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## GEEO ITINERARY

Budapest-Romania-Bulgaria-Istanbul 6/22/25

### **Day 1: Budapest Arrive in Budapest at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.**

You may arrive in Budapest at any time today. The main international airport is **Budapest's Ferenc Liszt International Airport (BUD)**, and the main train station is **Budapest Keleti**, about a 10-minute walk from the hotel. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you consider arriving in Europe at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference, overcome any jet lag, and avoid any disruption to your trip due to flight delays or cancellations. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Budapest before the trip. With the Danube River dividing old town (Buda) from the newer area (Pest), there is plenty to see and do in the city. Opt to visit Buda Castle, window-shop in Pest, or soak in the city's famous thermal baths. **Hotel Check-in and Welcome Meeting** Please note that hotel check-in usually opens around **2:00-3:00 p.m.**, so if your flight arrives early in the morning, you may wish to book a pre-trip hotel night so that you can rest when you arrive. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

**Joining Instructions** When you arrive at the airport, you can either take a taxi or use public transportation to reach the hotel. Please make sure you travel to the correct Ibis hotel (Ibis Styles Budapest Center located at Rákóczi út 58). A metered taxi will cost approximately €25-30 EUR. You can also take bus NR 200 E to Kőbánya Kispest; from there, take the metro line NR 3 (blue line) to Arany János utca. You can then walk to the hotel. To arrange a private airport transfer, we recommend you book through [Viator](#) (double-check your travel dates). Choose from a range of transport options including both private and shared transfer. It is best to use a service that has many reviews and is highly rated.

**Accommodation:** Ibis Styles Budapest Center (or similar) \* For the actual hotel your specific departure will be using, please check your voucher.

### **Day 2: Budapest to Balla Géza Winery Enjoy a morning free to explore Budapest, and then visit a social enterprise café for a drink and an optional bite to eat. Then travel to the Balla Géza Winery for a wine tasting and traditional Romanian dinner.**

Explore the charming city of Budapest during some free time this morning. Opt to join your group on an early morning walk that ends at Great Market Hall, the city's largest (and oldest) indoor public market. Visit Gellert Hill to learn about the history of Buda and Pest, divided by the Danube River. On a clear day, capture amazing panoramic shots of the river as it snakes through this ancient city. Continue onto Liberty Square, then take a quick peek at the Gellért Thermal Baths to learn about its place in Hungarian culture. Upon arriving at Great Market Hall, sample local specialties that have been enjoyed in this busy market for over 120 years. On your way out of town, stop for a refreshment at Nem Adom Fel Café and Bar, whose proceeds help fund the non-profit Nem Adom Fel Foundation (meaning "I never give up"). The foundation was established in 2005 to empower differently-abled Hungarians, and most of the employees at the cafe are living with a disability. Your visit helps this café to invest in the foundation's efforts, which also include supporting rural Roma communities through much-needed social programs. Continue to Balla Géza Winery, located on the outskirts of Arad, a region known for its wine growing. Since 1999, Balla Géza has been working to bring back the red wines that this region was once famous for. Visit the Minis vineyard and enjoy a wine tasting with the group, and then sit down to a traditional Romanian dinner featuring three different courses. If time allows, explore the grounds before heading to the winery's guesthouse, where you will spend the night. **Approximate travel time:** 4 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Balla Geza Winery (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

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**Day 3: Balla Géza Winery to Sighișoara Enjoy breakfast at the Balla Géza Winery before traveling to the enchanting town of Sighișoara. Use your free time here to explore the cobblestone streets and medieval architecture.**

Breakfast is included at the Balla Géza Winery this morning. After breakfast, drive to the Sighișoara. During your free time there, explore the medieval walled citadel and enjoy the cobblestone streets and medieval architecture. There two great free attractions everyone should see. The Clock Tower, also known as the Council Tower, is considered one of Sighisoara's main sights. It was built in the second half of the 14th century and expanded in the 16th century. After a fire in 1676 when the town's gunpowder deposits located in the Tailors' Tower exploded, Austrian artists rebuilt the roof of the tower in its present baroque style and, in 1894, colorful tiles were added. You should also visit the Church of the Dominican Monastery. Built-in the late Gothic style, it was last repaired in 1929, quite sometime after it was first attested in a document back in 1298. For dinner, we recommend sampling some Romanian cuisine at the Casa Dracula. Once the original home for Vlad the Impaler, who was the model for Count Dracula, it is now a restaurant specializing in the hearty meat and game dishes of the region. **Approximate travel time:** 4.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Sighisoara (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 4: Sighișoara/Brașov With a local guide, venture into the Romanian countryside to visit traditional villages. Get a true sense of life in this less-visited region.**

Enjoy a half-day guided tour of Sighisoara and the nearby countryside. Take in the beautiful rolling scenery and visit medieval villages and fortified churches. In the early evening, transfer to the city of Brașov, the best preserved medieval city in Romania. **Approximate travel time:** 1.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Central Residence Annapolis Brasov (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 5: Brașov Visit the picturesque Bran Castle and learn the history (and rumors) of this fascinating place.**

