

The Danube—A River's Lure



Press Service September/October 2004

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Press Service September 2004; responsible for the contents: Ursula Deutsch, editor: Eva Nikolaou.

The **Danube Tourist Commission**, founded in 1972, is a marketing association for tourism to the Danube region and the Main-Danube Canal. Members of the Danube Tourist Commission are Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, and Casinos Austria AG. www.danube-river.org donau@austria.info

Danube Diary

Thirty-third general meeting in Budapest

At the invitation of Hungary the thirty-third general meeting of the Danube Tourist Commission will take place in Budapest at the Sofitel Atrium on 19 November 2004. Representatives of the eight member states and associate member Casinos Austria AG will meet under the chairmanship of President Gerhard Skoff. The Danube Tourist Commission's new members, the IDM, the Working Community of Danubian Regions and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) have also been invited to attend the meeting.

Members and cooperation agreements

As the interests of the Danube Tourist Commission and Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) are closely linked, an agreement on reciprocal membership was recently concluded between Prof. Gerhard Skoff, President of the Danube Tourist Commission, and Erhard Busek, Special Representative for the Stability Pact. ids@idm.at
www.idm.at

At the meeting of senior representatives of the *Working Community of Danubian Regions (Arge Donau)* held in St. Pölten, Lower Austria, in June, cooperation with the Danube Tourist Commission was praised and unanimous agreement on reciprocal membership passed. www.argedonau.at

The Danube Tourist Commission was invited to take part in the *Danube cooperation process*, which in Austria is coordinated by the country's Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Austria has constructed an internet web portal for the Danube cooperation process. The portal can be visited at the temporary address, <http://donauraum.osi.ac.at/Content.Node/index.html>

In conjunction with preparations for Danube Day, the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention on 29 June, the Danube Tourist Commission and *International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)*, which is headquartered in Vienna, agreed that the two bodies would enjoy observer status in the other organization. www.icpdr.org

Cooperation has long been close between the *Route of Emperors and Kings* (www.strassederkaiserundkoenige.at), *TINA Vienna Transport Strategies* (www.tinavienna.at) and the Tourism Section of *Austria's Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour* (www.bmwa.gv.at).

Hungary unveils new website

Hungary's diversity can be experienced online at www.hungary.com. The Hungarian National Tourist Office's new website presents itself in an updated guise and now also offers visitors a downloadable photo gallery.

New organization for Romanian tourism

Responsibility for promoting Romanian tourism is now vested in a newly established tourism section in the Ministry for Transport and Construction. The president of the national tourism authority with the rank of state secretary is *Nico Radulescu*, who is assisted by three general directors, including *Carmen Moraru* for advertising, international relations and European integration. MR. Radulescu oversees a network of twenty offices abroad and a staff of thirty-six. Information: rumanien@aon.at

Bulgaria's tourism authority restructured

As of September 1 Bulgaria's National Tourism and Information Agency has been restructured as the State Office for Tourism. Manager of the reorganized body is

Mr. Bisser Yalamov, an experienced tourism industry professional. The new office is charged with promoting Bulgaria as an appealing tourist destination, as well as with product development, licensing and categorizing hotels and restaurants.

Information: www.bulgariatravel.org, assja@bulgariatravel.org

New visa agreement between Serbia and Romania

At the second ministerial conference of the Danube Cooperation Process held in July in Bucharest, Romanian foreign minister, *Mircea Geoana*, and his Serbian counterpart, *Vuk Drašković*, signed two agreements on travel and visa regulations providing for simplified formalities for the issuing of visas and the exemption of special groups, diplomatic personnel, and introduction of multiple visas for business travelers, economic experts and transport firms.

People on the Danube

Honors for Sven D. Hauer

In recognition of over quarter of a century of service on behalf of tourism in the Wachau-Nibelungengau region, tourism director Sven D. Hauer was awarded the Silver Medal for Service to the Republic of Austria. It is a result of Mr. Hauer's tireless efforts that the Wachau is today on UNESCO's list of world heritage sites. www.wachau.at

Jens Huhse on board again

The former director of river cruises for Seetours-A'Rosa has gone into business for himself in his area of special expertise. He will focus on quality management and product development. Jens Huhse will also continue to act as president of IG River Cruises.

Information: jens.huhse@cruiseadvance.de, www.cruiseadvance.de

Hans Hollerer strikes out on new paths

During the past four years Hans Hollerer's responsibilities at the Austrian National Tourist Office included the Danube Tourist Commission. Cooperation during this time was excellent, as evidenced by his superb coordination of the twelfth Danube Travel Mart in Vienna in 2004, which contributed substantially to the event's success. More recently Mr. Hollerer was the Austrian National Tourist Office's representative in Leipzig. As of 1 October he will assume management of a new hotel to be opened behind the Loisium in Langenlois in Lower Austria.

