

# Danube cruise

on the

# MS Moldavis

From Passau to the Black Sea and back

12 to 28 October 2013

Fotos: Margrit Müller  
Text: René Müller

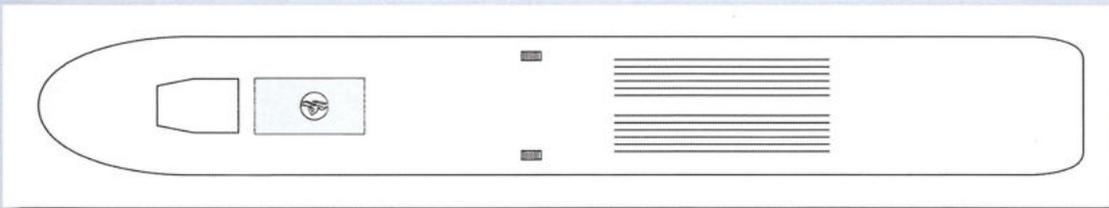




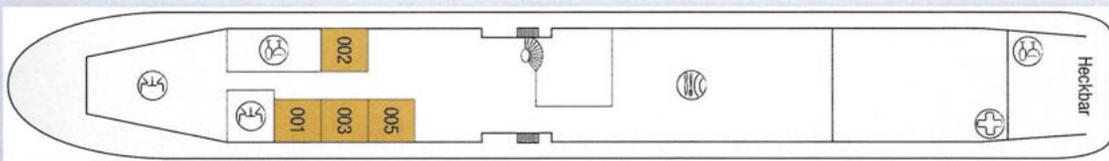
	Tag		Datum	Etappenorte / Sehenswürdigkeiten	Km
<b>Hinfahrt</b>	1	Sa	12. Okt.	Passau	
	2	So	13. Okt.	Wien	288
	3	Mo	14. Okt.	Budapest	287
	4	Di	15. Okt.	Vukovar / Osijek	314
	5	Mi	16. Okt.	Belgrad	163
	6	Do	17. Okt.	Kataraktenstrecke	
	7	Fr	18. Okt.	Giurgiu / Bukarest	667
<b>Rückfahrt</b>	8	Sa	19. Okt.	Oltenita	63
				Ismail	376
				Wilkowo / Delta bis km 0	74
	8	Sa	19. Okt.	Wilkowo	
				Ismail	74
	9	So	20. Okt.	Fetesti / Constanta / Mamaia	246
	10	Mo	21. Okt.	Nikopol / Pleven	297
	11	Di	22. Okt.	Kataraktenstrecke	
	12	Mi	23. Okt.	Novi Sad	658
	13	Do	24. Okt.	Mohács / Pécs	192
			Kalocsa	68	
14	Fr	25. Okt.	Budapest	132	
			Visegrad	47	
15	Sa	26. Okt.	Bratislava	175	
16	So	27. Okt.	Linz	265	
17	Mo	28. Okt.	Passau	88	
<b>Total der Flusskilometer</b>					<b>4'484</b>



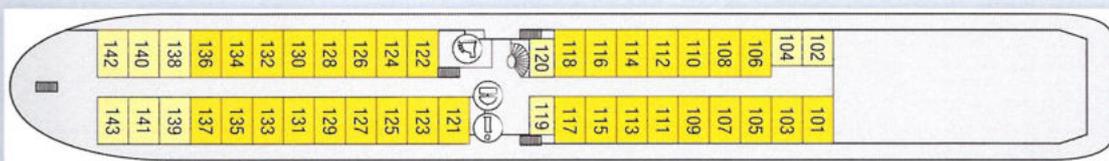
# MS Moldavia



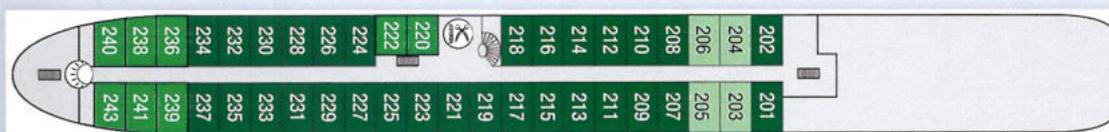
Sonnen-Deck (4)



Promenaden-Deck (3)



Ober-Deck (2)



Haupt-Deck (1)



# Danube River Cruise

12 - 28 October 2013

Day 1 of travel, Saturday 12 October

John picks us up at 06:30 and even helps us stow our luggage on the train. In bad weather, only the journey along Lake Constance is really interesting. In the cold station concourse in Munich, we look for a warm place to eat and find it in a Chinese takeaway with seating. Magi for a vegetable tofu dish and René for a Peking soup. Both taste excellent, but are clearly surpassed by our desserts from the neighbouring stall: Cream puffs and brownies.

In Passau, we take a taxi with other passengers we meet by chance and drive past countless other river cruise ships to the Lindau landing stage, 6 kilometres away, where the MS Moldavia is waiting for us. We have to endure a long wait until we can finally move into our luxury cabin no. 1. We are delighted with the furnishings and location. When it comes to allocating seats in the dining room for the whole trip, suite occupants are obviously favoured. We are strategically placed with guests of the same category in a window seat in a quiet corner of the dining room. Our table neighbours name is Schulze and they come from Frankfurt at the Oder. They seem quite nice.

The tour guide, a German, makes a very competent impression. He skilfully gives us all the information we need.



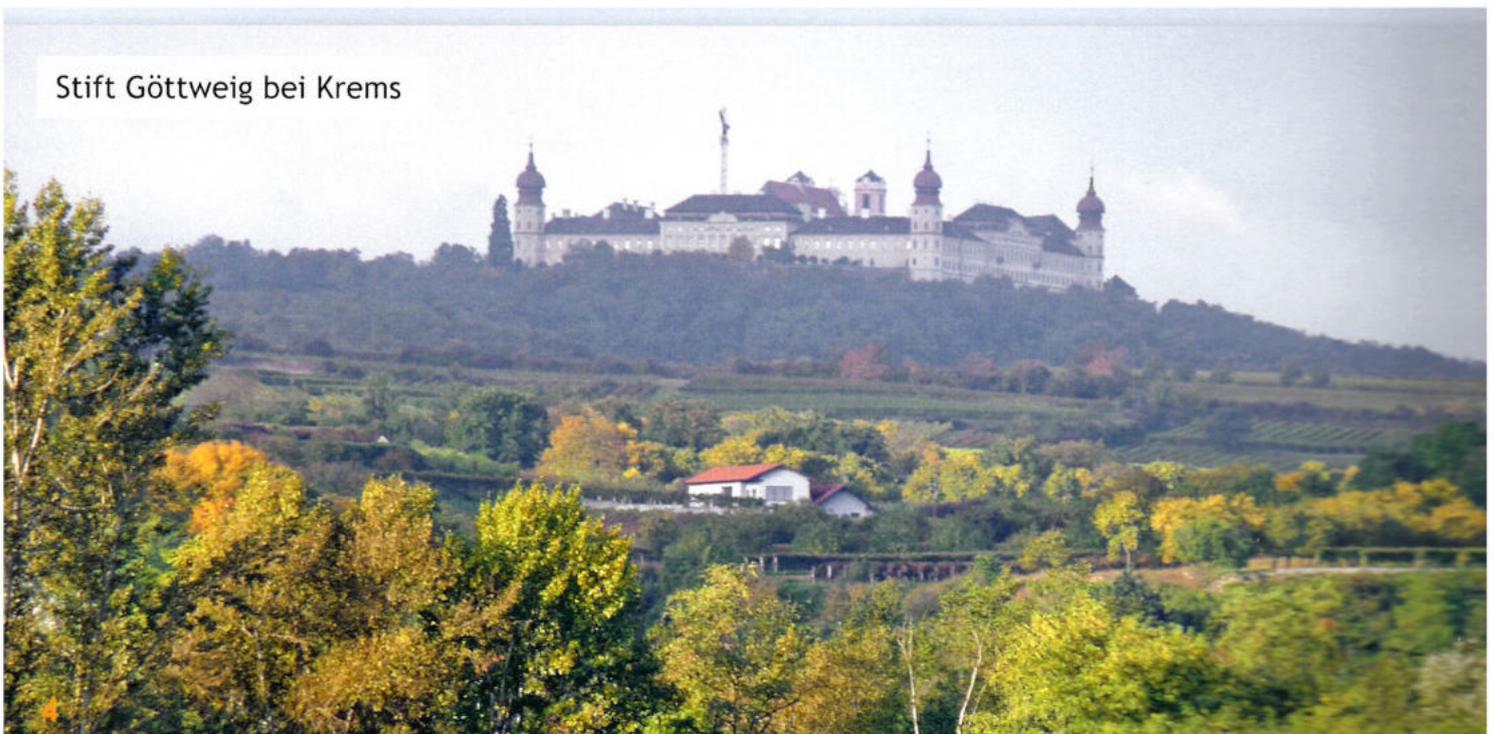


## Day 2, Sunday 13 October

There are 13 locks from Passau [km 2225] to the mouth of the Danube [km 0], 9 of them to Vienna. We passed most of them during the night. Breakfast leaves nothing to be desired. In the morning we pass the Wachau. Beautiful villages, picturesque churches, imposing monasteries and extensive vineyards create a marvellous landscape. The whole thing literally calls out for a holiday in this region. The improving weather naturally plays a major part in this.

