

# Munich to Prague: A Pilgrimage of Music & Miracles

11 days / 9 nights

This unique pilgrimage will nourish your soul with glorious music, the power of the Passion, and the miraculous grace of Christ and the Church.

## **Day 1: Departure from the USA**

*Welcome to Germany, Das Land der Dichter und Denker (the land of poets and thinkers).*

Our pilgrimage begins as we depart the USA on an overnight flight to Munich, Germany. Dinner and breakfast are served on board.

## **Day 2: Arrive Munich, Germany (D)**

*Munich's name derives from the monks of the Benedictine order who founded the city. The city's motto is "München mag Dich" (Munich likes you).*

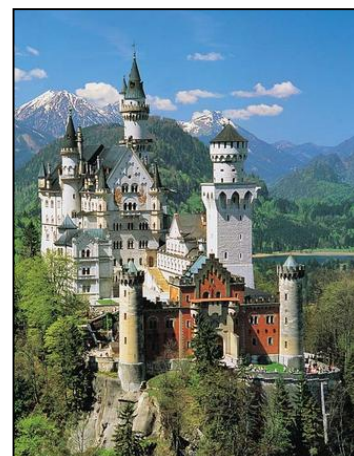
Today we begin our journey with a scenic tour of a place known as a cosmopolitan city with a heart. We'll find Munich a cultural, historical and spiritual hub. The city is full of museums, galleries and an inspiring mix of old and new--for example: historic buildings alongside new landmarks of architecture. Throughout the years, this 'city of heart' has also played host to many prominent composers including Mozart, Wagner, Mahler and Strauss. This afternoon, we see the city's Catholic Church of St. Johann Nepomuk, better known as the Asam Church, built by the brothers Egid Quirin and Cosmas Damian Asam as their private church. Due to resistance of the citizens, the brothers were forced to make the church accessible to the public, though they had taken on all the costs of building. The Asamkirche is one of the most splendid achievements of Bavarian late Baroque architecture, or Rococo, and the skeleton of the saint for which the church is formally named, St. Johannes Nepomuk, is buried there. We'll have leisure time this afternoon to explore on our own before dinner and an overnight stay in Munich.



## **Day 3: Excursion to Oberammergau & Fussen (B,D)**

*The Oberammergau Passion Play was first performed in 1634 and is the result of a vow made by the inhabitants of the village that if God spared them from the effects of the bubonic plague then sweeping the region they would perform a passion play every ten years.*

About half the inhabitants of Oberammergau took part in the once-a-decade Passion Play in 2010. That means that over 2,000 villagers brought the story of Jesus to life for the audiences that flocked in from around the world. The play started with Jesus entering Jerusalem, continued with his death on the cross and finished with the resurrection. As always, it was an extraordinary community enterprise in which only natives of the village could participate. This morning we take a trip to Oberammergau, home of the centuries old Passion Play, to see the theater where it all takes place. Afterwards, we'll be enchanted by the quaint old city of Oberammergau where we'll see examples of Lüftlmalerei, a unique and beautiful way of decorating the fronts of old homes and buildings. Next we'll head for Fussen where we'll visit the Neuschwanstein Castle, a 19th-century Gothic Revival palace built atop a rugged hill above the village of Hohenschwangau in southwest Bavaria. The palace, commissioned by Ludwig II of Bavaria as a retreat and as homage to Richard Wagner, is visited by more than 1.3 million people annually, and is said to be the inspiration for Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle. We'll continue west to Bavaria's famous Ottobeuren Abbey to join in the Monastic Liturgy of the Hours. Ottobeuren Abbey has one of the richest music programs in Bavaria, with concerts every Saturday. Most concerts feature one or more of the Abbey's famous organs. The old organ (actually a double organ) is the masterpiece of



French organ builder Karl Joseph Riepp (1710–75), and one of the most treasured historic organs in Europe. While at Ottobeuren Abbey, we'll explore the majestic basilica, visit the Chapel of St. Benedict and the Abbey Museum. After beholding many places of great miracle and music, we return to Munich for dinner and another overnight stay.

#### **Day 4: Excursion to Regensburg & Altotting** (B,D)

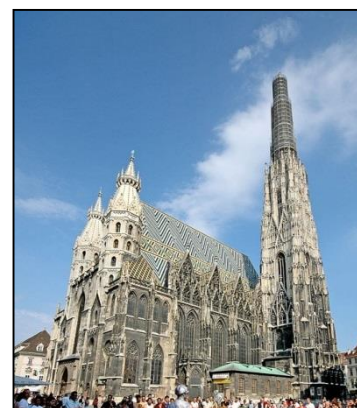
*John of Nepomuk, the saint for whom Asam Church is formally named, is described by his chaplain as a "gloriosum Christi martyrem miraculisque coruscum" (in English: "a glorious martyr of Christ and sparkling with miracles").*

