we travel on narrow gauge railway from Balatonfenyves before continuing into Budapest and returning to the hotel where it all started for some special time in this grand city. Dinner this evening is at leisure.

Overnight: Hotel Moments (B, L)

Day 14 • Tuesday 3 October: BUDAPEST - GODOLLO - BUDAPEST

This morning after breakfast we embark on a morning city tour. The history of the great twin city will be revealed as we roam the heart of both Buda and Pest with our local guide, before some free time during which you can enjoy lunch at leisure.

In the afternoon, we re-group for a most exciting time of culture and history. We'll re-board our train, this time made up of Pullman coaches, which will take us to the Royal Palace of Gödöllő, a favourite retreat for The Empress Elizabeth (Sisi) and a place bursting with stories and art. After exploring the Palace (including the Royal Apartments and the Grand Ballroom) and the Museum, we shall wander across to the grand and historic Queen Elizabeth restaurant for our farewell dinner. Who knows what plans may be hatched along the way!

Overnight: Hotel Moments (B, D)

Day 15 • Wednesday 4 October: END OF TOUR

After breakfast this morning our tour concludes. (B)

OPTIONAL PRE TOUR

VINTAGE SLOVENIA - SEPTEMBER 10 - 19 September 2023 with Bernadette Eichner.

Operated and hosted by PTG tours in conjunction with Railway Adventures

**See separate brochure*



WHAT'S **INCLUDED**

- Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- 14 nights' accommodation in mostly 5-star hotels including Moments in Budapest, Sheraton Riviera in Croatia, Hyatt in Belgrade, The Esplanade in Zagreb
- All breakfasts, 10 Lunches, 9 Dinners, including all drinks at lunches on our private train and both the welcome and farewell dinners
- Luggage handling and hotel portering throughout
- All drinks on board the train
- Drinks with welcome and farewell dinners
- All taxes, tipping and transfers
- Water supplied throughout the tour

WHAT WE **DON'T INCLUDE**

- International flights
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone, camera fees where applicable
- Anything listed as optional in the itinerary

FITNESS **RATING**

Two 'Locos'

The most common grading for our tours. Two loco itineraries offer many activities that require a little extra fitness – walking on uneven ground, climbing hills to enter towns or historic sites, walks of 1-3 kilometres as well as getting on and off transport. You need to have good mobility and aerobic fitness and be able to manage your own luggage.

National Theatre, Zagreb

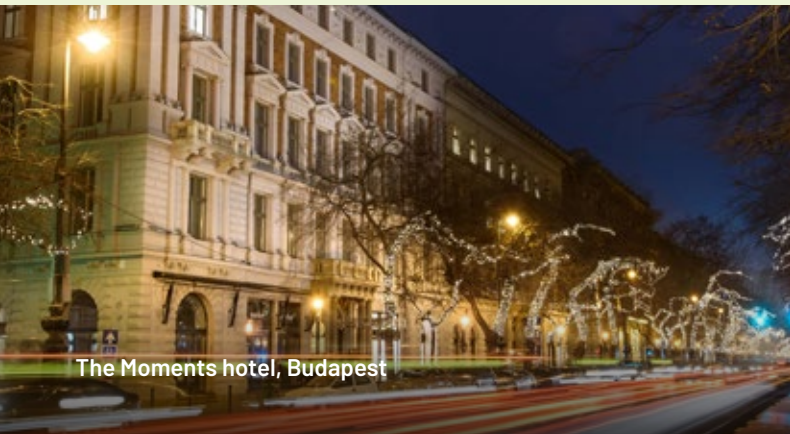


Continental Classic Express Dining Car

SOME PLACES **YOU'LL STAY**

Hand-picked hotels and resorts based on location, customer feedback, value and atmosphere.

Please Note: Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.



The Moments hotel, Budapest



The Esplanade, Zagreb



The Sheraton Riveria, Dubrovnik



The Hyatt, Belgrade

PRICE

Per person twin share **\$16,475**
Single supplement **\$1,790**
Deposit (per person) **\$1000 at time of booking**
Final payment due by **24 July 2023**

Tour Code: 2309BAL

SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

We have suggested flights for this itinerary depending on your departure point from Australia, any preferred stopovers en-route and/or your planned pre- and post-tour activities. We can also investigate your preferred airline and offer you a solution based on connection times and prices. Contact 1300 800 977 to discuss your options.

HOW TO BOOK

Contact us on 1300 800 977 or info@railwayadventures.com to obtain a booking form, if you'd prefer a form can be sent to you. Complete the form and submit it, along with your \$1000 pp deposit to secure your place on the tour.

DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

We endeavour to have all the details of our tours correct at the time of printing. However, sometimes factors beyond our control may affect the final inclusions and prices. These factors may include, but not be limited to; significant fluctuations in currency exchange rates, individual hotel/restaurant decisions that may affect bookings; weather events forcing a change of itinerary; unexpected trackwork on rail lines, unexpected closure of site attractions and so forth. Therefore, items mentioned in the brochure such as quoted prices, hotels and inclusions are subject to change. If a change is imposed on us, we will endeavour to ensure the substitute is of the same quality that you've paid for.

TOUR PACE / LEVEL OF FITNESS:

Our itineraries are designed to make the most of each destination, so a reasonable amount of activity is built into most days, which is why we call them adventures. Our philosophy is to offer you the best experience possible, while leaving you, our guest, the flexibility to pace yourself and choose how much or how little you want to do. Each Railway Adventures tour incorporates periods of free time for your own exploration and relaxation.

While you don't need to be a 'gym junky', a reasonable level of fitness is required for most of our tours. The ability to manage your own luggage, get on and off all manner of trains and coaches, walk for extended periods, stand comfortably, and climb steps and stairs will ensure you get the maximum enjoyment from your adventure.

ADDITIONAL TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

In addition to assisting with flight suggestions and bookings, we can also give you some ideas of what you could do before and after your Railway Adventure.

We can also organise your all-important Travel Insurance for you. Call our office on 1300 800 977 if you would like to discuss options.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

For more information on factors such as travel insurance requirements, fitness levels, fees and charges, tour cancellations, payment schedules and so on, please refer to our Terms and Conditions, which accompany the booking form. They can also be found on our website.



Sarajevo



1300 800 977
railwayadventures.com



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THE RAILWAY ADVENTURES **STORY**

Since 2012 Railway Adventures has thrilled and delighted thousands of travellers on hundreds of tours from Sweden to Sri Lanka, Tasmania to Transylvania, Britain to Burma, Venice to Vietnam and all manner of shorter adventures in our own wonderful country. Scott's numerous rail-themed TV documentaries, his ongoing involvement in rail heritage and his extensive connections with private train owners around the world, guarantee that every Railway Adventures tour is exclusive, entertaining and authentic. 22 December 2022.

Your travel agent

