



Walking the Danube

Concerts & country walks

15–21 August 2026 (MM 134)

7 days

Lecturer: Richard Wigmore

Six private concerts in beautiful and appropriate buildings, part of our *Music Along the Danube* festival, with the addition of five country walks.

A singularly beguiling combination of music and place: some the most beautiful locations in the Danube valley are also where some of the greatest composers of the Western classical tradition lived or worked.

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 six concerts and five 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.

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 cling to a steep hill behind the town.

Day 2: Dürnstein, Melk. A morning walk of c. 6.5km 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



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

predominantly on quiet, shaded roads. Return to the hotel for some time to refresh. In the afternoon, drive to Melk, a delightful little town on the Danube nestling under the abbey. Visit the abbey state apartments and church, which are among the most brilliant creations of the Age of Baroque. Return to Dürnstein for an *early evening concert in Dürnstein Abbey with the Vienna Chamber Choir: Austrian Choral; programme to be confirmed*. Final night in Dürnstein.

Day 3: Leopoldsberg, 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. Lunch is included, before a short drive to Klosterneuburg Abbey for a guided tour and *late-afternoon recital in the Augustinus Saal with Kristian Bezuidenhout (fortepiano): Haydn & Mozart*. Continue to Vienna, where the next four nights are spent.

Day 4: Eckartsau, Bratislava. Drive to Schloss Eckartsau for a *morning recital with Carolyn Sampson (soprano) and Joseph Middleton (piano): Schubert's Four Seasons*. Picnic lunch here before a short circular walk (c. 3km), in the national park surrounding the Schloss.

Drive to Bratislava. *Late-afternoon concert in the Primatial Palace with the Smetana Trio: Czech Piano Trios*. Dinner in Bratislava before returning to Vienna for the second night.

Day 5: Eisenstadt, Vienna. Drive to the Burgenland for a walk of c. 2 hours through gently rolling countryside of vineyards and fields. Continue by coach to Eisenstadt in time for an *afternoon concert in the great Haydn Saal at Schloss Esterházy with the Haydn Philharmonie: Haydn Symphonies*. Return to Vienna for the third night.

Day 6: Vienna. Free morning in Vienna for independent exploration or participate in an optional walking tour of the city. *Afternoon recital in the Rittersaal of the Hofburg with Imogen Cooper (piano): Schubert's Impromptus*. Final night in Vienna.

Day 7. Travel by coach to Vienna Airport. Return to Heathrow in the early afternoon.

Walking the Danube continued

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

Included: travel by coach for transfers and excursions; 6 private concerts; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 3 lunches (2 of which picnic lunches) and 5 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admission charges; all tips for restaurant staff and drivers; all 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. **Grand Hotel Wien** (grandhotelwien.com): Luxury hotel in a superb location on the Ringstrasse just a few steps to the opera house, traditionally furnished and decorated. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

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.