



CENTRAL EUROPE & THE BALKANS Detailed Itinerary

MAY 13 - 24, 2027

CENTRAL EUROPE & THE BALKANS

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Central Europe is a region shaped by shifting borders, powerful empires, and the movement of ideas through trade routes, universities, and cultural traditions. Today, it lies at the heart of democratic life and international cooperation within the European Union. Its history remains visible in architecture, memorials, and civic spaces, offering travelers insight into how nations remember the past while continuing to redefine their place in modern Europe.

From Warsaw's remarkable postwar renewal and Kraków's preserved medieval center to Budapest's grand boulevards and sweeping Danube views, each city reveals a distinct story of resilience, creativity, and reinvention. Continuing south to Belgrade, where the Danube and Sava rivers meet, the journey enters the Balkans—a region shaped by overlapping cultures, faiths, languages, and empires. Together, these destinations offer a deeper understanding of Europe's shared history and the forces that continue to shape its future.

American Councils' connections to the region span more than two decades. Its work in Serbia began in 2002 through the former Junior Faculty Development Program, while engagement in Poland began with the U.S.-Poland Parliamentary Exchange in 2008 and expanded with the opening of the Warsaw office in 2015. The Budapest office followed in 2018 as educational exchange programming grew across Hungary and Slovakia.

Over twelve days, you will travel from Poland's postwar reinvention and historic cultural centers to Hungary's Danube capital and onward to Serbia's dynamic capital at the confluence of two rivers. Along the way, conversations with local staff, alumni, and partners will offer a personal perspective on the region—connecting its layered history with the people and institutions shaping it today.



At the heart of Europe, Poland offers a vivid example of how a nation can preserve deep historical roots while continually reinventing itself. Centuries of shifting borders, foreign occupation, war, and political transformation have left a profound mark on the country, yet Poland's history is equally defined by cultural endurance, intellectual achievement, and national renewal. Today, longstanding traditions remain visible in its historic urban centers, universities, museums, and public life, while economic growth, global engagement, and democratic debate continue to shape its place in contemporary Europe.

This balance is especially striking in Warsaw and Kraków. Warsaw, the capital, was almost entirely rebuilt following the destruction of World War II, and its reconstructed Old Town now stands alongside modern architecture and rapidly developing business districts. Kraków, the country's former royal capital, retains its medieval character and remains one of Poland's leading centers of academic life, artistic expression, and cultural heritage. Together, the two cities reveal different but complementary dimensions of Poland: one shaped by dramatic reinvention and the other by remarkable historical continuity.

American Councils has implemented programs in Poland since 2008 and has maintained an office in Warsaw since 2015. Today, a nine-member professional team supports four active programs and a network of more than 450 alumni. FLEX Poland receives more than 3,000 applications annually and sends approximately 20 students from across all 16 voivodeships to the United States each year. Poland also hosts American high school students through FLEX Abroad and participates in Open World, alumni mentoring, media literacy and counter-disinformation initiatives, and Title VIII research support. These exchanges provide opportunities to encounter Poland not only through its history and landmarks, but also through the students, educators, researchers, and civic leaders contributing to its evolving role in Europe.



At the crossroads of Central Europe, Hungary reflects the many cultural, political, and intellectual currents that have shaped the region over centuries. Its identity has been influenced by Roman settlements, the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, Ottoman rule, the Habsburg Empire, and the political transformations of the twentieth century. These historical layers remain visible in the country's architecture, traditions, cuisine, and public life, while strong academic, scientific, and artistic traditions continue to shape contemporary Hungary.

This interplay between history and modern life is most clearly experienced in Budapest. Formed through the unification of Buda, Pest, and Óbuda in 1873, the capital stretches across both banks of the Danube, connected by landmark bridges and defined by architectural styles ranging from medieval and Ottoman influences to grand nineteenth-century civic buildings. Beyond its historic streets and monuments, Budapest remains a center of business, research, music, and cultural exchange, offering insight into Hungary's distinctive place within Central Europe.

American Councils established its Budapest office in 2018. With one staff member, the office works closely with the U.S. Embassy in Budapest, American Corners, EducationUSA, and Hungarian academic and non-profit institutions. The Future Leaders Exchange program sends 10-14 Hungarian students to the United States each year and has contributed to a growing network of more than 60 Hungarian and dozens of international FLEX alumni living in Hungary.

