

Maybe check out Nikola Tesla's museum and the National Museum, or wander around the central streets. Dinner at hotel.

May 24: Saturday Belgrade- Novi Sad

After breakfast, we shall make a trip to the City of Novi Sad. On our way to the second-largest city in Serbia, we shall stop at the nearby town of Sremski Karlovci, the center of Serbian culture in the 18th century. Strolling through this picturesque town's cobbled streets will lead us to the first Serbian High School, which gave Serbian people several great writers and poets. As we stroll among great cultural institutions and historic buildings, we shall visit the oldest part of Novi Sad, the Zmaj Jovina pedestrian zone. Here we shall get introduced to the rich history of Novi Sad as we see the monument to Svetozar Miletic, the famous Novi Sad Cathedral, Episcopal Church. Accommodation and dinner in Novi Sad

May 25: Sunday Novi Sad-Budapest

After breakfast, drive to Budapest, Arrival, will start the tour of Budapest at Heroes Square, with its ancient buildings and statues. The visit follows the St. Stephen's Basilica, the largest Catholic cathedral, the impressive neo-Gothic Parliament. Leaving aside the crossing of one of the majestic bridges spanning the Danube, arrive at Buda which is the oldest, most historic and scenic part of the capital. The main attraction here is the Castle Hill with its breathtaking view over the city and its many cultural monuments, the thirteenth century Matthias Church, the Royal Palace, the Fisherman Bastion. The tour ends at the top of Gellert Hill in the Citadel, with the best panoramic view of the city. Accommodation, dinner.

May 26: Monday Budapest

After breakfast visit to the Budapest parliament
Lunch. Free time. Danube cruise with dinner
Accommodation at the hotel. Dinner.

May 27: Tuesday Budapest- Bratislava

After breakfast drive to the capital of Slovakia. Arrival in Bratislava. We will meet our local guide to start the guided tour of the capital of Slovakia. It will include the Old Town, National Theatre, Filharmonia, Royal Route, along the Danube, visit of the Cathedral of St. Martin - place of coronation of the Austrian emperors, Municipal Museum, Apponyi Palace, town houses dating from times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Visit of Primate's Palace. Free time. Return to hotel. Dinner.

May 28: Wednesday Bratislava - Kutna Hora - Prague
Breakfast, travel to capital of Czech Republic. En route we stop at Kutna Hora, capital of Bohemia, which was one of the biggest and richest cities in Europe. The dominant monument is the Gothic church of Santiago and the Cathedral of St. Barbara, later dedicated to the saint patron of miners. Lunch, free time. Arrival to Prague. Accommodation. Dinner.

May 29: Thursday Prague

After breakfast guided visit of Prague - the beautiful and historic city, located in the heart of Europe. Its rich artistic and cultural heritage is reflected in its splendid art nouveau

architecture. Among the most famous monuments we'll visit the Prague Castle, which was founded in the ninth century and was the residence of the Kings of Bohemia, Holy Roman Emperors, presidents of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. It contains the Crown Jewels of Bohemia, it is considered the largest medieval fortress in the world, the Cathedral of San Vito - temple dedicated to Catholic worship and the oldest Gothic cathedral in Central Europe, then we will cross the Charles Bridge that joins the Old Town and so called the Lesser Town. Free time. Lunch. Accommodation at the hotel. Dinner.

May 30: Friday Prague. Free day in Prague to explore.

May 31: After breakfast, transfer to airport.