Today we will visit Bran Castle, impressively situated on a rock outcrop and dominating the valley. This 14th-century castle is steeped in history and folklore and is an unmissable highlight. Sometimes called "Dracula's Castle," it served as a defensive fortification to protect the border between Transylvania and Wallachia. Rumors abound regarding Dracula's interaction with the castle. You'll have to visit to find out for yourself. You'll have the afternoon free to explore Brașov on your own. We recommend visiting the Schei District. During the Saxon rule of Brașov, from the 13th to the 17th century, Romanians were forbidden from owning property inside the citadel walls, so they settled in the southwestern Schei district. Walk up Strada Prundului to Piața Unirii and the beautiful St. Nicholas Church, then wander around the small curving streets that gradually slope upwards against the hill. Continue to the southern end of Schei and you'll end up on the gravel road that leads to the impressive Solomon's Rocks (Pietrele Lui Solomon), a popular picnic area for locals during the weekend but relatively quiet at other times. We also recommend a visit to the Black Church (8 RON), which is Romania's leading Gothic church and the biggest church between Vienna and Istanbul. It is a famous landmark in Brașov and has the largest church bell in the country, weighing a hefty 7 tons! Explore its beautiful interior, including stained glass windows and a collection of 119 Turkish carpets, the largest in Europe. **Accommodation:** Central Residence Annapolis Brasov (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 6: Brașov/Bucharest Travel to Bucharest and enjoy an orientation walk.**

Upon arriving in Bucharest, go on an orientation walk with your tour leader. Take time to explore the Soviet-esque architecture and the beautiful cathedral, or indulge in Bucharest's international cuisine. There is a lot to see and do in Bucharest. See some of our recommendations below under "Optional Activities." **Approximate travel time:** 4 hrs by train **Accommodation:** ibis Styles Bucharest City Center (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 7: Bucharest/Veliko Tarnovo Enjoy some free time to explore more of**

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## **Bucharest before traveling to Bulgaria and one of the oldest cities in the world, Veliko Tarnovo.**

Explore more of Bucharest this morning and then travel to Veliko Tarnovo in Bulgaria, one of the oldest cities in the world. Wander the medieval town, visit the museums, or sample your first taste of Bulgarian cuisine. Enjoy this charming town and opt to visit the Tsarevets Fortress just outside the city.

**Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Tarnava (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

## **Day 8: Veliko Tarnovo Enjoy the morning in the medieval town of Veliko Tarnovo. In the afternoon, visit the hilltop village of Arbanasi.**

After a free morning, hike up to the hilltop village of Arbanasi, which was once the residence of choice for the wealthy Roman elite and is still a countryside haven for the high-flyers of modern Bulgaria. The hill offers amazing panoramic of Veliko Tarnovo and the surrounding area. You'll want to visit the 16th-century Church of the Nativity (6 BGN) to see the amazing murals. **Accommodation:** Hotel Tarnava (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

## **Day 9: Veliko Tarnovo/Sofia Travel to Sofia and take an orientation walk of the capital city. Later, enjoy a stroll down Sofia's chic pedestrian area, Vitosha Boulevard, or visit the eclectic Ladies' Market.**

After arriving in Sofia, enjoy an orientation walk of the capital city of Bulgaria. Opt to visit the Ladies' Market, Sofia's biggest market for fresh produce, meats, fish, cheeses, and spices. Don't miss the stunning gold-domed Alexander Nevsky church, honoring the Russian liberators whose contribution saw the end of Ottoman rule in Bulgaria. Sample modern takes on Bulgarian and international food, with some great trendy dining opportunities. **Approximate travel time:** 3-4 hrs by local bus **Accommodation:** Hotel Budapest Sofia (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

## **Day 10: Sofia/Plovdiv Travel to Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second-largest city. Visit the hilly old town, museums, or the Theatre of Ancient Philippopolis, one of the many Roman ruins found here.**

Travel to Bulgaria's second-largest city, Plovdiv, dating as far back as 4000 BC. Wander the atmospheric streets of the hilly old town and admire the colorful buildings. Opt to visit the Ancient Theatre of Philippopolis, nearly 2,000 years old, and tread in the steps of Roman legionnaires. Or visit the Ethnographic Museum, which has an impressive collection of traditional Bulgarian costumes. In the evening, opt to relax over coffee and a Bulgarian baklava, a specialty of the area. **Approximate travel time:** 2 hrs by train **Accommodation:** Hotel Poldin COOP (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

## **Day 11: Plovdiv/Istanbul Spend time in the morning exploring more of Plovdiv before boarding an afternoon bus to Istanbul.**

Enjoy some free time this morning in Plovdiv before departing Bulgaria on a long bus ride to Istanbul. **Approximate travel time:** 7 hrs by local bus **Accommodation:** Hotel Centrum Istanbul (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

## **Day 12: Istanbul Enjoy a city tour with a local Turkish guide. Opt to visit the Blue Mosque, the Grand Bazaar, the Hagia Sophia, and the Topkapı Palace.**

Begin the day in Istanbul with a 3-4 hour walking tour of the old city, walking past the historic

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Hippodrome, the magnificent Hagia Sophia, and the Blue Mosque. The Hagia Sophia is one of the great churches of the Byzantine Empire; it was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest. Be awed by the Blue Mosque's symmetry and internal tile work, and take the chance to learn more about Islamic ceremonies, as it is a working mosque. While admission to the sites is not included, we highly recommend that you go inside, which may require extending your stay in İstanbul by a day or two after the program ends. İstanbul is a safe, tourist-friendly city. In the evening, there are plenty of cool little bars and restaurants to celebrate the end of an amazing journey over a raki or two. **Accommodation:** Hotel Centrum İstanbul (or similar) \* For the actual hotel your specific departure will be using, please check your voucher. **Meals included:** Breakfast

### **Day 13: İstanbul Depart İstanbul at any time.**

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart İstanbul at any time. The main international airport is **İstanbul Airport (IST)**, but many airlines also use **Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (SAW)**. If you wish to extend your stay in İstanbul, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off the lesser-value program(s) (up to three programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, [let us know](#). We can help you find a trip from our partner tour's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any of their tours, and you would still receive GEEO's fast and attentive customer service. **Meals included:** Breakfast

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**\*Itinerary Disclaimer:** While it is our intention to adhere to the routes described on our website, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The information on our website is a general guide to the tour and region, and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.