The office has also implemented Embassy-supported initiatives including the Elie Wiesel Study Tour and the Academy of Critical Thinking. These programs offered new opportunities to Hungarian high school and university students for 21st century skill building and deepening their knowledge in these fields, guided by leading American experts.



SERBIA

Situated at the crossroads of Central and Southeast Europe, Serbia has long been shaped by the movement of people, goods, and ideas across the Balkans. Its strategic position along the Danube and Sava rivers placed it at the intersection of Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Habsburg spheres of influence, leaving a complex cultural and historical legacy. Today, the country offers an important perspective on identity, resilience, and political and social change in the Western Balkans.

These layers are especially visible in Belgrade, where the Danube and Sava meet. One of Europe's oldest continuously inhabited cities, Belgrade has been destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly throughout its history. Historic neighborhoods, fortifications, religious sites, and civic landmarks now coexist with contemporary cultural venues, universities, creative industries, and major redevelopment projects. The city's energy and contrasts reflect Serbia's continuing negotiation between tradition and modernity, regional identity and wider European connections.

American Councils established its Belgrade office in 2002 through a fellowship program for newly appointed university instructors. The office later administered the American-Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange Program, known as A-SMYLE, which was subsequently integrated into the Future Leaders Exchange program. Together, FLEX and A-SMYLE have produced more than 950 alumni, while the office's broader network includes more than 2,550 students, educators, and professionals.

More recently, American Councils became a key implementing partner for the [American Resource Center](#) (the ARC), the U.S. Mission to Serbia's flagship public-engagement initiative at Ložionica in Belgrade's redeveloped Waterfront district. Since its opening in October 2025 through January 2026, the ARC hosted 185 programs reaching 4,561 participants. Working closely with the U.S. Embassy and a broad network of governmental, academic, and civil society partners, American Councils Serbia serves as a visible and effective platform for advancing U.S. engagement, educational exchange, and civic dialogue in the region.

INSIDER TOURS 2027

ITINERARY

DAY 1

MAY
13

Departure from the United States

DAY 2

MAY
14

Hotel Polonia
Palace,
Warsaw*

Warsaw, Poland: Arrive in Warsaw and transfer to the hotel for check-in. Optional afternoon walk to the Palace of Culture and Science with an elevator to the terrace and panoramic view of Warsaw, followed by a welcome dinner with select staff at a traditional Polish restaurant.



DAY 3

MAY
15

Hotel Polonia
Palace,
Warsaw*

Warsaw: Guided walking tour ending in Old Town, followed by free time and lunch with alumni. Afternoon visit to the Museum of Modern Art and coffee with the FLEX Abroad cohort, then return to hotel to refresh before dinner at a modern Polish cuisine restaurant.



**Hotels and restaurants are subject to change.*

DAY 4

MAY
16

Grand Hotel,
Kraków*

Warsaw-Kraków: Breakfast and checkout, then transfer to the station for a fast train to Kraków. Check in at the hotel and enjoy free time in Old Town before a guided visit to Schindler's Factory Museum, followed by dinner in the Jewish District.



DAY 5

MAY
17

Overnight
sleeper train to
Budapest

Kraków: After breakfast, depart for a guided visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Return to Kraków for free time and hotel refresh/check-out, then transfer to the station for the overnight sleeper train to Budapest.



DAY 6

MAY
18

Eurostars
Danube Hotel,
Budapest*

Budapest, Hungary: Arrive by overnight train and enjoy breakfast near St. Stephen's Basilica while your luggage is transferred to the hotel. Cruise the Danube, have lunch in the city, then check in and enjoy free time before dinner at an authentic Hungarian restaurant nearby.



**Hotels and restaurants are subject to change.*

DAY 7

MAY
19

Eurostars
Danube Hotel,
Budapest*

Budapest: Begin the day with a guided tour of the Pest side, highlighting sites connected to Hungarian-American relations and culture. Meet American Councils alumni for lunch, then visit the historic Unicum Factory. Return to the hotel for free time before dinner.



DAY 8

MAY
20

Hotel Prezident,
Palic*

Budapest - Palic, Serbia: After breakfast and checkout, explore Buda Castle Hill on a guided walking tour, followed by a light lunch in the Castle District. Return to the hotel for your luggage, then travel to Palic, Serbia, for dinner and an overnight stay.

