Whether you’re seeking to recapture your ancestral heritage or simply to discover a beautiful and poignant part of the world, this small group tour limited to 24 guests offers ample opportunity for enrichment, enlightenment, and enjoyment. Both leisurely and comprehensive, it provides a generous overview of five distinctly different nations—Poland, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Begin the 17-day tour in Poland’s capital, Warsaw, where sightseeing includes the faithfully rebuilt Old Town and guided visits to the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps. Travel to Krakow and tour the Wieliczka Salt Mines, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Explore Budapest with comprehensive touring and time on your own to discover the “Paris of the East.” View the scenic Danube Bend. In Vienna, attend a classical music performance and enjoy sightseeing including an inside visit to majestic Schönbrunn Palace. Continue to old-world Bratislava and dine at the restaurant of a local family. Travel to the Czech Republic and enjoy a tour of elegant Prague, including Old Town Square, Prague Castle, and Charles Bridge.

STUDY LEADER: Michael Hornblow AB ’62, Retired Diplomat, Eastern Europe Specialist
Michael Hornblow graduated from Harvard College in 1962. After three years in US Army intelligence, he joined the Foreign Service and served in Afghanistan, Iran and the National Security Council. From 1980 to 1995 he specialized in Eastern Europe — first at the Vatican, during the pontificate of John Paul II, where he reported extensively on Poland and Czechoslovakia, in Krakow as Consul General, in Washington from 1988-1990 where he was responsible for Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in Warsaw 1991-4 as Deputy Chief of Mission and Charge’ and at the U.S. Mission to NATO as Political Advisor where he participated in the study which led to NATO membership for the eastern European countries.

GROUP SIZE: 12 to 24 guests

PRICING:
- $5,997 per person double occupancy Air Inclusive from Boston or JFK ($5,295 air & land inclusive plus $702 airline taxes and departure fees)
- $4,895 per person double occupancy Land Only
- $1,195 single supplement
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24
DEPART U.S. FOR WARSAW

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25
ARRIVE WARSAW

After reaching Warsaw late this morning and transferring to the hotel, there’s time to unpack, relax, or begin your discovery of this fascinating city. This evening, gather for a welcome dinner at the hotel, where you’ll have a chance to get acquainted with your fellow travelers and your Tour Director. 

Overnight: Polonia Palace Hotel / (D)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
WARSAW

Devastated by World War II, Warsaw had to be virtually rebuilt from the ground up – a 15-year project that used every piece of authentic stone found amid the rubble. See the results on today’s morning tour, which includes the completely restored Old Town Square, a UNESCO Heritage site; and the Royal Castle, the official residence of the Polish monarchs located in Castle Square at the entrance to the Old Town. Also, explore the area of the former Jewish Ghetto and the Jewish Cemetery, the largest of its kind in Europe. As you walk the streets that the Jews of Warsaw once inhabited, you can imagine the 1943 uprising when a small number of Jewish Resistance fighters inside the ghetto held out against Nazi forces for an incredible 22 days. After some time at leisure, late this afternoon enjoy a special treat: a private classical piano recital. Lunch and dinner are on your own today. 

Overnight: Polonia Palace Hotel / (B)

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
WARSAW/AUSCHWITZ & BIRKENAU/KRAKOW

This morning board our motor coach for a day-long journey to Krakow, the former Polish capital city. Along the way, you’ll stop and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant in the town of Oswiecim, better known by its German name of Auschwitz. All over the world, Auschwitz has become a symbol of terror, genocide, and the Holocaust. We also tour the concentration camps of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II – Birkenau. Auschwitz was the largest camp established by the Nazis during World War II. More than a million people – the vast majority of them Jews – died there between 1940, when it was built, and 1945, when it was liberated. Both camps have been preserved as they were during the war, including the prison blocks, gas chambers, and crematoria. You will spend approximately three hours here, touring the sites and learning more about this horrific time. Arrive in Krakow late this afternoon and enjoy dinner at the hotel. 

Overnight: Hotel Pod Roza / (B, L, D)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
KRAKOW

The country’s third largest city, Krakow escaped the devastation that obliterated other Polish cities during World War II, and it’s perfectly preserved medieval Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is on the itinerary of this morning’s tour. Next, visit the Main Market Square, the largest medieval town square in Europe; as well as 14th-century Wawel Castle and Cathedral before returning to the hotel. The remainder of the day is free to do as you please. Lunch and dinner today are on your own. 

Overnight: Hotel Pod Roza / (B)
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
KRAKOW

This morning tour the Wieliczka Salt Mine, a UNESCO World Heritage site that is a virtual underground city, with galleries, lakes, chapels, and murals – all carved from salt. The mine’s centerpiece is the Chapel of Saint Kinga, with its chandelier and mural of the Last Supper, carved by three miners over a period of 68 years. The mine has been a family tradition, with fathers passing their mining – and carving – skills on to their sons for generations. During World War II, the Nazis actually used the mine to manufacture parts for their aircraft. Though no longer a source of hard salt, the mine does extract and sell salt from ground water in the underground lakes. After this fascinating tour we return to Krakow, where the remainder of the day is at leisure with lunch and dinner on your own in this historic capital.