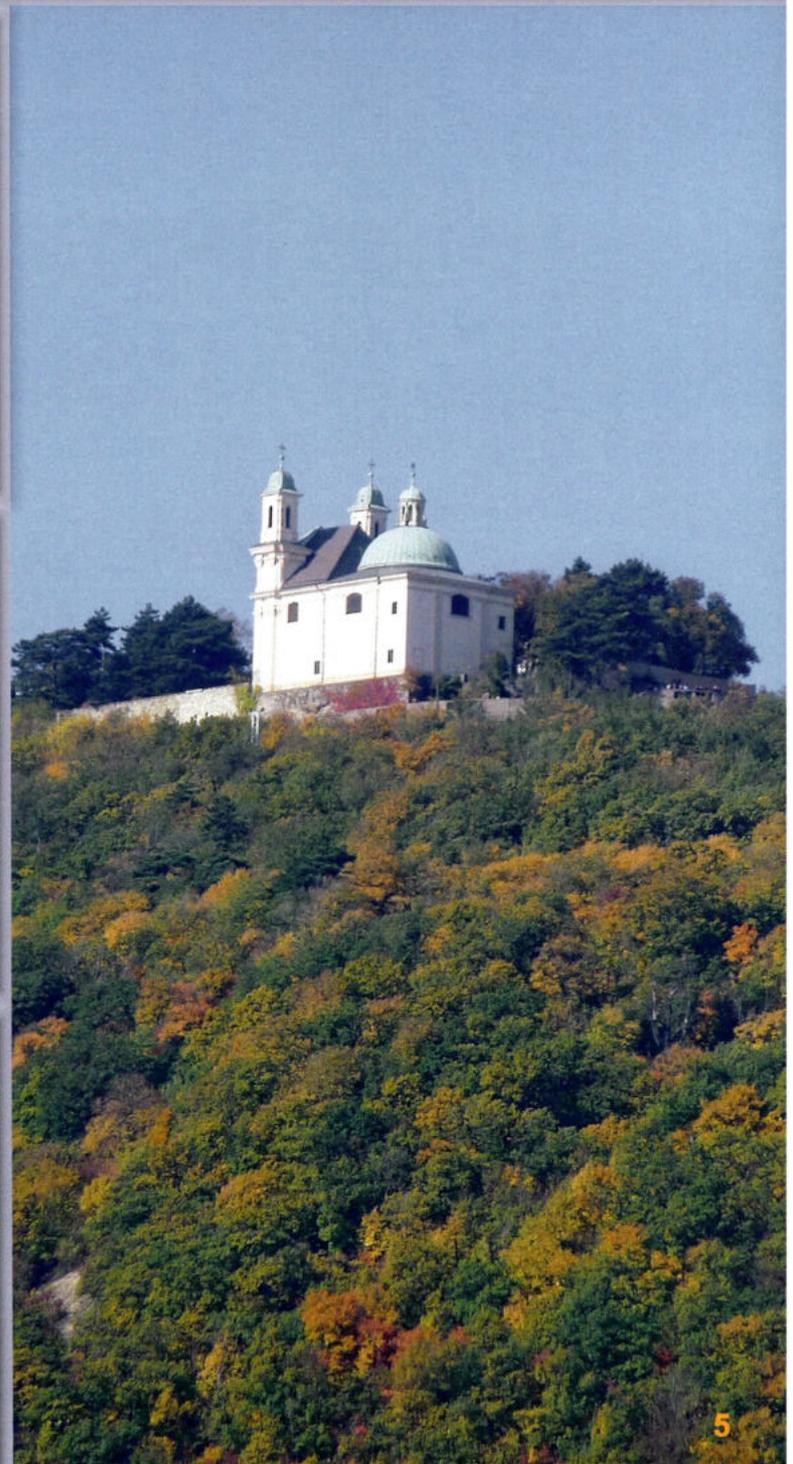
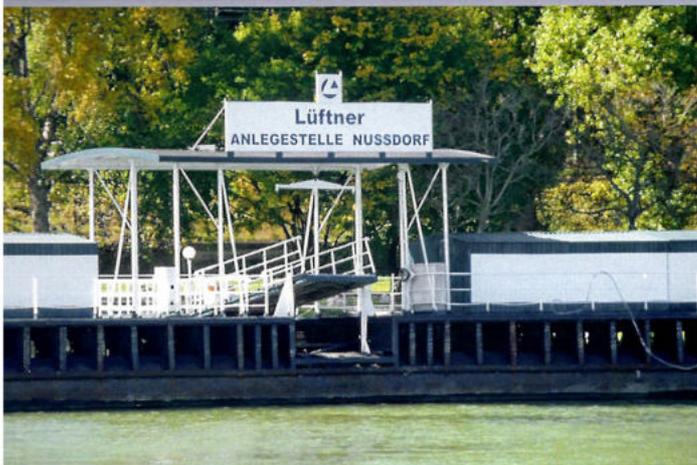
The area becomes increasingly flat. We are approaching Vienna. We moor in Nussdorf [km 1933], a suburb. After lunch (cordon bleu), 3 coaches with tour guides pick us up. First we drive along the Ringstrasse. This is where most of the buildings worth seeing are located. From Stephansplatz we follow our guide through the city centre and are constantly directed and informed by radio. Our heads are soon buzzing and after a good hour we are, thankfully, released to our own devices. We quickly find one of the many coffee houses and order a delicious, large mocha. We share a delicious piece of truffle cake with it. Thus fortified, we venture into St Stephen's Cathedral, but we are not particularly impressed. After this huge hustle and bustle with so many people, we are glad to be back on the ship. Nevertheless, we wouldn't want to miss our first impression of this cosmopolitan city!