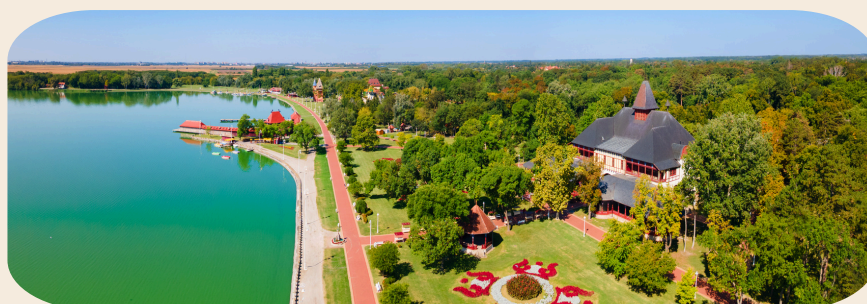


DAY 9

MAY
21

Hotel Prezident,
Palic*

Palic - Subotica - Palic: Begin with a leisurely tour of Palic and coffee by the lake, followed by lunch and time to rest. Later, travel to Subotica for a guided tour highlighting the city's distinctive Art Nouveau architecture, then enjoy dinner before returning to Palic.



**Hotels and restaurants are subject to change.*

DAY 10

MAY
22

Hotel Courtyard
by Marriott,
Belgrade*

Palic – Novi Sad - Belgrade: After breakfast and checkout, travel to Novi Sad for a guided tour, followed by lunch at Petrovaradin Fortress. Continue to Belgrade for a visit to the American Resource Center (the ARC) and hotel check-in. In the evening, explore Kalemegdan Fortress and enjoy dinner overlooking the city.



DAY 11

MAY
23

Hotel Courtyard
by Marriott,
Belgrade*

Belgrade: Travel to Avala for a guided tour through panoramic vistas and Ivan Meštrović's legendary monument followed by picnic in nature, then continue to Zemun for an afternoon walking tour along Danube while observing Habsburg cultural legacy. Return to the hotel for time to rest before dinner in the historic bohemian Skadarlija district.



DAY 12

MAY
24

Pack up your souvenirs and depart in the early morning. Farewell!

TOUR DETAILS

DATES: May 13 - 24, 2027

COST:

Standard tour fee:

\$5,000 per person, including a \$750 tax-deductible donation to American Councils. For two travelers sharing a room, the cost is \$9,600, including a \$1,500 tax-deductible donation.

Register by December 15, 2026, to receive the early bird discount:

\$4,900 per person, including a \$750 tax-deductible donation to American Councils. For two travelers sharing a room, the cost is \$9,400, including a \$1,500 tax-deductible donation.

EXCLUDED:

- Airfare to Warsaw Chopin Airport (WAW) May 13-14 and return flights from Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport (BEG) on May 24.
- Airport transfers (departure and arrival) at the home airport.
- Airport transfers, meals, and accommodations before or after the official tour dates. Upon request, American Councils may arrange additional nights at the same hotels used during the tour; all related costs are the traveler's responsibility.
- Travel Insurance (if desired).

INCLUDED:

- Airport transfers upon arrival at Warsaw Chopin Airport (WAW) on May 14 and departure from Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport (BEG) on May 24.
- Hotel accommodations (single occupancy for individual travelers and double occupancy for travel companions).
- All ground transportation throughout the tour.
- All meals, scheduled activities, and admissions.

NEXT STEPS

American Councils Insider Tours are curated, small-group journeys that offer an immersive, personal encounter with the countries and communities where American Councils has worked for decades. Guided by our in-country staff and joined by current participants, alumni, and local partners along the way, you'll see Poland, Hungary and Serbia through their eyes - connecting headline history to everyday life and the real impact of international education.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: This tour includes a fair amount of walking, sometimes over uneven pavement and stairs. Some locations may not offer mobility accommodations or alternative transportation, and participants may need to walk for up to an hour at a time. Please consider your physical stamina and abilities before registering.

Participation is limited to 15-20 guests. The standard tour fee is \$5,000 per person, including a \$750 tax-deductible donation to American Councils, or \$9,600 for two travelers sharing a room, including a \$1,500 tax-deductible donation.

Register by **December 15, 2026, to receive the early bird discount: \$4,900 per person, including a \$750 tax-deductible donation, or \$9,400 for two travelers sharing a room, including a \$1,500 tax-deductible donation.** Registration closes when the tour reaches capacity or on January 15, 2027, whichever comes first.

All fees are due in full by **January 15, 2027**. Cancellations made on or before **March 1, 2027**, are eligible for a full refund. Cancellations made after March 1 may be eligible for a partial refund.

READY TO JOIN THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME?
Register today at ais.americancouncils.org/insider



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