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Text by Bonnie Tsui Photograph by Paul Hahn/Laif/Redux



A dinner cruise on the Danube River in Budapest

WHAT'S NEW: In June the bike-touring specialist Backroads launches a trip through Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland that includes cycling through beech forests, windswept pastures, and some of the least touristed medieval cities and

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alpine hamlets in Europe. The seed of the trip was planted by Tom Hale, the company's founder, who, inspired by all he'd been reading about Eastern Europe, ordered as many maps of the region as he could find. "With the small villages, it feels like postwar Europe," says Backroads spokesperson Christian Chumbley, who helped Hale create the itinerary. "Traffic just disappears, and you can do a 60-mile (97-kilometer) route where you don't see a single car."

ON THE GROUND: The tour begins with a cruise up the storied Danube River from Budapest to the 13th-century forts and 14th-century palaces at Visegrád, Hungary. Then you'll head west and begin cycling with a roll over the Maria Valeria Bridge into Slovakia. Winding through the High Tatras Mountains to Banska Stiavnica, a town filled with Renaissance architecture, the route crosses into Poland, where a day of biking the Polish High Tatras ends with a horse-drawn carriage ride to a traditional highlander restaurant (smoky soft cheeses and dumplings comprise the local fare). The final two days are spent spinning past the ancient castles that surround Krakow.

Vitals

Outfitter: Backroads (www.backroads.com/)

Length: Nine days

Price: \$3,898

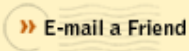
Difficulty: Moderate

Departs: June through September



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