Stift Göttweig bei Krems

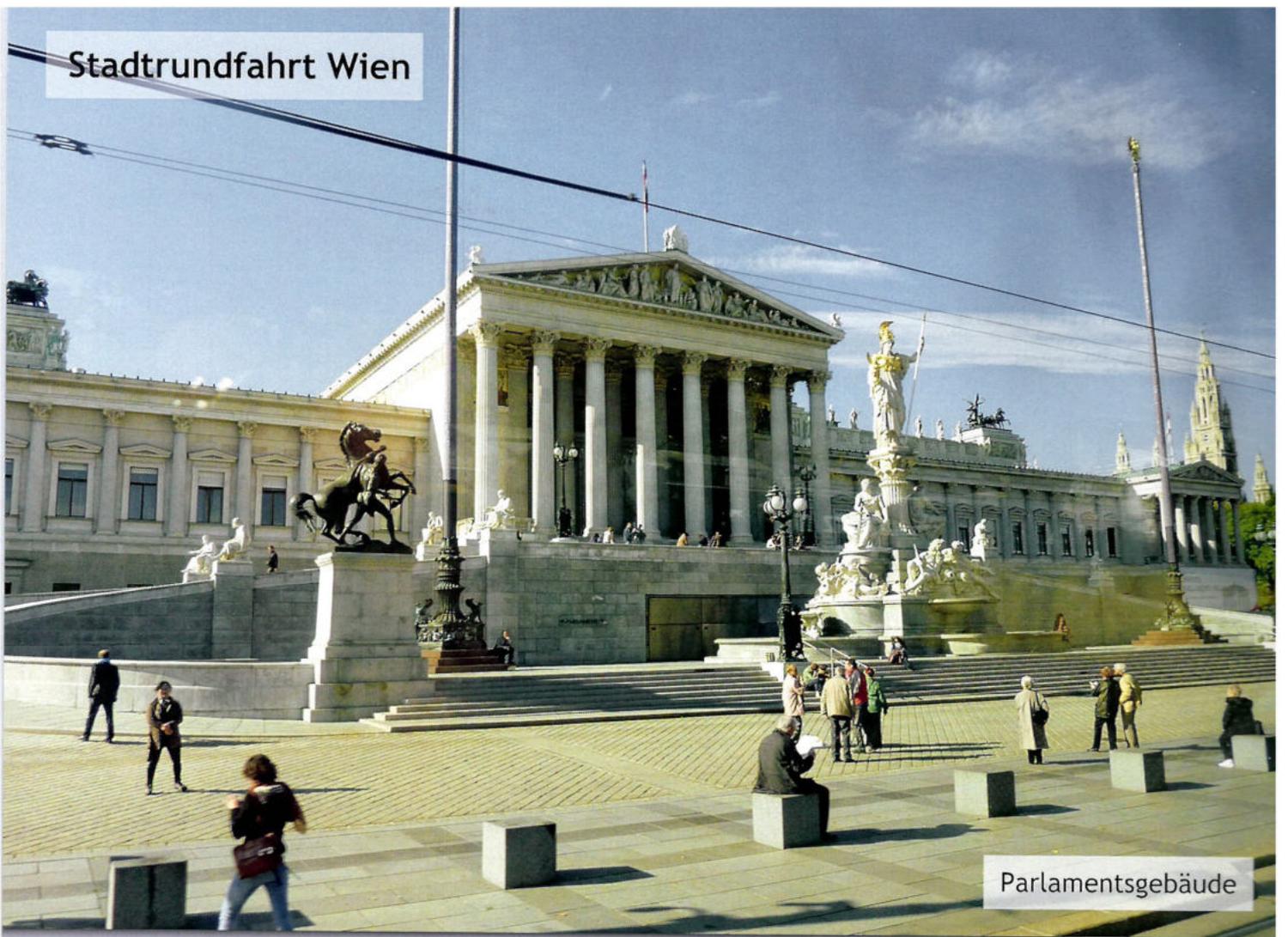




Atomkraftwerk Zwentendorf war nie in Betrieb



Stadtrundfahrt Wien

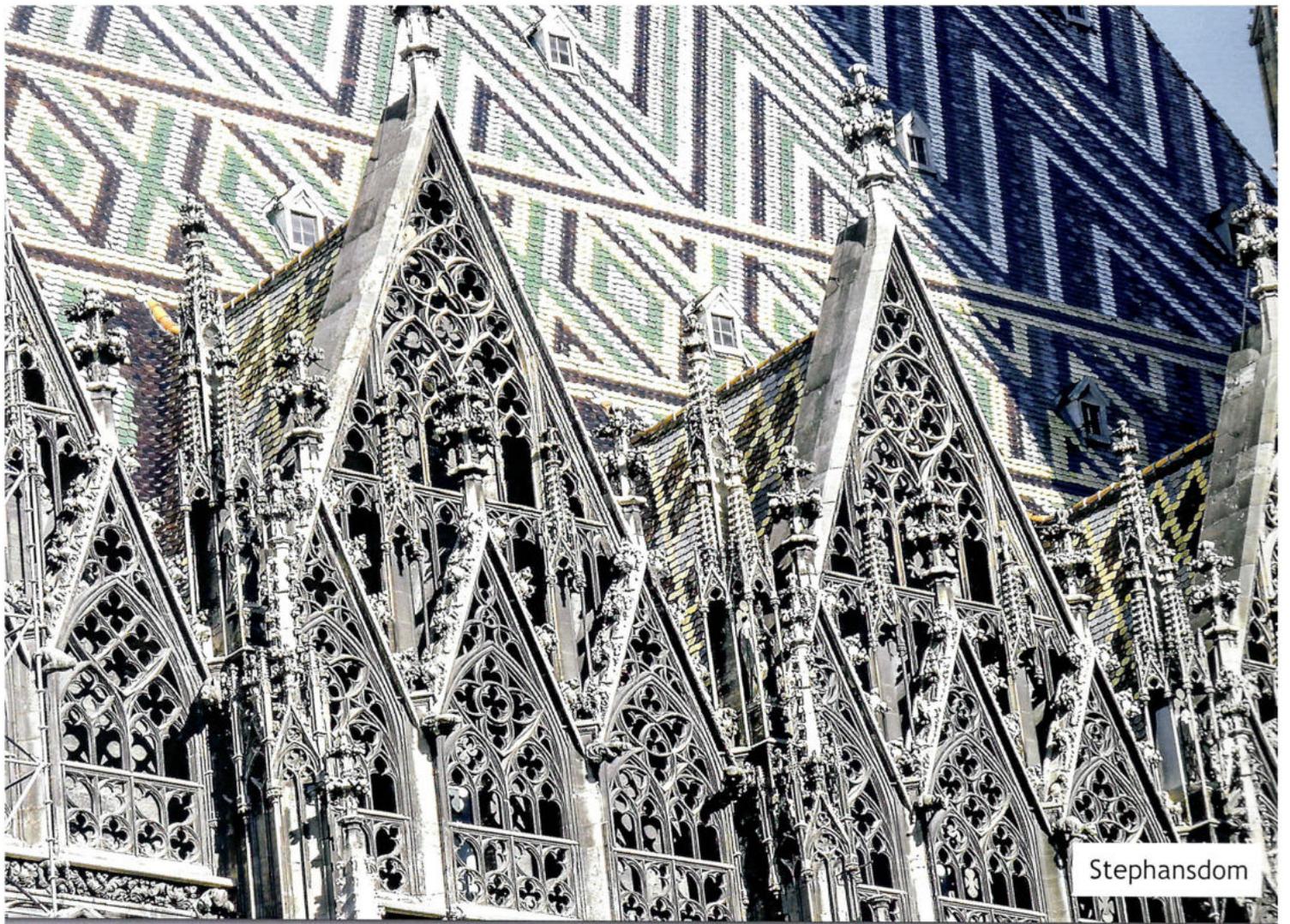


Parlamentsgebäude

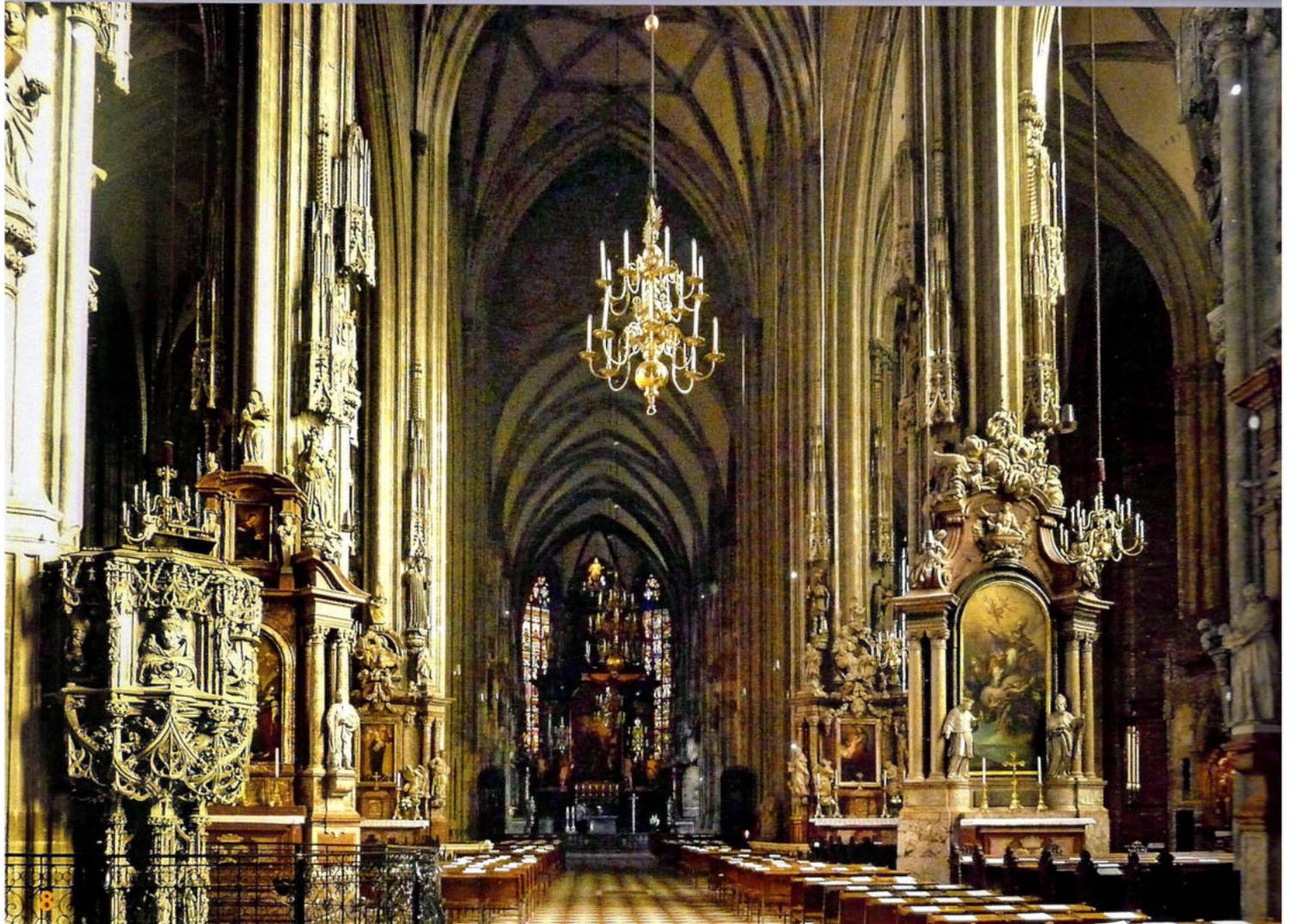


Rathaus





Stephansdom











Das moderne Wien



## Day 3, Monday 14 October

We leave Austrian territory during the night, travelling through the Slovakian part of the Danube at night and approaching Budapest [km 1648] in the morning. This journey can hardly be topped. The most beautiful buildings line up like pearls on a string to the left and right of the Danube. The impression is overwhelming. The most beautiful building for me is the parliament building, completed in 1904. It combines different architectural styles, with an oriental flavour that cannot be denied. The 365 towers and turrets contribute to this.

