



Walking the Danube

Concerts & country walks

20–26 August 2021 (MH 865)

7 days • £3,120

Lecturer: Richard Wigmore

The Danube Music Festival with six country walks and eight concerts in appropriate historic buildings.

Stays in hotels in Vienna and Dürnstein rather than on the ship.

Led by lecturer, critic and musicologist Richard Wigmore.

This variant on the festival package includes eight concerts and six country walks. The Austrian stretch of the Danube valley is, for much of its length, of considerable beauty, with much variety of landscape – cultivated lowlands, forested peaks, open alluvial plains, vine-clad hillsides, upland pastures, and, of course, the mighty river meandering towards the Black Sea. There are pine and fir and larch, but broadleaves predominate – beech, birch, oak, poplar.

Though hardly *classifiable as strenuous*, this tour should only be considered by those who are used to regular country walking with some uphill content. There are hills, and a few fairly steep climbs for short stretches, but no mountains, and most of the routes are along gently undulating paths. The durations are between one and three hours.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 9.00am from London Heathrow to Vienna (Austrian Airlines). Drive to Dürnstein, perhaps the loveliest little town on the river, where two nights are spent. Walk up to the ruins of a castle where Richard the Lionheart was once imprisoned, and which clinging to a steep hill behind the town.

Day 2: Grein, Dürnstein. Drive along a picturesque road beside the Danube to the little riverside town of Grein. *Morning concert in the tiny Baroque theatre hidden within the Town Hall with the Elias Quartet: Beethoven, String Quartets Op.18 No.4 in C minor, Op.74 No.10 in E flat Harp.* Lunch here before setting out for an afternoon walk (c. 6 km). Begin in woods of pine, beech and birch to the sound of tumbling streams before descending through upland pastures and farmland. Walk on moderately gentle woodland paths and quiet roads, the few steep sections being fairly short. Catch glimpses



Dürnstein, 1820s aquatint by Jacob Alt (1789–1872).

of the Danube. Drive back to Dürnstein in time for the *evening concert in the Abbey's Festsaal with Roderick Williams (baritone) and Susie Allan (piano): Beethoven, An die ferne Geliebte, Op.98; Schubert, Schwanengesang D957 ('Swan song', performed in English).* Final night here. Overnight Dürnstein.

Day 3: Vienna. Drive up the Leopoldsberg, a high hill with fine views over the capital and the Danube valley. Walk down through beech woods, vineyards and salubrious ivy-clad suburbs on a 5.5km walk on footpaths, country roads and quiet streets. Easy terrain. In the attractive wine-producing village of Heiligenstadt visit the apartment (now a museum) where Beethoven stayed (and wrote the 'Heiligenstadt Testament'). Lunch here. Drive to central Vienna with time to refresh before the *afternoon concert in the Albertina with Imogen Cooper (piano): Beethoven, Diabelli variations, Op.120.* First of three nights in Vienna.

Day 4: Eckartsau, Bratislava. Drive to Schloss Eckartsau. *Morning concert with Andreas Staier (fortepiano): Beethoven, Bagatelles and Sonatas.* Picnic lunch here before an afternoon circular walk (c.7 km), in the national park surrounding the Schloss. Drive to Bratislava. *Late-afternoon concert in the Primatial Palace with the Amatis Piano Trio: Beethoven, Piano Trios Op.70*

No.1 'Ghost' and Op. 97 'Archduke'. Dinner in Bratislava. Return to Vienna for the second of three nights.

Day 5: Vienna, Eisenstadt. *Morning concert in the Konzerthaus with the Auryn Quartet: Beethoven, String Quartets: No.11, Op.95 Serioso and No. 9 Op.59, No.3, Razumovsky.* Three hours of free time in Vienna for independent exploration before driving to Eisenstadt for some more free time, perhaps to visit the the Haydn House museum or the Esterházy Palace. *Evening concert in the Bergkirche with the Vienna Chamber Choir and Bach Consort Wien: Beethoven: Mass in C major, Op. 86.* Return to Vienna for the third and final night.

Day 6: Melk, Dürnstein. Drive to Felbring for a morning woodland walk through landscapes of beech and pine, with vistas across the Danube Valley. Walk c. 6km on a mixture of grassy footpaths and stony tracks, on level terrain with some downhill and uphill sections (sturdy walking boots are necessary). Arrive in Melk, a delightful little town on the Danube nestling under the abbey. Lunch here. Visit the abbey state apartments and church, which are among the most brilliant creations of the Age of Baroque. *Afternoon concert in Melk Abbey with the Nash Ensemble: Beethoven, Septet in E-flat, Op.20; Schubert, Octet in F, D. 803.* Overnight in Dürnstein

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continued

Day 7: Dürnstein. A morning walk of c. 6.5 km starts with a climb of 15 minutes on a small road into the vine-clad hills overlooking the Danube and dips periodically into shaded gullies with butterflies, abundant wildflowers and red-roofed villages in the valley below. The terrain is easy underfoot as the walk is predominantly on quiet, shaded roads. Return to Dürnstein for some free time before travelling by coach to Vienna Airport. Return to Heathrow at c. 6.40pm.

How strenuous? This is a walking tour, graded 'moderate'. It is essential for participants to have appropriate walking footwear, be in good physical condition and to be used to country walking with uphill and downhill content. There are a few moderately steep climbs, but no walk is more than 6 miles or 3 hours. There is not always the opportunity to return to the hotel to freshen up before every concert or dinner. (Please see www.martinrandall.com/about-us for our walking tour grading system).

Small group: between 12 and 22 participants.

Lecturer

Richard Wigmore. Music writer, lecturer and broadcaster for BBC Radio 3. He writes for *BBC Music Magazine* and *Gramophone* and has taught classes in Lieder history and interpretation at the Guildhall, Trinity College of Music and Birkbeck College. He read French and German at Cambridge and later studied Music at the Guildhall. His publications include *Schubert: the complete song texts* and *Pocket Guide to Haydn*.

Practicalities

Price – per person. Two sharing: £3,120 or £2,950 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,490 or £3,320 without flights.

Included: flights (economy class) on scheduled Austrian Airlines flights; travel by coach for transfers and excursions; 8 private concerts; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 4 lunches and 5 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admission charges; all tips for restaurant staff and drivers; all airport and state taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation: Richard Löwenherz, Dürnstein (richardloewenherz.at): a lovely old-fashioned hotel occupying a historic building with garden and outdoor pool. **Hotel Bristol, Vienna** (bristolvienna.com): a 5-star hotel in a superb location on the Ringstrasse near the opera house, traditionally furnished and decorated.