

Munich to Istanbul

Austria – Slovenia – Croatia – Serbia – Bulgaria – Istanbul

April 02 – 20, 2012

After slumbering for decades, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria have just become Europe's hottest new destinations! Sandwiched between Italy, Austria, Hungary and Mediterranean, this entire region remains genuinely "unspoilt". This is a stunning area marked by ruggedly beautiful scenery, with its enriched history, unique architecture, ancient castles, peaceful villages, delicious food and nice wine, all worthwhile to experience.

We have four of our Land Rover Discovery vehicles parked in Germany right now. We'd like to explore this region by driving from Munich to Istanbul taking the route through Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria. You are welcome to participating in driving, as long as you can cope with driving in a convoy, sometimes along a winding mountainous road with unreadable Slavic signs, feeling comfortable with these fully loaded, automatic modern SUVs. However, you don't have to drive if you don't feel like it. As you can tell from the itinerary, the driving distance is quite short and each day is pretty easy. Our main focus of this trip is on the history, culture and natural beauty of these less-travelled European countries.



AAST Overland Driving Adventure: Munich to Istanbul

TRIP COST

Per person price based on twin-share:

8 – 10 participants: € 3960 or \$5660
11 – 16 participants: € 4090 or \$5840
Single supplement: € 890 or \$1270
Cash payment: € 100 or \$140 (to be paid in Munich)
Min/max: 8 / 12

Price includes:

- Hotel accommodation in 4 or 5-star hotels in big cities. In towns, villages and monasteries, we use the best available
- Hotel taxes and service charges.
- Meals (breakfast and dinner)
- Arrival and departure transfers
- 4WD vehicle throughout the journey (3-4 persons per vehicle)
- All cross-border handling
- Petrol and oil expense, toll fees, European freeway taxes, maintenance and repair of the vehicle
- Guided sightseeing and entrance fees.
- Travel handbook and accessories

Price excludes:

- International flight (home city – Munich, Istanbul – home city)
- Beverages
- Travel insurance (strongly recommended)
- Visa fees (if applicable)
- Personal expenses.

Note: the cash payment will cover all gratuities and incidental charges.

AAST Overland Driving Adventure: Munich to Istanbul

DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1 April 02 Arrive Munich

Meet in Munich. Introducing vehicles.

Day 2 April 03 Munich – Salzburg, Austria (143 km)

Getting familiarized with the vehicles. An easy but very scenic drive through the Bavarian and Tyrolean Alps to Salzburg, Austria. Check into a central hotel. Remainder of the day at leisure.

Day 3 April 04 Salzburg – Judenburg (266 km)

Today we drive for about 3 hours through some beautiful countryside and across some passes to a lovely small town, Judenburg, in Southern Austria. Check into a castle-style hotel.



Day 4 April 05 Judenburg – Ptuj, Slovenia (80 km)

Cross the border of Slovenia and check in at a hotel in Ptuj.

The oldest town in Slovenia, it was said that Ptuj existed since AD69. Numerous archaeological remains prove that the city experienced its first period of prosperity as the Roman town of Poetovio. The present much admired appearance of the city originates from the Middle Ages when Ptuj experienced its second rise to wealth and prominence. We will explore its beauty in a walking tour through the town and visit Ptuj Castle. The castle, the Dominican and Minorite monasteries, the Provost church and the old city hall are some of the curiosities of the town, worth seeing. The heritage of past centuries will enchant even the most demanding visitor of this town.



Day 4 April 06 Ptuj, Slovenia – Zagreb, Croatia (90 km)

Continue to Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia where we will stay for the next 2 nights. Enjoy a city tour of the historic Upper Town of Zagreb. See the churches of St. Mark and St. Catherine, the Cathedral, the Parliament and the Government Palace. Balance of the day at leisure.

Zagreb is the cultural, scientific, economic and governmental centre of the country. It is situated between the southern slopes of the Medvednica Mountain and both the northern and southern banks of the Sava River. Zagreb's numerous museums reflect the history, art and culture not only of Zagreb and Croatia, but also of Europe and the world. Around thirty collections in museums and galleries comprise more than 3.6 million various exhibits, excluding church and private collections.

Remainder of the day at leisure. We will stay at a hotel located in the city center, it is easy to walk to the central square, trendy outdoor cafes and any cultural attractions to your like.

Day 5 April 07 Zagreb

Enjoy a visit to Plitvice Lakes National Park, a string of 16 turquoise coloured lakes linked by 92 waterfalls and cascades and surrounded by densely wooded mountains and lush vegetation. Admire the landscape formed by the mineral-rich waters which carve new paths through the

AAST Overland Driving Adventure: Munich to Istanbul

rock, and enjoy your time in the middle of nature. Return to Zagreb in the evening.



Day 6 April 08 Zagreb – Osijek (280 km)

Drive to Osijek, the most important military, economic, administrative and cultural centre of Slavonia, Eastern Croatia. Upon arrival, check into your hotel. We will stay at this city for 3 nights.