CATHEDRAL OF ST. BARBARA—BRATISLAVA



PRAGUE



NOVI SAD CATHEDRAL—BELGRADE

EXPLORING THE EASTERN BALKANS BULGARIA, ROMANIA, SERBIA, BUDAPEST, PRAGUE May 15-31, 2024

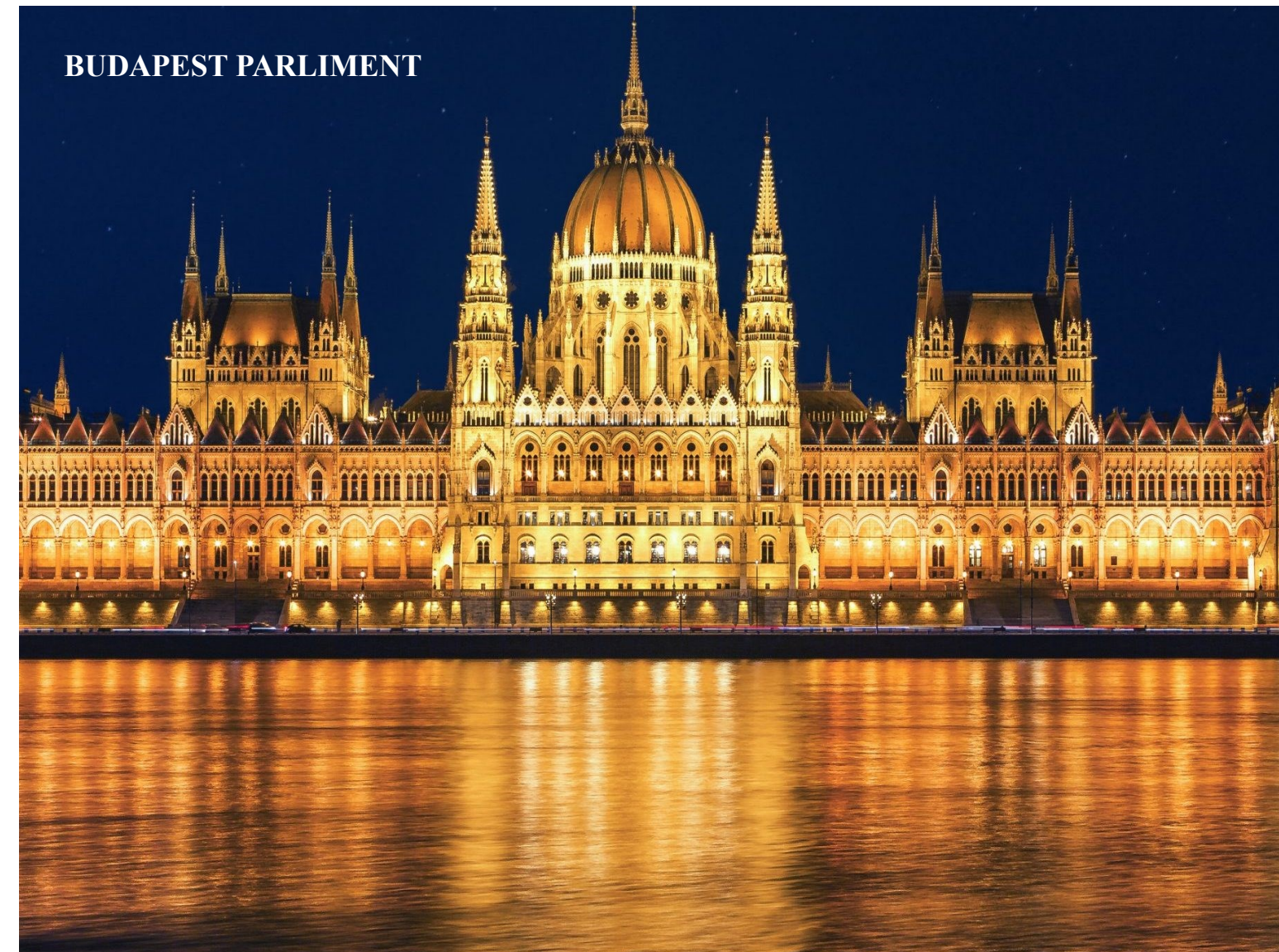
Led by Franciscan Fr. Mario DiCicco

In conjunction with Santours (#2092786-40)

**Land Only with Double Occupancy: \$6,575 (If paid by check.)
(4% surcharge if paid by credit card)**

Single Supplement: \$1,725

Air fare is separate and based on the city of departure.



ITINERARY

May 15: Thursday: Depart USA

May 16: Friday: Bucharest- arrival
Group arrival at Bucharest airport. Meeting with the English-speaking tour guide, who will accompany the group during the entire stay. Arrival. Check in . Time to rest. Dinner. Accommodation at the hotel.

May 17: Saturday Bucharest

After breakfast guided tour of the capital city of Romania. During the tour we will see the Parliament Palace, the second largest building in the world after the Pentagon and the National Treasure. We will learn how the Romanian people finally succeeded to topple the last communist dictator in eastern Europe in the Revolution Square. Your tour will bring us also to the Romanian Athenaeum, the Opera House, the National Military Club, the Military Academy, Triumphal Arch and The Village Museum. Accommodation and dinner in a local restaurant. Return to the hotel.

May 18: Sunday Bucharest- Sinaia – Peles- Bran - Brasov- Bucharest

After breakfast departure to the 17th century Sinaia Monastery. Then stop in Peles Castle built as the summer residence of King Carol I. Continue the tour with a visit to the Bran Castle made famous by Bram Stokers' novel as the residence of the vampire count, Dracula. Next, walking tour of Brasov including the visit of the First Romanian School with an impressive collection of rare books. Return to Bucharest. Dinner.

May 19: Monday Bucharest- Varna

We continue our drive along the coast of the Black Sea to Varna, where we'll have a guided tour through the Archeological Museum and the Cathedral. Lunch time After lunch in the center we continue our guided tour to the Terme Romane (2 cept. AD) the largest one in Bulgaria. If the weather is fine, we will make an excursion to the coast (Capo Kaliakra) or to an excavation site. Check-in at the hotel, dinner and overnight in Varna.