Overnight: Hotel Pod Roza / (B)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30
KRAKOW/SLOVAKIA/BUDAPEST

Enjoy the scenic beauty of the Tatra Mountains as you travel by bus from Poland to Hungary via Slovakia, where you'll stop for lunch. Boasting the highest elevations in the Carpathian mountain range, the Tatras count as a popular winter sports destination. Early this evening, reach the Hungarian capital of Budapest and your hotel, located in Buda's lovely and historic Castle District. A Hungarian king originally built Buda Castle in the aftermath of a 13th-century Mongolian invasion. Destroyed in a 17th-century siege, rebuilt, and decimated once again in World War II, the castle complex was reconstructed according to the original medieval design in an extensive post-war project that lasted through the 1980s. This evening is at leisure for dinner on your own in this sophisticated city.

Overnight: Hilton Budapest / (B, D)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1
BUDAPEST

Today's half-day tour will introduce you to this great city, home to one in every five Hungarians. Begin with a visit to Matthias Church (Mátyás Templom), the symbol of Buda's Castle District; followed by a stroll around Fisherman's Bastion behind the hotel for spectacular views of the Pest side of the city across the river. Looking out over the Danube to Pest you can see the Chain Bridge - the first permanent bridge across the Danube - connecting Buda with Pest; Margaret Island, a public park since 1908; and the huge neo-gothic House of Parliament, seat of this democratic nation's government.

The tour also includes an inside visit of the Dohány Synagogue with its rich but tragic history. Built in 1859, it is the largest synagogue in Europe and the world's second largest. During the German occupation, Nazis used the synagogue as a stable and a radio base; in 1945, some 5,000 murdered Jews were buried in a mass grave in its courtyard where a Holocaust Memorial now stands. After lunch on your own, the afternoon is free for independent exploration. Tonight enjoy a typical Hungarian dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Hilton Budapest / (B, D)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2
BUDAPEST

Today is free to explore “the Paris of the East” on your own. Your tour director is on hand to offer suggestions and assist with any special arrangements. The city’s riches include the ornate Opera House, one of Budapest’s most spectacular buildings and among the top opera houses in Europe. You may wish to take a guided tour of the Opera House, or even to enjoy an evening performance there (the season runs from late September through June; performances usually start at 6 or 7 p.m.). Or visit the Thermal Bath at the Hotel Gellert, with pools of varying temperatures,
steam rooms, and an outdoor artificial-wave pool; or the Museum of Fine Arts, displaying Central Europe’s most important collection of foreign art. If you’d rather be outdoors, you can walk one of the many trails in the Buda Hills or take a leisurely stroll on Margaret Island. Lunch and dinner today are on your own.

Overnight: Hilton Budapest / (B)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3
BUDAPEST/DANUBE BEND/VIENNA

Today you’ll travel by bus to Vienna via the small towns that lie along the scenic Danube Bend. The first stop is Szentendre, a tiny town packed with artisans’ shops; here, visit the fascinating museum showcasing the works of Hungarian ceramic artist Margaret Kovács. Then, continue to Neszmély, a picturesque village along the Danube where we meet the friendly inhabitants and sample outstanding cuisine for lunch before continuing to Vienna. After arriving in the Austrian capital late this afternoon and checking into the hotel, the remainder of the evening is free. Dinner is on your own this tonight; this is the perfect opportunity to sample some of Vienna’s acclaimed cuisine.

Overnight: Hilton Vienna Plaza / (B, L)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4
VIENNA

The grandeur of the Habsburg Empire comes to life today as you embark on a half-day tour of the city that was the cornerstone of Habsburg rule for centuries. A drive along the Ringstrasse, the city’s famed boulevard, gives us a wonderful overview of Vienna. You will pass the Hofburg, the former Imperial Palace; city hall; the Parliament; and the National Museum. Stopping at the storied, ornate Opera House, enjoy a guided tour of one of Europe’s grandest opera houses. Next, drive to Schönbrunn Palace for a guided inside tour of the Imperial Apartments and a stroll through the surrounding gardens.

After returning to the hotel, lunch is on your own and the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure. You may want to spend some time on the pedestrian-only Kärntnerstrasse, a bustling shopping street that features all the best shops, restaurants, and coffeehouses. Early this evening, enjoy a traditional Wiener Schnitzel dinner at a local restaurant. Afterward, attend a concert of classical music in this most musical of all cities.