Information: hans.hollerer@web.de, http://www.licht2000.at/life_langenlois.html

On the Danube...

Danube cruises in 2005

New catalogues for the 2005 cruise season are due to appear over the coming weeks. The Danube Tourist Commission has already put together an overview that can be ordered from donau@austria.info

Viking River Cruises

Starting March 27, 2005 MS *Viking Star* will cruise the Danube on seventeen and eighteen-day cruises between Passau and the Black Sea. There are fourteen sailings scheduled. Languages aboard ship will be English and German, and for specified departures French and Italian. The same applies to cruises aboard MS *Viking Danube* on the Passau-Budapest-Passau route and the special musical cruises that depart from Vienna in November and December. MS *Viking Primadonna* will also make round-trip cruises between Passau and Budapest between April 3 and November 6 next year (language: German).

Information: www.vikingrivercruises.com, info@inexcom.de

A'Rosa: an excellent 2004 season, program for 2005

A'Rosa achieved a substantial increase in occupancy aboard its Danube ships in 2004. As of going to press, bookings for the season exceeded those for all of last year by more than 50 percent. At the beginning of July, confirmed reservations had been received for over 80 percent of capacity through the end of the 2004 season. A'Rosa attributes this success to its increased concentration on theme cruises, such as a golf cruise.

In November and December A'Rosa will offer short four and five-day "City Lights" and "Musical & More" cruises between Passau, Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest aboard the *A'Rosa Mia* and *A'Rosa Donna*, as well as special Christmas and New Year's cruises. The program for the upcoming season is already available: the beautiful catalogue features "feel good holidays" on a variety of Danube routes between Passau and the Black Sea.

Information: A'Rosa, Tel. ++49/381/4447050, www.a-rosa.de

Fire and Flame on Danube and Altmühl

The by now traditional event marking close of the cruise season will take place this year on November 13 and feature a convoy of seven festively illuminated ships. On board there will be a three-course menu, music and dancing, and on shore a spectacular fireworks finale in Kelheim.

Information: *Altmühltal Personenschiffahrt GmbH*, POB 1111, 93301 Kelheim, Tel.: ++49/9441/2487, Fax: ++49/9441/21699, www.altmuehlperle.de

Winter trips on the Danube

Donauschiffahrt Pyringer-Zopper

The promise of wintry fun and Danube waves is what programs aboard MS *Johanna* offers. St. Nicholas day cruises and anticipation of Christmas, Riverboat Shuffle, spare-ribs feasts on board, "devilish" good times, Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations, and of course classic Vienna sightseeing cruises are all on the Pyringer-Zopper schedule.

Information: Pyringer – Zopper, dspz@donauschiffahrtwien.at, www.donauschiffahrtwien.at

Winter line and admiral's ball with DDSG Blue Danube

This year for the first time DDSG Blue Danube will offer sightseeing tours aboard MS *Vindobona* from the end of October through April 2005. The ship will depart for Nussdorf Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at 2:45 pm from Reichsbrücke pier and return at 4:00 pm (minimum: ten passengers). Information: www.ddsg-blue-danube.at

Budapest ship-restaurant

Lajos Kovács known for his Mediterranean restaurant the Robinson next door to Budapest's famed Gundel, has created a new gourmet temple in the Hungarian capital: Spoon, a ship-restaurant. Together with chief cook Zsolt Beke, Kovács has succeeded in turning the floating restaurant and café into a favorite meeting place for the in-crowd.

Information: Spoon, Tel.: +36/1/4110933 (reservations), www.sponcafe.hu

New Mahart PassNave internet portal

The Hungarian shipping company Mahart PassNave is now present on the world wide web in English and German. The new website www.yachtlap.hu contains a profile of the company, details about its fleet, events and theme and excursion cruises. Of special interest to yacht owners is information about Hungarian ports, sources of equipment, locks and an overview of accommodations and sights.

Information: Mahart PassNave Yachting, www.yachtlap.hu

...and on the River's Shores

Germany

Adventure holiday in eastern Bavaria's Danube valley

The "Haus am Strom" (House on the River) on the Danube Bicycle Trail in Untergriesbach, offers a varied hiking and nature experience. Equally interesting is a hike on the Bavarian glass road following old smuggling routes to experience the past come alive at former forest glass factories.