The castle with the royal palace is impressive and probably the most famous building. The entire castle district is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Budapest is pronounced "Budapäschdu" in Hungarian and consists of the eastern flat district of Pest, with the parliament building, and the western hilly Buda, with the castle. After breakfast, we set off downstream on the Pest side to do our shopping. Our destination is the market hall. We immediately buy the much-praised salamis for presents. On the first floor we find matching T-shirts and jackets for our grandchildren. We walk back to the ship through Vaci Utca, the traffic-free main shopping street.

After lunch, we complete the second tour of the excursion package. We take the bus through the city and make our first stop on Castle Hill, where we are rewarded with a magnificent view of the city from the Fisherman's Bastion. Of course, there is not enough time to visit the royal palace or Budapest's most famous church, Matthias Church. After a pleasant walk back to the bus, we head up the next hill. The view from Gellért Hill, with the Statue of Liberty and the Citadel, is even more impressive. This is where you can see how the city is characterised by the Danube and the nine impressive bridges. We end the day with a long walk to Margaret Bridge and back along the other bank. The city with its illuminated buildings appears almost fairytale-like. Despite many detours due to the conspicuous number of building sites, we are delighted with the city and recommend it for further visits!

We leave the town while enjoying a surprise buffet in the salon at 11 p.m.



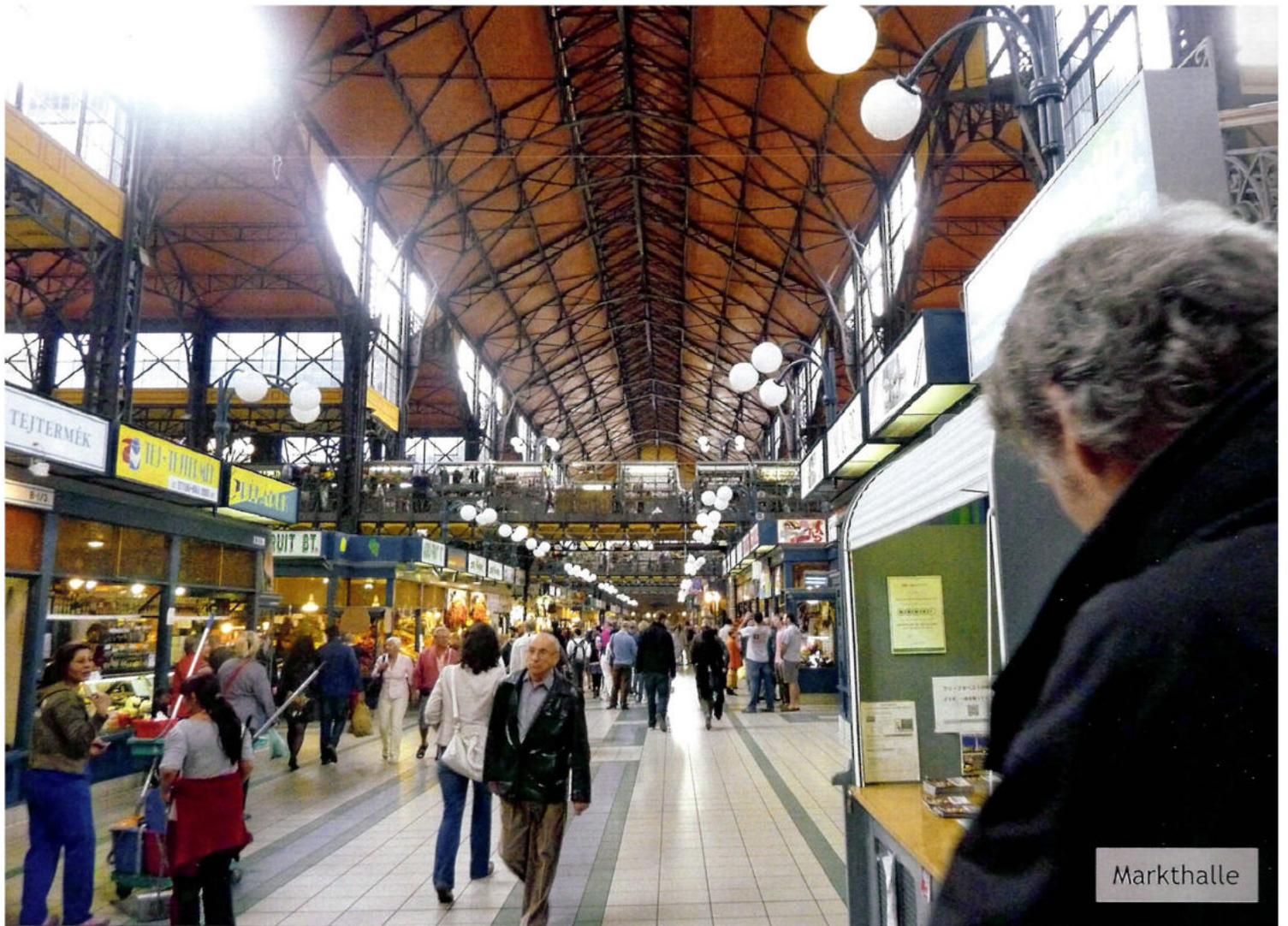
Budapest



Kettenbrücke

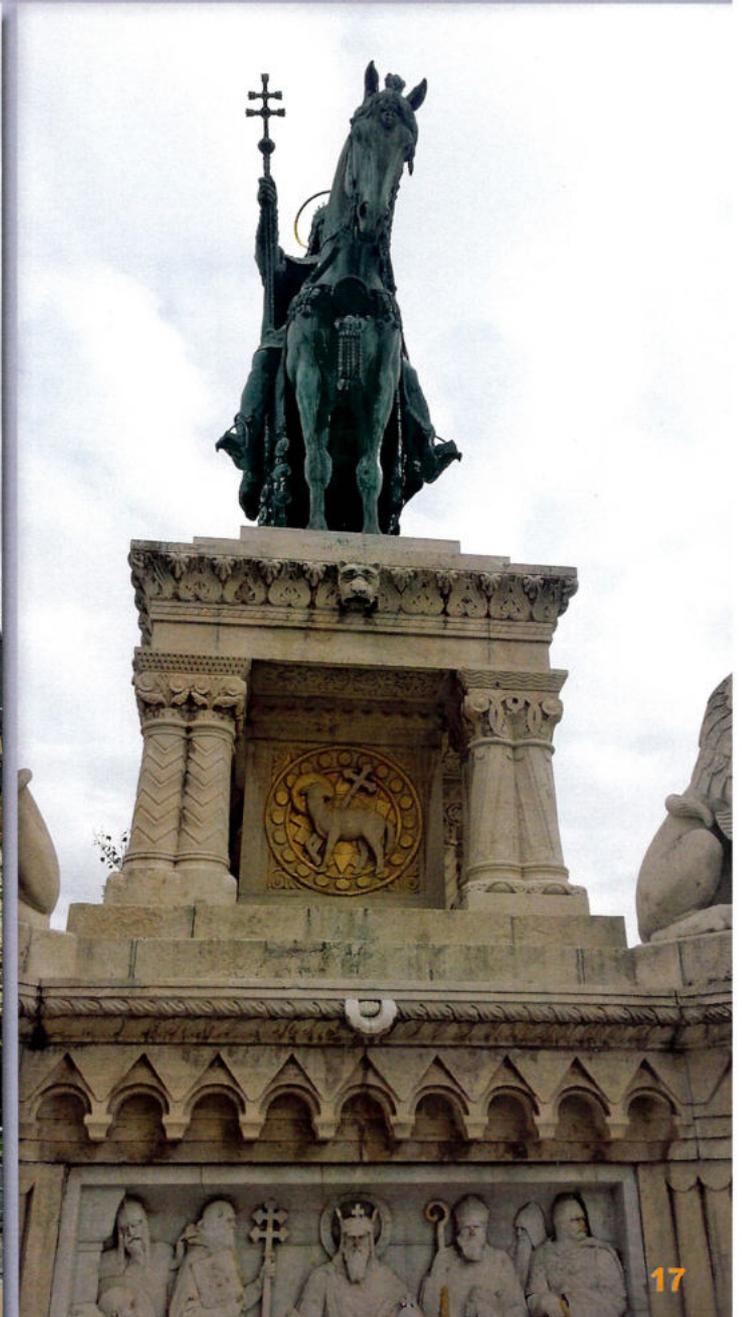


Stadtteil Buda



Markthalle





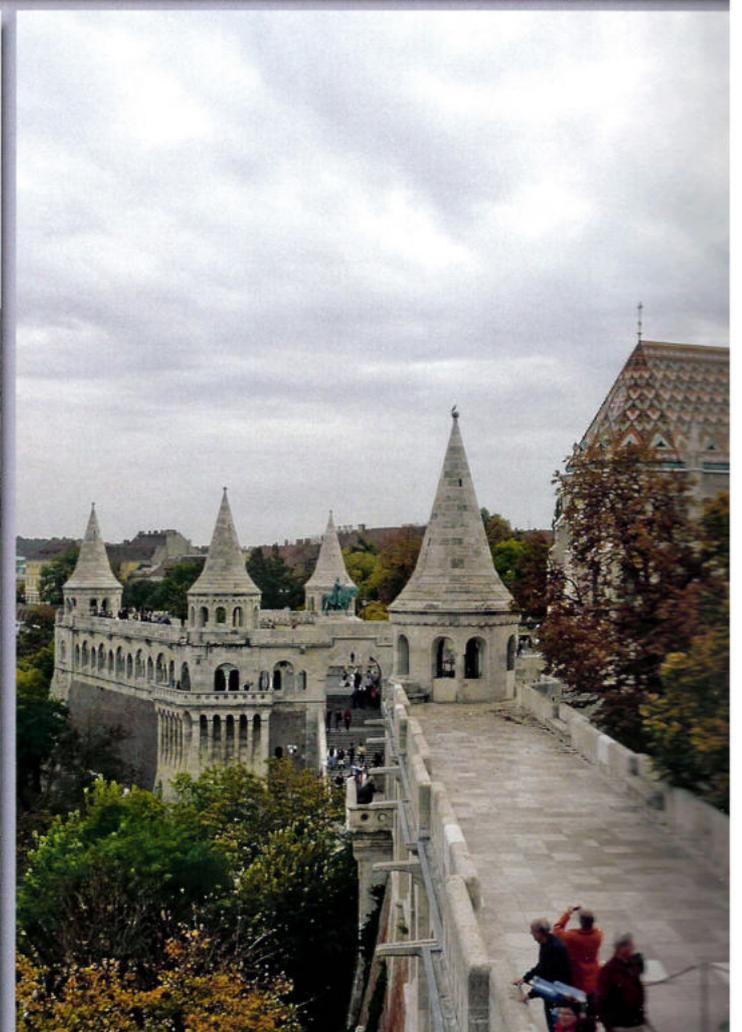
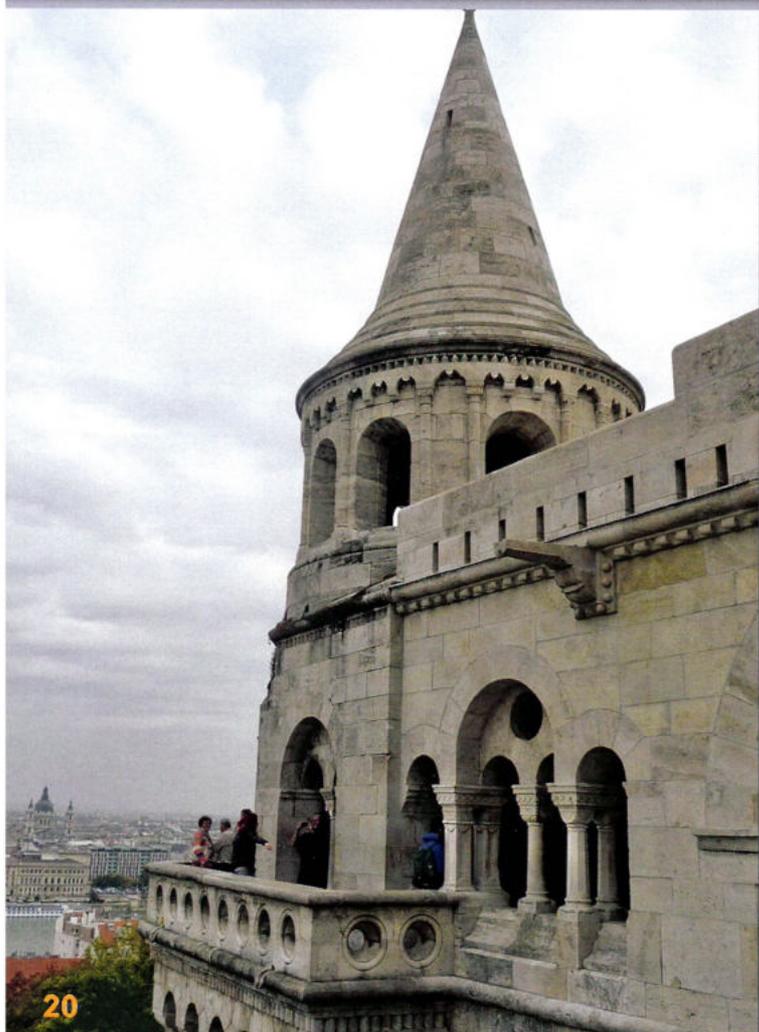




Parlamentsgebäude



Fischerbastei





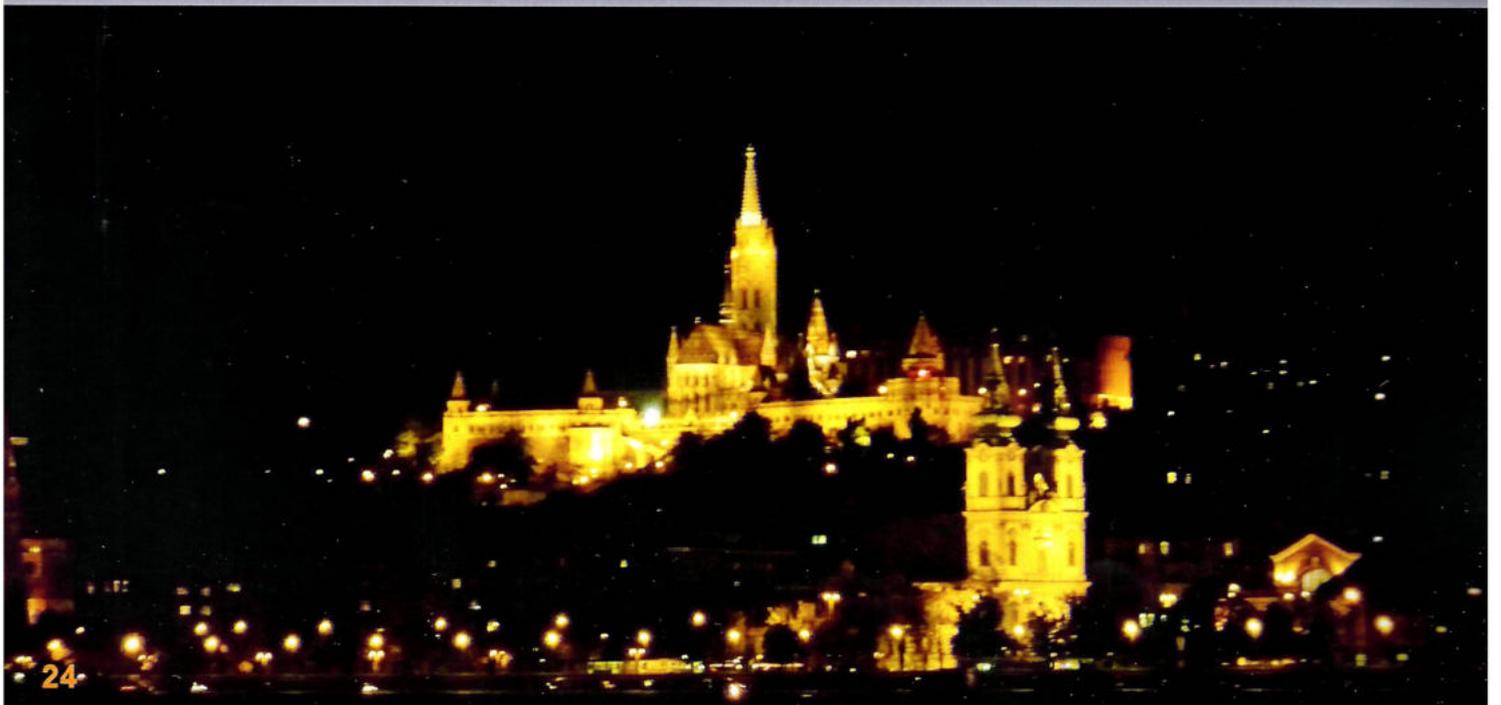




Burgpalast



Nächtliches Budapest



## Day 4, Tuesday 15 October

Wonderful, we oversleep. We only wake up at 08:30 and at 09:00 it's time for the exit check in Mohács [km 1448]. This refers to the customs check when leaving the Schengen area. René has enough time for a small breakfast, but Magi has to present herself to the customs authorities in her bathrobe.

