

TSC Summer Expedition Trip CLASC on the Danube Sept 21 – Oct 5, 2016

In late September, 38 members of CLASC set out for an epic cruising and biking adventure along the Danube River through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary.

The members participating in the Pre-trip extension to Budapest, Hungary arrived via multiple plane trips and a bus ride to our hotel, the Best Western Grand Hotel Hungaria. After unpacking and relaxing from the long trip over, we were entertained by a strolling music group while enjoying a fabulous buffet dinner in the hotel dining area.

Friday, we loaded onto tour buses and were informed on the sites, culture and history of Buda and Pest, the two cities that together have become known as Budapest by our knowledgeable tour guides. We learned the history of the government, the buildings, and the wars that shaped Budapest into what it is today.



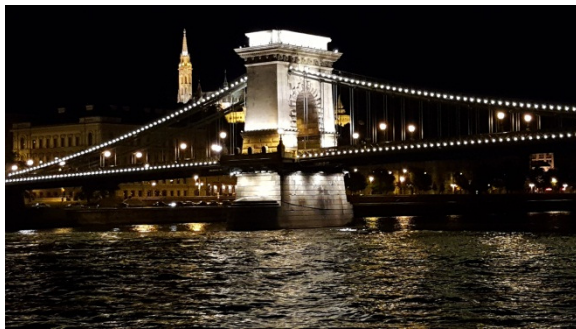
When we broke for lunch, some went to the market for shopping while others grabbed a bite to eat.



The tour resumed with more interesting sights. There were the bullet riddled buildings (from the 1956 Revolution) marked by these balls, and everyone was interested in Hero's square and of course the beer trolley.



Our surprise adventure on Friday evening was a lovely meal on a dinner cruise on the Danube past the many lighted buildings and bridges of Budapest.



Saturday was a free day to do as you wished. Some chose to go to the thermal baths, some went to the Holocaust Museum, some returned to the Marketplace to shop, some visited the Churches or Cathedrals, or whatever else they desired to spend their day doing.

We all met back at the hotel and were treated to an evening meal and drinks at the Trofea Grill, where everyone shared stories of their day's adventure.

With the pre-trip complete, we made our bus trip Sunday morning to Passau, Germany, where we met the main trip participants on the MS *My Story* for the Cruise Director's Welcome, safety briefing, and cycling information for the next day, followed by dinner in the dining room. The MS *My Story* departed that evening for Mauthausen, Austria.

Monday was the first day of bicycling and the day's leg took us from Mauthausen to Grein, a 36 km (~22.4 mi) bike trip. Some people made a sobering, yet memorable, stop at the former concentration camp in Mauthausen, while others explored the villages along the route. After the ride, we enjoyed the Captain's Welcome Cocktail and dinner. That night the ship departed for Devin.



The second day of biking was from Devin to Bratislava, Slovakia, a 43 km leg. Along the way we visited the castle Schlosshof and passed through the former border crossing of the Iron Curtain. That evening many of us took a guided stroll past the major sights of Bratislava which were all lit up at night.

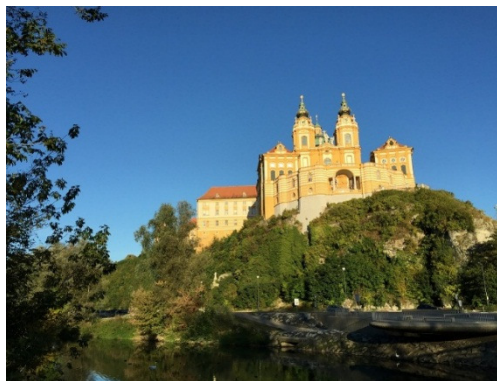


Back in Austria on Wednesday, some chose to take a cycling tour of Vienna, while others opted for the Hop On/Hop Off bus system as their method of touring the city. There were many sights to see including the Opera House, Museums, Churches, Cathedrals, Colleges, opportunities for shopping, etc. A few lucky people stumbled into Vienna's version of Oktoberfest. In the evening some chose to go back to the city for a concert at the orchestra hall that used to be run by the famous Strauss family. That evening the ship departed for Krems.



Thursday, we cycled the Wachau Valley from Krems to Melk, a 33 km trip. We rode through beautiful vineyards, sampled the local wines, and passed a few castle ruins. At the end of the day many people hiked up to tour the Melk monastery, a World Heritage site that was very impressive. We were

entertained that evening after dinner by the cruise staff performing several hilarious skits. The TSC participants joined in the fun with dancing after the show.



Friday, the cycling leg from Melk to Grein was 50 km. Along the way we rode past small villages, farms, and a couple of the locks in the river. In the evening there was an optional guided visit to Grein theatre, one of the oldest active theaters in Europe. That evening the ship departed for Obermuhl.



Saturday, the last day of biking was from Obermuhl to Engelhartzell, with two different paths, one of 28 km and one of 43 km. Along the way, most people chose to hike to a lookout point where you could view our ship, the MS My Story, making the famous Danube Loop. That evening we enjoyed a Farewell Cocktail and the Captain's Farewell Gala Dinner. We docked the next morning back in Passau, Germany.



The entire crew of the MS My Story were amazing. They worked tirelessly on making sure our rooms were clean, if not organized, making sure the bicycles were unloaded and loaded every day, bringing us endless quantities of food and beverages, and just pleasing us in general.

I would like to think that we made their lives a little better with our interactions with them. We were sometimes seen joining them on the dance floor or sharing a story with them to make them smile.



This trip definitely would not have run so smoothly without the tireless efforts of our Bike Tours representative, Richie Daigle, and the MS My Story cruise director Stephan.

Sunday some people departed to return home, but others stayed for the post-trip and were transported to our nearby accommodations at the Hotel Weisser Hase (the White Hare). We had a very good dinner at the restaurant in the hotel each evening.

Monday we left the hotel around 7:00 a.m. to arrive at the world famous Oktoberfest in Munich by lunchtime. Of course, lots of beer, pretzels, beer, cheesy bread, beer, food and beer were consumed. Some joined in the dancing, and a couple of the ladies even dressed in appropriate traditional costumes. Much fun was had by all.





Tuesday was a free day in Passau with time to explore the city, with it's many churches and shops. Many people went to see the Cathedral of St. Stephen with the largest pipe organ of any Catholic Cathedral in the world. We also enjoyed many of the other historic sites the city had to offer. Some went shopping ... and shopping.



Wednesday we bid farewell to Passau and were transported to the Munich airport for the long flight home.

In the end many people commented that this was one of the best trips they had ever had.

Prosit!

Keith and Ginger