The medieval city of Regensburg (founded by Marcus Arelus), at the confluence of the Danube and Regen Rivers, is our destination this morning. There we celebrate Mass in the Dom Cathedral, Bavaria's finest and most impressive example of pure German Gothic architecture (founded in 1275, it was completed in 1634 except for the towers which weren't finished until 1869). The official choir for the liturgical music at St. Peter's Cathedral is the famous Regensburger Domspatzen. We'll find that the ancient walkways, quaint narrow streets and stone bridges of Regensburg make it a city to savor. We continue on to Altotting, one of Germany's most celebrated shrines. According to legend, in 1489, a three-year-old local boy who had drowned in the river was revived when his grieving mother placed him in front of a wooden statue of the Virgin Mary at the high altar. News of the miracle quickly spread, and the chapel was immediately extended by the construction of a nave and a covered walkway. Here we'll celebrate Mass at the center of the pilgrimage complex, the Chapel of Mercy where the statue of the Blessed Virgin still resides. We'll also visit the Basilica, the Panorama of the Crucifixion, the Pilgrim Museum, and St. Konrad's Monastery. Tonight, dinner and another overnight stay in Munich.

#### **Day 5: Vienna, Austria** (B,D)

*In the fourth year of his age, his father, for a game as it were, began to teach him a few minuets and pieces at the clavier. He could play... with the greatest delicacy, and keeping exactly in time. At the age of five, he was already composing little pieces, which he played to his father who wrote them down (re Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in the words of his sister, Nannerl, who was three years his senior).*

In the morning, we will motorcoach through the picturesque Austrian countryside to Vienna, where we will have Mass at St. Stephen's Cathedral. The Stephansdom was first built in 1147 AD and has survived many wars to become a symbol of Vienna's deep spirituality and treasured freedom. There is much to see at St. Stephen's. Some of the best sights are its many altars and chapels, the beloved 23 bells and the Maria Pötsch Icon, which shows the Virgin Mary pointing to Jesus to signify that "He is the way" (He holds a three-stemmed rose to symbolize the Holy Trinity). It is said that the composer Ludwig van Beethoven discovered the totality of his deafness when he saw birds flying out of the bell tower of St. Stephen's Cathedral as a result of the bells' tolling and he did not hear their music. We won't be able to pass up some delicious Viennese pastry and coffee before seeing the State Opera House, home to the Vienna Boys' Choir. We'll also visit impressive, imperial Schonbrunn Palace, one of the most important cultural monuments in Austria. The palace and gardens of Schonbrunn (the name Schönbrunn means "beautiful spring") illustrate the tastes, interests and aspirations of successive Habsburg monarchs. We may not see each of the 1,441 rooms, but we hope to glimpse the Hall of Mirrors where Mozart performed at the age of six, before a young Marie Antoinette. We'll enjoy a sumptuous dinner and overnight stay in Vienna.



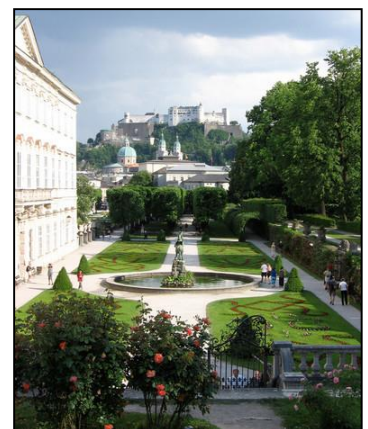


## **Day 6: Vienna**

**(B,D)**

*The name "Vienna" is thought to be derived from the Celtic word "windu", meaning bright or fair, but opinions vary on the precise origin.*

In the morning, we'll be treated to an excursion to the majestic Belvedere Palace complex, built as a summer residence for Prince Eugene of Savoy. The museum tells us much about the ruling dynasty and the history of the imperial capital. The palace is replete with the most beautiful grounds, inspiring sculptures, wrought-iron gates, tiered fountains and cascades. We'll also visit Hofburg Palace which had a very illustrious history of its own, and currently serves as the official residence of the President of Austria. During the Habsburg dynasty, Hofburg Palace was the principal winter residence just as the Schönbrunn Palace was the preferred summer residence. This afternoon, hang on! We'll get a bird's eye view of Vienna from our seat on the Prater's enormous Ferris wheel, and tonight, enjoy dinner and another overnight stay in this 'bright, fair' city.



## **Day 7: Mariazell, Salzburg**

**(B,D)**

*On the evening of December 21, 1157, a Benedictine monk named Magnus, looked for a place in the forest to build a monastery. When his path became blocked by a huge boulder, Magnus took a small wooden statue of the Virgin Mary from his knapsack, knelt in prayer, and asked the Virgin Mary for guidance. Soon there was a great rumble and the rock split in two, allowing him to pass.*

This morning we journey west. First we go to Mariazell, which is a small city picturesquely situated in the valley of Salza and the most important pilgrimage site in Austria. Its object of veneration, brought to this place in 1157, is a miracle-working image of the Virgin carved in lime-tree wood. We resume our drive west through the lush Austrian countryside to beautiful Salzburg, birthplace of Mozart. Salzburg is home to many castles, palaces, grand halls and a lovely old town. We'll see the Mirabelle Palace, one of the most-visited places in Salzburg, with its geometrically arranged gardens and mythological statues dating from 1730. Some of us might remember that several scenes from The Sound of Music were recorded in Mirabelle Gardens, one in particular where Maria and the children sang "Do-Re-Mi" while dancing around the horse fountain and using the steps as a musical scale. Before enjoying dinner and an overnight stay in Salzburg, we'll hear the bells of the great Glockenspiel Tower play a Mozart melody.