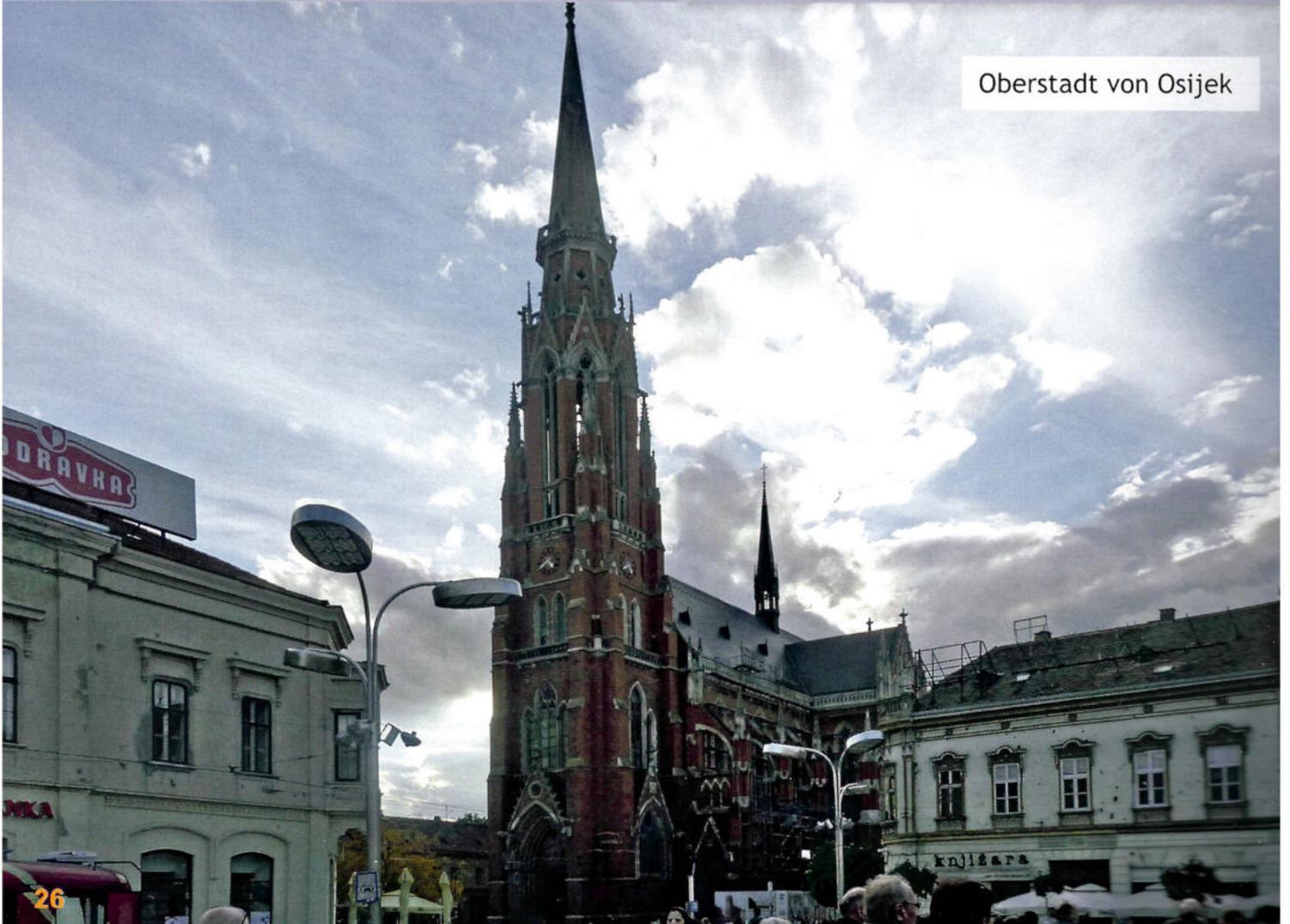
After the very detailed and fair information about the next few days and excursions from the cruise leader Mark Mahler, we enjoy the journey on the sun deck. The landscape is flat. There is floodplain forest on both sides. Along the sandy shore, the roots of trees toppled by the tide form bizarre sculptures.

We notice practically nothing of the revision of Croatian customs in Vukovar [km 1333]. Then the bus tour begins. The first topic is Vukovar itself. This town became sadly famous during the Serbian-Croatian civil war. The whole area was hotly disputed and the town was practically completely destroyed. Even today, the town has not recovered. Many houses are still damaged and the economy is in ruins. 30% of the people are unemployed.

Osijek, our next destination, is a little better off. Osijek is the centre of Slavonia, a vast fertile plain that is part of the Pannonian Plain, which stretches all the way to Hungary. The town on the River Drava has a pleasant pedestrianised zone and a modern hotel where we are offered a drink of our choice. We visit St Peter and St Paul's Church with its beautiful windows and the church of the Capuchin monastery. Unfortunately, many of the beautiful houses are dilapidated.

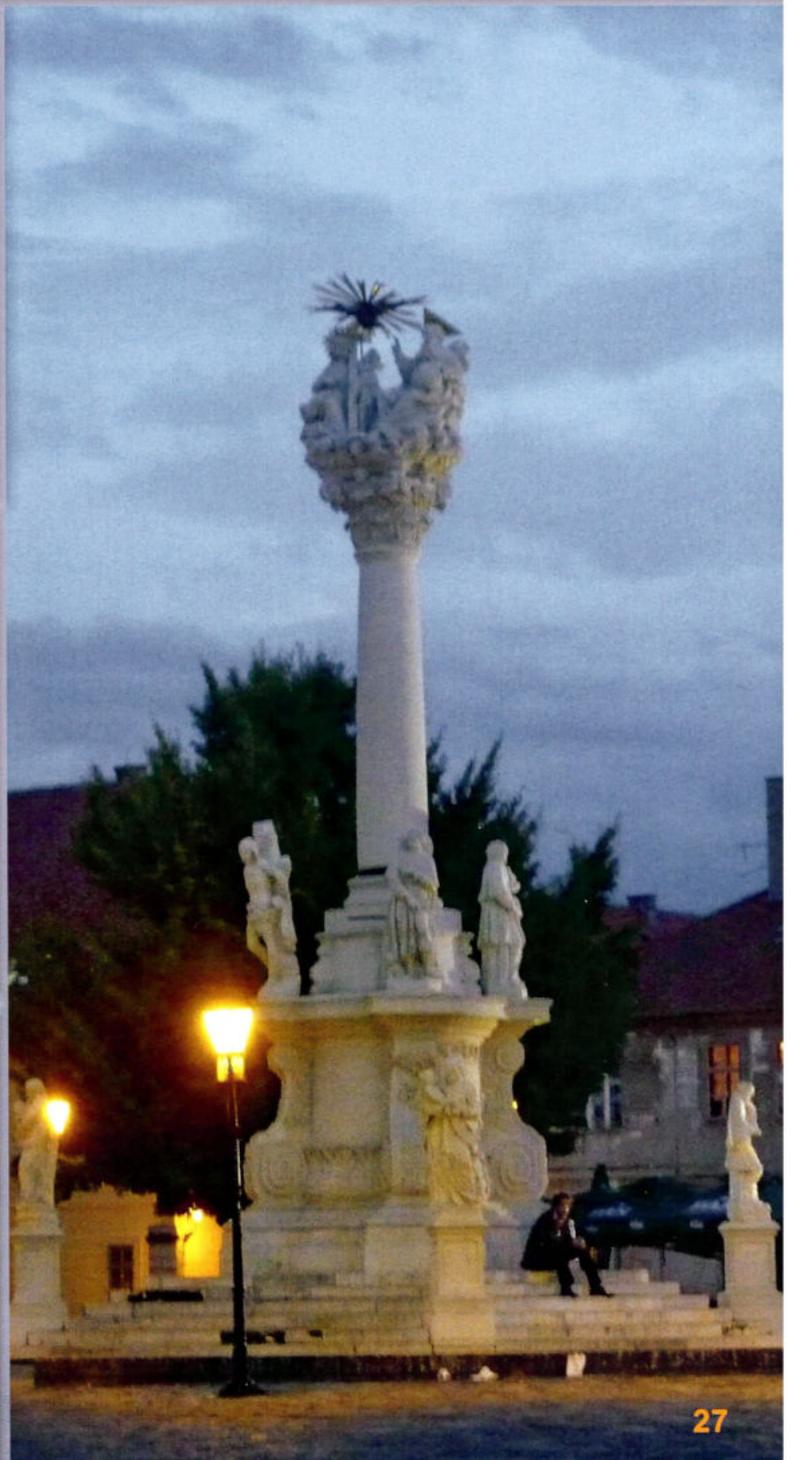
The fortress and its surroundings leave an ambivalent impression. In addition to half-ruined buildings, there are some beautifully renovated parts. The evening lighting creates quite a nice atmosphere and invites you to linger. But the bus and boat are waiting for us to continue our journey. We don't notice anything of the Croatian's exit inspection.