May 20: Tuesday Varna- Tarnovo- Sofia

After breakfast, we have to wake up early this morning because there will be a longer journey to Veliko Tarnovo. On the way to Veliko Tarnovo we'll stop at Pliska, the capital of the first Bulgarian Empire with a spectacular town – fortress. Guided tour of the town. We will visit one of the very few left medieval fortresses in Bulgaria, situated on the Tsarevets hill which is the site of the capital of the second Bulgarian Kingdom. Situated on a hill surrounded by the Yantra River, Tsarevets is possibly one of the best places to learn the rich and proud history of the Bulgarian Empire during the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. Continue to Sofia, founded thousands of years ago, today the city continues to develop as the country's cultural and economic center. Arrival, check in and dinner.

May 21: Wednesday Sofia

After breakfast we will explore the beauty of Sofia by visiting the most interesting monuments and buildings that

can be seen and they are: Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, the biggest one in Bulgaria, National Library, the monument of Vasil Levski- a great Bulgarian hero, Administration of the President and Council of Ministers, the former Royal Palace, Russian Church, the Mosque, the Military club, National Parliament and National Palace of Culture. After exploring the capital, we will be picked up by a bus which will take us to the outskirts of Sofia. There we will visit the UNESCO site Boyanska church and nearby next stop will be National History Museum. In the afternoon, you will have free time and, in the evening, you will go for dinner in a traditional restaurant where you will also enjoy a folklore show. Overnight in Sofia.

May 22: Thursday Sofia- Nis- Belgrade

After breakfast drive to Nis, the largest city in this part of Serbia, known as the birthplace of Constantine the Great. After exploring the city and listening to the story about this famous Roman emperor, the tour continues to Skull tower, where you will learn about The First Serbian uprising against Ottomans in the 19th century and its victims. The history lesson continues at a concentration camp from World War II. You will hear about the torture that thousands of captured people experienced during the war. Finally, explore Devil's Town, a natural monument of two natural phenomena: the soil figures (specific forms of relief) and two springs of extremely acidic water with high mineralization. In fact, Devil's Town is a New Seven Wonders of Nature nominee. Continue to Belgrade, arrival and dinner.

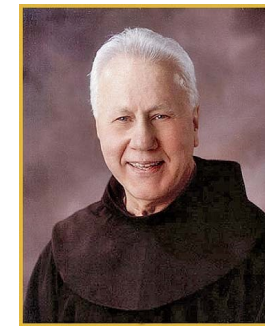
May 23: Friday Belgrade

After breakfast, we'll start with our Belgrade sightseeing tour. Today we're going to show you almost the most important sights in the city. We'll start at the daunting Belgrade Fortress, dramatically perched above the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. Built between the 1st and 18th centuries, this Fortress witnessed major defensive battles. We'll check the Victor Monument, the Monument of Gratitude to France, the Zindan Gate, the Chapel of Saint Petka, the Clock Gate, and the Clock Tower. Once we finish with the Fortress, we will start our panoramic ride through New Belgrade –Belgrade's largest municipality, with its impressive modern architecture. Here we will see some remarkable buildings, such as the Ex-Central Committee of the Communist Party, Federal Executive Council, also known as the Palace of Federation, Genex Tower or Western Gate of Belgrade, Sava Center, Belgrade Arena, and many more. After New Belgrade, we'll reach Zemun, the northern area of Belgrade, characteristic of its Central European appearance, charming quarters, cobblestone streets, and fish restaurants on the Danube river banks. Its curvy cobblestone streets and small houses will give you the impression that Zemun is a melting pot of Mediterranean and Middle European cultures. After Zemun, we'll drive through Dedinje, Belgrade's most luxurious residential area, before we reach the imposing Saint Sava Temple, one of the world's largest Orthodox churches. After the sightseeing tour, time this afternoon on your own.

Continued on back cover

Dear Explorers,
Some of us did the Western Balkans (Croatia, Montenegro and Albania) this past year and there was an eager request to do the Eastern Balkans. Take a look at the itinerary and you will see what is in store for us. This is an out-of-the-ordinary assembly of different countries and cities. Besides Prague and Budapest, two lovely cities, we will also visit the cities of Sofia (Bulgaria), Bratislava (Czech Republic), Belgrade (Serbia), Bucharest (Romania) and other towns. I'm excited to visit these historic cities filled with magnificent buildings, unusual cuisine, and cultural sites. I hope you have a chance to come with me since it is a unique array of famous and historical countries.

Fr. Mario DiCicco, O.F.M.



Trip Includes:

- Breakfast and Dinner
- First Class Hotels
- English-speaking Guide
- Air-conditioned bus
- All tips, etc.

For additional information and reservations, please contact:

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REGISTRATION FORM

Fr. Mario DiCicco

***Exploring the Eastern Balkans
Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia,
Budapest, Prague***

May 15-31, 2024

Room Preference:

Single Double

Roommate _____

PRINT FIRST AND LAST NAME CLEARLY AND EXACTLY AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR PASSPORT

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City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

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