Those who prefer to sightsee by bike can cycle the "Trail of Sunken Castles" between Danube and Inn and visit the area's small castles, churches and romantic ruins. The route starts at the ducal castle of Dingolfing and winds sixty-six kilometers, or over forty miles, along well-marked roads.

Information: Tourismusverband Ostbayern, info@ostbayern-tourismus.de, www.ostbayern-tourismus.de

The Silver Treasure of Hildesheim

On October 17, 1868 Prussian soldiers discovered a treasure composed of seventy artifacts of extraordinarily pure silver buried two meters below the ground. The gilded silver vessels—dinner service and ceremonial tableware—date to the early Roman imperial period (first century BC-first century AD). The originals are exhibited in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. Most of the treasure will be shown at a special exhibition, "The Silver Treasure of Hildesheim" at Kelheim Archaeological Museum through 1 November. The items on display are electroplated copies produced by the Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik (WMF) in 1922.

Information: Archaeological Museum, Lederergasse 11, 93309 Kelheim, Tel.: ++9441/10409, museum.kelheim@t-online.de

A portrait of the city of **Passau** is attached to this issue of the Danube Press Service.

Austria

New look for Vienna Convention Bureau

The Vienna Tourist Board's Vienna Convention Bureau recently launched a brand-new website. The portal has been designed to be more attractive, quicker, convenient and creative, and includes a new feature "Unusual Locations". The venue finder lists over 110 locations for conventions. The site's calendar is continually updated.

Information: www.vienna.convention.at, www.vienna.convention.at

Port of Vienna on course

The Port of Vienna, one of Austria's largest Danube harbors, is currently being expanded under a program to cost around EUR 100 million. New warehouses and six additional piers are being constructed; the project is scheduled for completion in 2006.

Information: www.wienerhafen.at

Bike trails

Marchfeld canal trail

The new Marchfeld canal bicycle route—from Langenzersdorf through the northern areas of Vienna and the central Marchfeld region to end at Schlosshof—was opened in mid-May. The sixty-kilometer (thirty seven-mile) route represents a further step in the development of "gentle tourism" in the region. The largely level gravel road joins the Danube bike trail. It is a new segment in the Eurovelo 9 route, which intersects in the north with the Kamp-Thaya-March trail and continues through Slovakia on into Hungary.

New underpass for cyclists in Dürnstein

Europe's favorite cycling route along the Danube is not only one of the continent's most beautiful, but also one of its safest biking trails, which is continually being improved and upgraded. One measure is a new tunnel that permits cyclists to pass safely and easily below the intersection of the B3 and Provincial Road 7091. The tunnel thus remedies one of the few critical locations on the Lower Austrian stretch of the Danube bike trail.

2005 Linz-Danube group handbook

A new edition of the reliable manual for group travelers has been published for 2005. The handbook contains general information, news about Linz, packages, incentive programs, events, accommodations, excursions, dining, museums and galleries, as well as contact details for local service providers. New offers include a Christmas season through "Crèche City Linz" and special tips for events under the motto "Linz.Sounds.Great!".

Information: *Tourismusverband Linz*, *Tel.:* ++43/70/7070-2921, vkf@mag.linz.at, www.linz.at/tourismus

Historic shipyard in Korneuburg

The Korneuburg shipyard, which is cared for by the Association of Friends of Historic Ships and is a regular meeting place for old-timer ships, is currently being turned into a museum and adventure park. The cornerstone was laid in a festive ceremony on September 4.

Information: *Freunde Historischer Schiffe*, www.fhs-austria.at

Michelangelo and Rubens at the Vienna Albertina

The exhibit "Michelangelo and his Age" featuring works by the most celebrated artists of the Italian High Renaissance such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael opened to the public on July 9. The some 100 artworks on exhibit have all been drawn from the Albertina's

own holdings, one of the world's most extensive and important collections of graphic arts. The exhibition is on view through October 26.

On September 15 another major exhibition opened at the Albertina. This show focuses on the work of Peter Paul Rubens with 160 drawings, sketches and oil paintings, including the monumental *Daniel in the Lion's Den*. Thirty of the objects are from the Albertina's own Rubens collection which comprises seventy artworks. *Information:* www.albertina.at

Slovakia

New "botel" on the Bratislava quay

Just a few steps away from Bratislava's picturesque old town floats the four-star Marina boat hotel. The Marina's motto is "Dreaming on the Danube", and the hotel offers luxurious comfort on the Danube's waves against a historic backdrop.