Alte Festung von Osijek



## Day 5, Wednesday 16 October

We don't notice anything about the Serbian entry inspection either.

The mooring we

arrived at during the night is in the Sava. It is raining. Luckily it's not cold. The city tour of Belgrade [km 1170] starts punctually as usual at 08:30. In addition to beautiful, prestigious buildings, there are still ruins from the NATO bombings during the Bosnian war. We get out for the first time at St Sava's Cathedral to visit it. It is one of the largest Orthodox churches in the world. It will be years, if not decades, before the interior work is completed. But even as a building site it is extremely impressive with its masses.

We make our second stop at Republic Square. We stroll through the pedestrian zone (Kneza Mihailo) to a coffee house for a break.

The third stop is at Kalemegdan Fortress, most of which is no longer preserved. However, it offers a beautiful view of the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers. It also houses a military museum.

According to our city guide, the Serbs have high hopes for the EU. But to do so, they have to say goodbye to the dreams of a Yugoslavian empire under their leadership, which still seems to be present in some people's minds.

We take it easy in the afternoon. For once, we let ourselves be tempted by coffee and cake on the boat, even though we only have a quarter of an hour to spare. Jutta and Dieter are no different.

Afterwards, we disembark for another walk. After climbing a flight of stairs, we are already in the centre of town. We first take the path on the right, past the Austrian Embassy to the residence of the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Opposite, we visit the cathedral. A church service is taking place. The chanting, although canned, together with the iconostasis, the magnificent vaults and the beautiful church windows create a wonderful atmosphere. It is striking how individual churchgoers wildly cross themselves and kiss holy images. After a detour to the palace of Princess Ljubica, we head in the other direction to Kalemegdan Fortress. On a clear night, we enjoy the magnificent view of the Sava, the Danube, the bridges and the neighbouring districts.



Belgrad



Nato Bombardierung



Sankt-Sava-Kathedrale





Festung Kalemegdan



Domkirche



Zusammenfluss Save und Donau

## Day 6, Thursday 17 October

The clock is set forward one hour. Eastern European time zone. There is little time for breakfast. We reach the Iron Gate. The width of the river in the narrows of Kaza is only 150 metres, but the depth of the river is 80 metres. A small monastery with a chapel stands prominently on a promontory. On the Romanian side, Decebal looks down menacingly. He lost the battle against Trajan and committed suicide afterwards. However, he is still revered by the Romanians as a national hero. A Romanian who had made a career in the USA had the Prince of the Drakes carved into the rock.

On the Serbian side is the world-famous Trajan plaque [km 964] in praise of the Roman emperor for his services as a road builder who overcame mountains and rivers. The remains of this bridge can still be seen between Drobeta [km 931] (Romania) and Turnu Severin. It was the longest bridge in the world, both in terms of arch length and overall length, for more than a millennium.

Shortly after the Iron Gate, we enter the huge lock of the Derdap I power station [km 944]. The two successive locks overcome a total height of 34 metres. The lock process takes about 90 minutes. It's nice to be able to follow this in detail during the day.

The landscape (Wallachia) becomes increasingly flat. Derdap II [km 863] is the last lock before the mouth of the Danube, which we pass soon afterwards.





DECEBALUS REX  
DRACAN FECIT

Decebalus, König der Daker



Derdap, Kraftwerk und Schleuse



## Day 7, Friday 18 October

We get up early again. We have moored in Giurgiu (Romania) [km 493]. Once again, the entry inspection goes almost unnoticed and without any problems. At 08:15 the bus takes us through Wallachia to Bucharest. The country is flat and fertile. The southern suburbs are anything but beautiful. Small plots of land are dotted with small houses, some of which are dilapidated or in need of repair. The blocks of flats date back to the communist era and almost all of them are in need of renovation. The flats are cramped, as Ceausescu considered 10 square metres per person to be sufficient at the time. The Palace of Parliament (formerly the "House of the People"), which was realised according to Ceausescu's ideas, is quite different. It has over 3,000 luxuriously furnished rooms, secret passages and, of course, a nuclear bunker. Ceausescu never got round to giving a speech from the designated balcony. Michael Jackson then took over with the words: "Hello Budapest"!!!!

The patriarchal church stands on a hill. It was built in 1656. The relics of the city's patriarch Dimitriu are venerated here. All the Orthodox patriarchs of the various, mostly nationally organised churches are on an equal footing.

The city centre makes a more well-kept impression than the southern suburbs, although there are also houses in need of renovation here. The pedestrian zone in the old town centre is relatively small and not particularly attractive. We liked the small Orthodox church. The northern suburbs are quite modern. There are large shopping centres with all the well-known German chain shops. You can also see newer, modern buildings. The MS Moldavia has now travelled on to Oltenita [km 430], where we get on again.

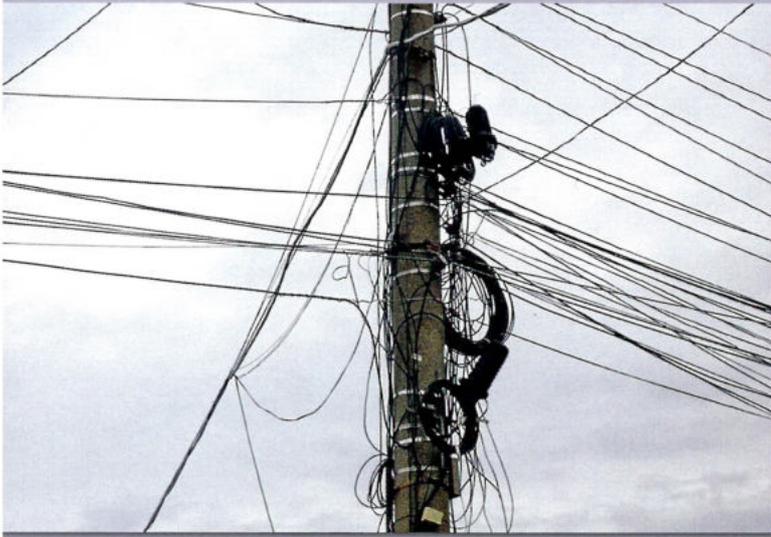
The Danube forks. We follow the northern branch, the Brajul Borcea. I do laps on the sun deck at a brisk pace. As on the previous days, a group of like-minded people soon forms behind me. There is a bit of excitement on the sun deck when large white birds are spotted on a sandbank. Are they pelicans or just geese? A photographer with a large telephoto lens later clarifies that they are indeed pelicans. Although it has already become quite chilly, we enjoy the sunset.



Stadtrundfahrt Bukarest



Zigeunerpalast





Patriarchenkirche



Parlamentspalast

Das Kloster Stavropoleo wurde 1724 vollendet und gilt als eines der schönsten und bedeutendsten Architekturdenkmäler der rumänischen Hauptstadt. Die Kirche ist den heiligen Erzengeln Michael und Gabriel geweiht.





## Day 8, Saturday 19 October

In the morning we reach the town of Ismail on the Chilia branch of the Danube in Ukraine. It is the home port of the MS Moldavia and about 90 kilometres from the Black Sea. It is part of the historical landscape of Bessarabia. Here, too, there are no problems with the entry check. The excursion starts at 08:00. We are proudly shown the modern high-rise building of our shipping company UDP. We turn into Suvorov Prospekt, the "boulevard" with a two-lane, directionally separated road and a park-like centre strip. We get off at the cathedral with its golden dome. In the bitter cold, we have to listen to the guide's lengthy introduction. It is warmer and atmospheric inside the cathedral. A church service is taking place. There are no benches for those attending the service, they have to stand. They are also separated from the chancel by the iconostasis. Only male priests are allowed to enter the chancel. There is no organ. Instead, the service is constantly accompanied by choral, polyphonic singing. Various priests in richly decorated robes come out of the chancel, perform ceremonial activities and disappear again through the iconostasis. The participants in the service cross themselves from time to time, touch the floor and occasionally kiss an image of a saint. The whole ceremony seems to me to be more orientated towards the mind than the spirit.

We then travel to the art museum. The artefacts on display there are of modest artistic value. I am more enthusiastic about the performances of a choir of pensioners' wives. Accompanied by an accordion player, they sing songs from Ukraine, Russia and even Germany. Bravo! A large fortress of the Ottoman Empire stood here in Ismail. It was conquered by General Suvorov in 1790 and subsequently destroyed. Only the mosque was left standing. Inside is a diorama that dramatises this historic moment. Finally, the guide tells us about the poor economic situation in Ukraine. The average wage is €150. A sailor earns €1,300 and the captain €6,000. A 3-room flat costs around €90,000.