Overnight: Hilton Vienna Plaza / (B, D)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5
VIENNA WOODS

This morning enjoy an excursion to the Vienna Woods, the eastern tip of Alpine Europe. The Vienna Woods gained fame during the heyday of the Austrian Empire, and infamy as the site of Mayerling, where in 1889 the mysterious deaths of Archduke Rudolf and his mistress changed the course of European history and led to the fall of the House of Habsburg. First stop is the medieval abbey of Heiligenkreuz, Austria’s second oldest Cistercian monastery (1133) with Babenberg tombs, a chapel with a Romanesque nave, High Gothic choir hall, Baroque choir stalls, and Early Gothic cloisters. Then, continue on past Mayerling to the medieval spa town of Baden, where you’ll take a brief stroll through the city center and then have some free time. Return to Vienna early this afternoon and the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration. You may wish to visit the Lipizzaner Museum; shop along the pedestrian Kärntnerstrasse; visit the home of Sigmund Freud; or tour the acclaimed Museum of Fine Arts or Museum of Natural History. Both lunch and dinner are on your own today.

Overnight: Hilton Vienna Plaza / (B)
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6
VIENNA/BRATISLAVA

Mid-morning depart for Bratislava, capital of the independent nation of Slovakia and the world’s only capital to share borders with two countries, Austria and Hungary. Soviet-era buildings intermingle with classical and medieval architecture in this rapidly growing city straddling the Danube. Upon arrival, embark on a minitrain and walking tour of the historic Castle area where various peoples – Celts, Romans, Slavs, and Slovaks – have built fortifications since the Stone Age.

Bratislava Castle underwent many renovations throughout the centuries until fire destroyed it in 1811; reconstruction began in the 1950s and continues today. Also, visit the 18th-century classical-style Archbishop’s Palace, now the Bratislava mayoral residence.

Before continuing on, enjoy lunch on our own. After reaching the hotel late this afternoon, you’ll have time to refresh before dinner tonight at the restaurant of a local family.

Overnight: Radisson Blu Carlton / (B, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7
BRATISLAVA/PRAGUE

This morning we leave for Prague, proud capital of the Czech Republic, filled with art, medieval architecture, historic churches, and cobblestone streets. Along the way you’ll stop for lunch and a brief tour of Brno, the Czech Republic’s second largest city and capital of Moravia. You will reach Prague in the late-afternoon.

The rest of the day is yours to discover this wondrous city or join your tour director on a short orientation walk of Old Town (Staré Msto). Walking is really the only way to explore Prague; most of the oldest areas are walking zones where motor traffic is limited or prohibited. Discover Prague’s Old Town, whose ancient streets are lined with many stately buildings, churches, shops, and theaters; and 14th-century Charles Bridge, Prague’s most celebrated structure linking Old Town and the Castle District across the river. All roads eventually lead to Old Town Square, a focal point of Czech history and politics. Here you can see the historic Astronomical Clock – at the top of the hour a mechanical parade of saints and sinners performs for passers-by. Tonight you enjoy dinner on your own.

Overnight: Grand Bohemia Praha / (B, L)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8
PRAGUE

This morning tour Prague’s celebrated Castle District (Hradany). This hilltop complex encompasses many houses, towers, churches, courtyards, and monuments. Visit the key sites of St. Vitus Cathedral and the Royal Palace, then this afternoon is free for you to explore at your own pace. The historical core of the city – Hrad any, Malá Strana (Lesser Town), Staré Msto (Old Town), and Václavské nám stí (Wenceslas Square), site of the demonstrations that led to the Velvet Revolution – covers about two square miles and is pedestrian-friendly. The afternoon and evening are free to enjoy your choice of restaurants in this dazzling city.

Overnight: Grand Bohemia Praha / (B)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9
PRAGUE

This morning join your tour director on a walk to Josefov, Prague’s historic Jewish Quarter, located entirely within Staré Msto. Your tour director will provide you with entrance tickets to the Jewish Quarter. Led by a local guide, you’ll have access to the following sites within Josefov: Maisel Synagogue, now serving as the exhibition space for the Jewish Museum; the Spanish Synagogue, the “newest” synagogue in the Jewish Quarter, built in 1868; Pinkas Synagogue, where a haunting collection of paintings and
drawings by children from Terezín concentration camp is on display; Klausen Synagogue, exhibiting Jewish traditions and customs; and the Old Jewish Cemetery and the adjacent Ceremonial Hall. This afternoon is free for lunch on our own and individual pursuits before tonight’s special farewell dinner.

Overnight: Grand Bohemia Praha (B, D)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
RETURN TO U.S.

Early this morning you'll transfer to the airport for your connecting flight to the U.S.

(B)

“PRAGUE-ON YOUR OWN”
OPTIONAL POST-TOUR EXTENSION

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10 & 11
PRAGUE

No need to transfer anywhere: you’re right at home for the next two nights at the Grand Bohemia Praha, your base for exploring Prague to your heart’s delight. Options abound. You may wish to further explore some of the sights visited on tour on Days 15 and 16; tour such museums as the Czech Museum of Music, housed in a 17th-century Baroque church, the incredible Museum of Miniatures, the Mucha Museum of Czech Art Nouveau, or the Franz Kafka Museum, with first editions of all of the writer’s works; follow silver arrows of the “Royal Route” that winds through the city in the footsteps of Bohemian kings’ coronation processions; relax over a local brew in a typical beer garden; or attend a performance at the National Theater.

Overnight: Grand Bohemia Praha / (B)