Day 7 April 09 Osijek

We visit Tvrdja complex, built in the 18th century with impressive defensive walls and town gates, Romanic centre and main square. Osijek's Upper Town is a historical treasure trove: old sacral, cultural and historical monuments, Capuchin monastery, Neo-Gothic church of Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Anna chapel, classicist palace of the Virovitica County, theatre building, chambers of commerce...Located in the Lower Town is a series of late Baroque citizen houses, and

AAST Overland Driving Adventure: Munich to Istanbul

Secessionist and late Baroque buildings in the New Town, and in Retfala the valuable Pejacevic family castle (18th century), and the church of Ascension of the Holy Cross with the Mausoleum of Count Pejacevics.

Day 8 April 10 Osijek – Kopacki Rit - Osijek

Today we take a boat tour through the Kopacki Rit, one of the richest, largest, and most beautifully preserved wetlands in Europe. Kopacki Rit is home to rare birds, marshes and lush vegetation. The 42,000-acre park is home to about 250 bird species, including rare varieties such as the black stork as well as wild goose, wild duck, big white heron, white stork, black stork, white-tailed eagle, coot, seagull, tern, kingfisher, woodpecker, green woodpecker Kopacki Rit is included in the IBA list (Important Bird Area) and is currently pending recognition for UNESCO's list of World Natural Heritage Sites.



Day 9 April 11 Osijek – Belgrade, Serbia (160 km)

Drive to Belgrade, the capital of Serbia.

If you've never been to Serbia, there's no better place to start. Belgrade is an open and welcoming city. The streets and squares of the capital are always busy and alive with people, mostly the young. Many indoor and open-air cafes and restaurants make a pleasant stop for coffee or beer. Some downtown streets are serene and gentle; others are busy and quaint, with a number of discreetly or centrally located luxurious shops selling works of art, jewellery and

AAST Overland Driving Adventure: Munich to Istanbul

clothes.

Check into the hotel for two nights.

Day 10 April 12 Belgrade

We visit various city quarters, including New Belgrade on the left bank of the Sava River, the luxurious residential area of Dedinje and the picturesque Old town. Between these visits we will pass en route St. Sava Church, Slavija Square, Belgrade Palace, the 'New Court', City hall, the Federal Parliament, Terazije street, the National Theatre, the National Museum, University and more. A highlight of the tour is our brief visit to the archaeological and historical site of Belgrade Fortress. Situated at Kalemegdan, the remains of the old city's fortifications from the 1st to the 18th centuries overlook a spectacular panoramic view of the Sava and Danube confluence.



Day 11 April 13 Belgrade – Studencia (250 km)

Today we head down to the south to visit Serbian monasteries: Manasija and Ravanica. Spend the night at one of the monasteries with a peaceful country setting.

AAST Overland Driving Adventure: Munich to Istanbul

Day 12 April 14 Studencia – Sofia, Bulgaria (380 km)

Drive to Sofia, Bulgaria. Check into hotel at the city centre for 2 nights.

Day 13 April 15 Sofia

A walking city tour will take up the whole morning. Visits include: Alexander Nevski Cathedral, National Assembly Square, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Former Royal Palace (now Ethnographic Museum and National Revival Art Gallery), National Theatre, National Archaeological Museum, Presidency, St. George Rotunda, Central Square with closed market, St. Nedelya Old Metropolitan Church, the 16th century Banya Bashi Mosque and the Synagogue.

Day 14 April 16 Sofia – Plovdiv (132 km)

Drive to Plovdiv and settle in the hotel. Afternoon, tour the old city including the Roman theatre, the Roman mosaics, and the presumed beginning of Via Trayana.



Day 15 April 17 Plovdiv

This morning head towards the beautiful Rodopi Mountains (the widest mountain massif in Bulgaria) passing through the pretty town of Asenovgrad. Nearby we will see the remarkable remains of King Ivan Asen's fortress - a wise ruler of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. There we are to find an ancient church dating from the 12th century painted with some authentic pieces of iconography as well as the stone inscription carved by King Ivan Asen.

Going deeper in the Rodopi Mountains towards Bachkovo Monastery, we will visit this second largest monastery in Bulgaria, founded in 1083, one of the most sacred places in Bulgaria's history.

Lunch will be arranged at a restaurant by the Waterfall. After lunch a light hike in the Red wall reserve will lead us to see a beautiful waterfall, chapels, the miraculous icon as well as drink

AAST Overland Driving Adventure: Munich to Istanbul

holy water out of the sacred well of a chapel.
Return to Plovdiv for dinner.

Day 16 April 18 Plovdiv – Istanbul, Turkey (380 km)

Drive towards Turkey via Svilengrad. After border-crossing formalities, will drive into the crowded city of Istanbul. Check into a centrally located hotel by the Marmara Sea.

Day 17 April 19 Istanbul

Welcome to Istanbul, the final destination of our journey!

In the morning visit the Blue Mosque, built in 1616 unequalled for its mosaics, and the Hagia Sophia dedicated in 536 AD during the reign of Justinian, we will also visit Topkapi Palace, which was built by Mehmed the Conqueror.

This evening we shall have a memorable dinner on a boat cruising along the Bosphorous to celebrate the successful completion of this unforgettable driving adventure.



Day 18 April 20 Istanbul departure

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to board your onward flight.