Information: *Botel Marina*, www.botelmarina.sk

Fifth Danube bridge in Bratislava

The new Kosicka bridge is currently under construction in Bratislava. Work is proceeding on schedule; the bridge is due to be opened to traffic in 2005.

Bratislava Music Festival

The Bratislava Music Festival takes place this year September 24-October 8. In addition to many famed soloists such as Editha Gruberova and Maxim Vengerov, the Bruckner Orchestra will perform symphonies by Johannes Brahms among other compositions on October 5.

Information: *Bratislava Music Center*, Tel.: ++421/2/5443 0378, Fax: ++421/2/5443 2029, e-mail: bhsfest@nextra.sk

Bratislava jazz days

Central Europe's largest jazz festival will take place for the thirtieth time this year October 22-24. *Information:* www.eventik.sk

Hungary

Architecture prize for Budapest's Corinthia Grand Hotel Royal

The five-star hotel, which opened just two years ago in the historic 1896 Grand Palace, was recently named among Europe's five architecturally outstanding hotels by the jury for the Villegiatures Awards 2004, one of the most prestigious architectural prizes.

Information: *Corinthia Grand Hotel Royal*, royalres@corinthia.hu, www.corinthiahotels.com

Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace Budapest

One of the Hungarian capital's architectural jewels, the Gresham Palace, which was built in 1906, has been reopened following extensive renovations as the city's most luxurious hotel. Located on the banks of the Danube with a magnificent panoramic view, the Gresham Palace is an art nouveau fantasy with magnificent curving stairways, winter garden and mosaics in the style of the fin de siècle. The Gresham Palace offers 172 spacious rooms and seven suites, including two presidential suites measuring 185 square meters (over 1,990 sq. ft.), as well as a royal suite (223 sq. meters, 2,400 sq. ft.) affording a breathtaking view of the Danube, two restaurants, fitness center, swimming pool, and facilities for meetings and events.

Information: *Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace*, www.fourseasons.com

Events & More at Budapest's historic railroad park

Budapest's museum park of old-timer trains is a fascinating trip back in time. Every day except Mondays, train fans young and old can make their dreams come true and try their hand at the engine, in the signal box, or atop a handcar. On view at the museum are locomotives, railway cars as well as uniforms and other memorabilia. Central Europe's largest circular locomotive shed is the site of regular train parades and locomotive ballets. There are also interactive games with the title of "Honorary Engineer of the Hungarian State Railways" to be won. The museum is open year-round except in January and February; group programs are available by advance notice.

Information: utazas@mavnosztalgia.hu, www.mavnosztalgia.hu

International harp festival in Gödöllő

The former royal palace at Gödöllő near Budapest is the venue for a musical event of a special kind: from October 5 through October 10 famed international soloists will perform on the royal instrument accompanied by the Budapest String Orchestra.

Information: *Jakobi Konzert Kft.*, ferras@enternet.hu, www.forraskonzert.hu

Serbia

Serbia's efforts to promote tourism have borne fruit: 170,126 foreign guests were recorded in the first half of 2004, representing a plus of 21 percent over the same period of the preceding year. Tourism receipts in the same period rose by 62.9 percent. These figures are a sign of hope for the future, particularly as ever more tour operators are including Serbia in their offerings. City tourism to Belgrade and Novi Sad together with cultural programs are leading the way. One reason is the quick-paced development of infrastructure and hotels in superior categories, a diverse range of events and cultures, excellent value for money and, not least, cruise tourism on the Danube. Serbian tourism authorities aim to build upon these encouraging developments by presenting the country at workshops for foreign tour operators.

Information: www.serbia-tourism.org, zjovanov@yubc.net

Autumn festival in Smederevo

This autumn event is a medieval festival revolving around the wine harvest and features processions in historic costumes, chivalric tournaments and numerous cultural and folklore performances against the backdrop of historic Smederevo castle.

Information: www.serbia-tourism.org

Romania

New rail links

Romania's state railways CFR have recently introduced into service a number of modern trains powered by Desiro-Siemens locomotives. The new trains dubbed "Salgeata Albastra", or "Blue Arrows" provide IC service on routes linking the capital Bucharest with the country's major cities such as Galati, Timisoara, Sibiu and Tulcea.

New hotels in Bucharest and the Danube delta

Two new three-star hotels, the Safo and Cormoran, were opened this year in Uzlina in the Danube delta. The hotels offer sixty comfortable air conditioned rooms and apartments as well as gourmet restaurant (www.hotelsafo.ro).