## **Day 8: Salzburg**

**(B,D)**

*Although the movie, "The Sound of Music" (filmed in and around Salzburg) portrays Maria von Trapp as the epitome of religious devotion, she was raised to be cynical towards all religions. Those beliefs quickly and dramatically changed by the chance meeting of a visiting Jesuit priest to Maria's college. Maria had entered a crowded church assuming she was about to enjoy a concert by Bach. Instead, a well-known priest, Father Kronseder, has just begun preaching. Caught in the middle of a standing-room-only crowd, Maria soon found herself caught up in the words of this preacher. In Maria's words, "Now I had heard from my uncle that all of these bible stories were inventions and old legends, and that there wasn't a word of truth in them. But the way this man talked just swept me off my feet. I was completely overwhelmed by it..." When he finished his sermon and came down the pulpit stairs Maria grabbed his elbow and loudly asked, "Do you believe all this?" A meeting between the Priest and Maria changed her beliefs and the course of her life (Excerpts from The Trapp Family Lodge website).*

Mozart often directed the orchestra and choir at St. Peter's. In fact, his famed Mass in C Minor premiered here in 1783, with his wife singing lead soprano. Mass at St. Peter's is a fitting way to begin our day (St Peter's houses the oldest library in Austria. Through continual acquisition, the library has grown to 100,000 volumes, focusing particularly on Benedictine monasticism, medieval church history, and history of art and items relating to the local history of Salzburg). The best way to explore Salzburg, with its narrow lanes,

is on foot. We'll appreciate the rich heritage of the Church that is evident in the Archbishop's Residence, the decoration of the State Rooms, and the mighty Romanesque Cathedral. We'll also have the opportunity to visit the Nonnberg Convent of Benedictine nuns. Located just below the south side of the Hohensalzburg Fortress, the convent is one of the oldest continuously-functioning nunneries in the world. Finally, we'll stop at Hellbrunn Palace to enjoy its lovely gardens before gathering for dinner and enjoying another overnight stay in Salzburg.

### **Day 9: Prague, Czech Republic (B,D)**

*Nicknames for Prague include: Praga mater urbium ("Prague – Mother of Cities") and Stověžatá Praha ("City of a Hundred Spires"); today's count is estimated at about 1,000.*

Our next destination is Prague, an important political, cultural and economic center of Europe for the over 1,100 years of its existence. This "City of a Thousand Spires," with its onion domes, old town cobblestone and artistic richness will provide us with a veritable feast for our souls. We'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in anticipation of all that we will see and do tomorrow.

### **Day 10: Prague (B,D)**

*No one doubts that, rising every night from his noble bed, with bare feet and only one chamberlain, he went around to God's churches and gave alms generously to widows, orphans, those in prison and afflicted by every difficulty, so much so that he was considered, not a prince, but the father of all the wretched (the chronicler Cosmas of Prague, writing in about the year 1119 about Saint Wenceslas (aka Good King Wenceslas of Christmas carol fame) who in 925 AD founded the original St. Vitus Cathedral).*

A good breakfast will launch us into our exploration of beautiful Prague. We begin the day with a celebration of Mass at the Church of Our Lady Victorious, a destination for many pilgrims from all around the world. The pilgrims come to pay homage to the Infant Jesus of Prague (the statue of the Infant Jesus originally came from Spain and is especially venerated by believers from Hispanic countries). There is a Museum of the Infant Jesus behind the main altar. The statuette of the Infant Jesus has 46 different robes, including one decorated by Empress Maria Theresa herself. We'll then visit Old Town by way of Golden Lane before seeing Malá Strana, meaning "Little Side," a name that comes from its position on the left (west) bank of the river. We'll see that Lesser Town is conjoined to the larger towns of Prague by the ancient Charles Bridge, which is adorned with many baroque statues. We will also take in St. Nicholas Church, the Astronomic Clock (the third-oldest astronomical clock in the world and the only one still working), and the Prague Castle district. The Castle district is where we tour St. Vitus Cathedral (the biggest and most important church in the country, exemplifying Gothic architecture and containing the tombs of many Bohemian kings and Holy Roman Emperors), St. George Basilica, Loreto Church, Strahov Monastery, and Wenceslas Square (the square named after Saint Wenceslas, the patron saint of Bohemia, and a part of the historic center of Prague and a World Heritage Site). Tonight we'll enjoy dinner and another overnight stay in Prague.

### **Day 11: Depart for Home (B)**

*Let all your things be done with charity (1 Cor. 16: 14).*

Our pilgrimage has provided wondrous miracles and music! We have memories to treasure as we depart from Prague Airport for our return flights to the USA.

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