The Romanian capital can now boast two new luxury hotels. The four-star Crystal Palace with forty-two rooms and ten suites opened at the beginning of the year and is located close to the city's trade fair grounds and just ten minutes from the airport (www.crystalpalace.ro). The recently inaugurated five-star Grand Palace is Bucharest's first Howard Johnson hotel. The eighteen-floor Grand Palace offers 285 rooms and apartments appointed with Ligne Roset furniture and every conceivable comfort, as well as two speciality restaurants, including the Benihana that serves sushi (www.hojoplaza.ro).

The Danube in Print

The June edition of Travel World News published in New York contained a sixteen-page insert entitled "The Danube—Cruis'n One of Europe Great Rivers" presenting the Danube, its attractions, sights and scenic beauties.

Serbia has released new brochures on its Danube region in German, English and French.
Information: www.serbia-tourism.org, zjovanov@yubc.net

The Danube plays and sings

"Thoughts on a European River and its Music" is the title of an essay by Austrian writer and journalist Ernst Trost who has published many books on the Danube. The essay is Trost's contribution to the Danube Tourist Commission's theme for 2005, "The Musical Danube".

For more about how the Danube plays and sings and other essays by Ernst Trost contact: donau@austria.info

IDM publications

Two new volumes in the "Danube Region" series published by Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) have appeared. *EU-Erweiterung—Chance für Österreich* (EU Expansion—A Chance for Austria) by Robert Prachar examines Europe post-May 2004. Werner Kvarda is editor of *Ecologisation of the Danube Region*.

Information: www.idm.at, orders: Böhlauverlag, Sachsenp. 4-6, A-1201 Vienna,
Fax: ++43/1/330 24 39.

Ulm Schachtel and Franz Schubert as models

AUE publishing house offers models of two historic Danube vessels in its Schreiber-Bogen model series: an Ulm "Schachtel" and the passenger liner *Franz Schubert*.

Information: www.schreiber-bogen.de

This Danube Press Service is also available online at our website:

www.danube-river.org



PASSAU
Leben an drei Flüssen

Passau—City of Three Rivers

Passau, a city of some 50,000 inhabitants, is located in the southeastern corner of Bavaria where the Danube, Inn and at Ilz meet. The city is situated directly on the German-Austrian border and just fifty kilometers (thirty-one miles) from the Czech Republic. Passau lies at the center of the triangle formed by Munich, Prague and Vienna. Its distinctive Italianate Baroque architecture, a varied array of leisure facilities, a diverse cultural scene and the hospitality of its people make Passau a city of unique charm.

Archaeological remains from the Late Stone Age show that the area of present-day Passau was settled as early as 7,000 years ago. In 739 the city became the seat of a bishopric that extended along the Danube as far as Hungary. From the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries Passau was an independent city-state ruled by a Prince-Bishop; since 1803 it has been part of Bavaria. In the heart of the old town rises the impressive cathedral of St. Stephen, which houses the largest cathedral organ in the world with 17,974 pipes and twenty-three magnificent registers. Mighty Veste Oberhaus fortress and Maria Hilf monastery tower serenely above the three rivers.

In recent decades Passau has developed into a hub of commerce and culture for southeastern Bavaria, with tourism playing an important role: Passau every year welcomes over 1.4 million day-visitors and almost 400,000 overnight guests.

The life of the city has been marked from time immemorial by water and shipping. Local shipping companies offer excursion cruises and exciting theme trips. Cruise liners depart from Passau for the Black Sea via Vienna and Budapest. Strong demand has led to the construction of six new docks for cruise ships in Lindau, which is located only one and a half kilometers (less than one mile) from the old town. The docks will enter service in spring of 2006 assuring safe and up-to-date docking facilities even at times of high water levels.

New trade fair grounds in Kohlbruck make Passau an excellent venue for fairs and exhibitions. Passau is also a paradise for cyclists. Other sports enthusiasts will find a wide range of possibilities in every season. The city has long been an important center of art and culture with an appealing variety of theater, cabaret, jazz, concerts and festivals, museums, galleries, art ateliers and crafts workshops.

From comfortable hotels to inns and pensions, simple cyclists' lodgings and a youth hostel, guests can choose from a varied range of accommodations in all price categories. Passau offers young and old alike a rich variety of culinary experiences and nightlife with cozy traditional eateries serving Bavarian and Austrian cuisine, international restaurants, inviting beer and wine gardens, cafés, as well as "in" bars.

Event tips for fall and winter 2004:

October 27-31: International Brass Ensemble Competition

November 26-December 23: Passau Christmas market on the Domplatz in the historic old town

For additional information about Passau, visit www.passau.de/ a calendar of special events is available at www.kalender.passau.de