We drive on to Wilkowo. A children's dance group with the village elder's representative awaits us on the jetty. The children, dressed in traditional costume, perform a little dance and sing Ukrainian songs. At the end of the performance, a loaf of bread is handed over, which is divided up and distributed to the passengers in small pieces. The bread is eaten with a little salt and is traditionally welcomed as a guest in the East. The children are generously rewarded with sweets donated by the passengers.

Magi makes the trip to kilometre 0 of the Danube. She is fascinated by the Danube delta. The traditional way of life of the inhabitants on the water and the unspoilt landscape have impressed her. Even a colony of the rarely seen pelicans presented themselves for the cameras.

I prefer to take a walk through Wilkowo with a guide. We sneak through the desolate village and are constantly on our guard to avoid stepping on the faeces of a stray dog. The three churches we spotted are closed. The video about the delta and the exhibits offer little information. The "Venice of the East" turns out to be a few dirty canals with desolate houses and impoverished people with no prospects for the future. I chalk up the €12 for the walk to development aid.





Pokrowski-Kathedrale in Ismail



Chordarbietung in der Kunst-Galerie von Ismail



Suworow-Museum in einer ehemig türkischen Moschee



Diorama "Sturm auf die Festung Ismail"

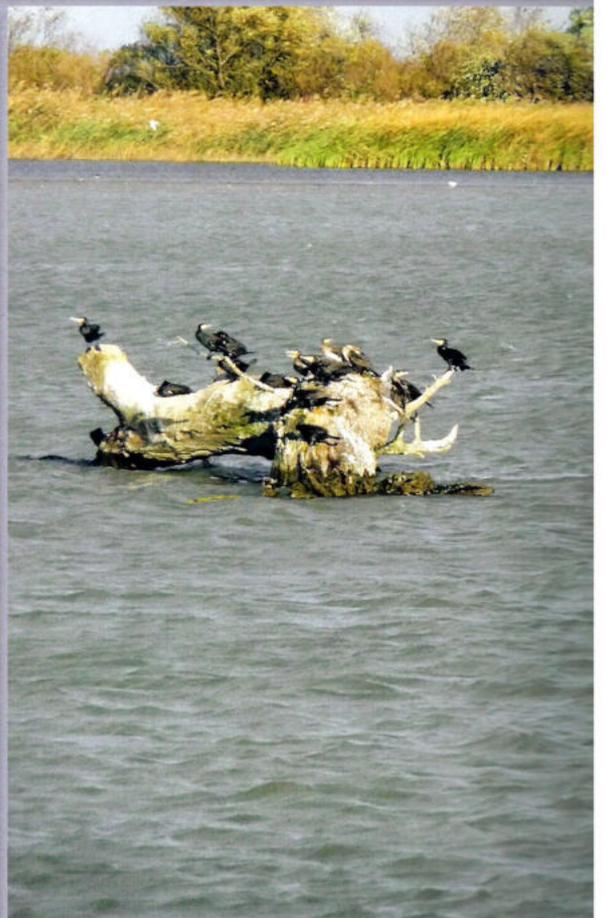








Begrüßung in Wólkowo



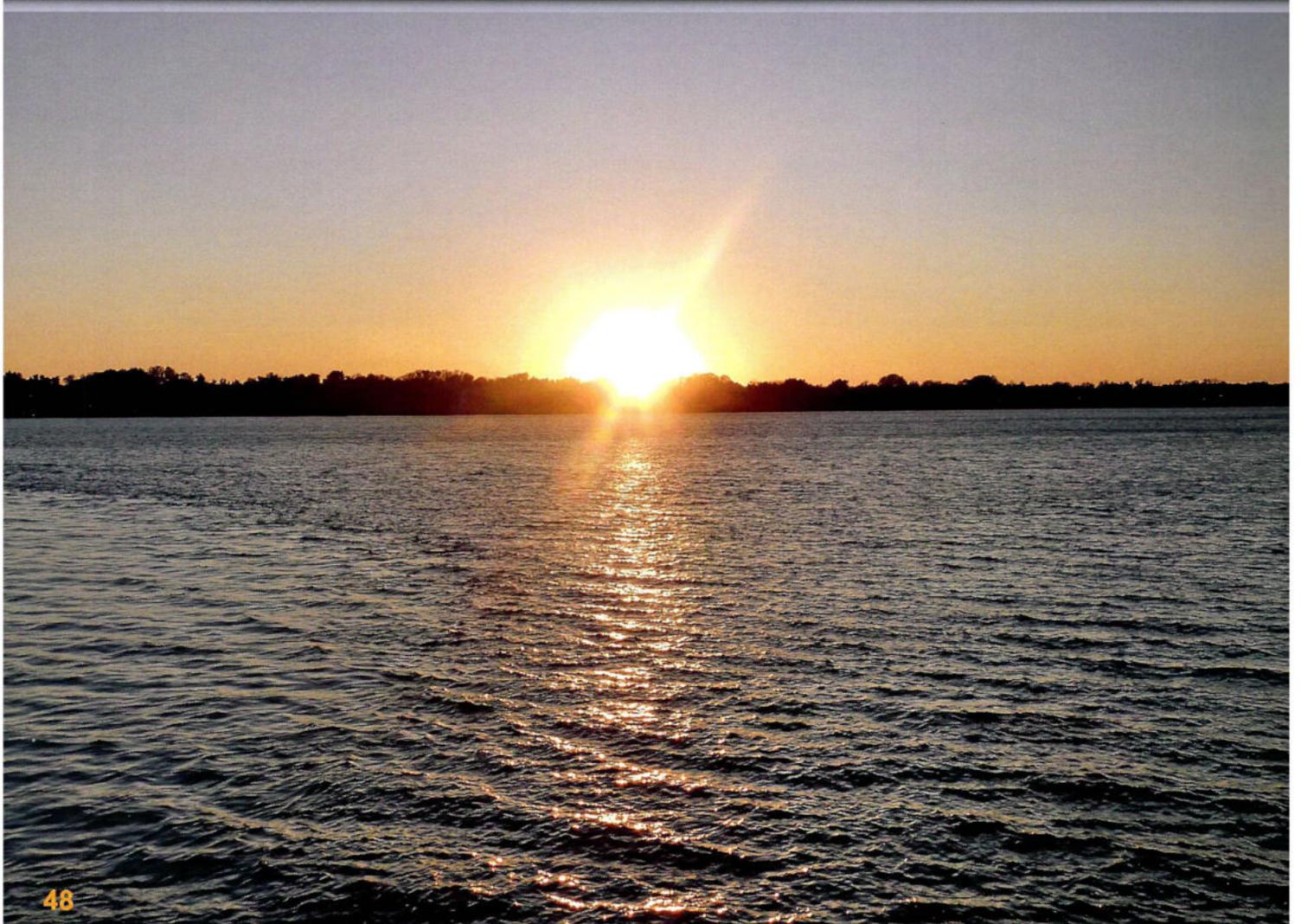


Donaudelta





Am Schwarzen Meer



## Day 9, Sunday 20 October

The ship is travelling upstream at a speed of 18.5-20 km/h. With the current cold wind, this results in fridge temperatures, although the sky is cloudless. Instead of lying in a deckchair, I do a few more laps on deck. In the course of the morning, Mark Mahler, the tour guide from Nicko-Tours, introduces us to the final excursion destinations. In addition to Bratislava, which is included in our package, we only book the excursion to Pécs in Hungary.

In the afternoon we reach Fetesti and from there the excursion goes to Constanta and Mamaia. On the way there, we cross the Danube-Black Sea Canal. It connects Constanta, by far the most important EU harbour on the Black Sea, with the Danube.

First, we visit the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul. I like the paintings of heaven and hell at the entrance and in the dome area. The casino nearby is a beautiful Art Nouveau building. Unfortunately, it is in need of renovation and is empty. The historical museum is located on Ovid Square. There is far too little time to admire all the splendours of this museum. I am most impressed by the sculpture of the glycone snake. The animal is a chimera consisting of an antelope's head with human hair and obrules and a snake's body ending in a lion's tail. Not far from the historical museum is the Roman mosaic. The size of 700 m<sup>2</sup> makes it a worldwide rarity. Unfortunately, this site is also in poor condition.

In Mamaia we have coffee at the 4-star Hotel Park Mamaia. Like everything else here, the hotel makes a somewhat run-down impression. Afterwards, we have time for a walk along the beach. The brownish-yellow sand is littered with shells.

On the way home, the Romanian tour guide complains about the *classe politique* and the mentality in Romania. Corruption still seems to be widespread and politicians are lining their own pockets. He gives several clear examples of this. The average salary is €200-300. Doctors and teachers earn around €600. Around 20,000 academics have left Romania in recent years.

The motto of many Romanians is: "You can do it this way!"



Impressionen vom Unterlauf der Donau



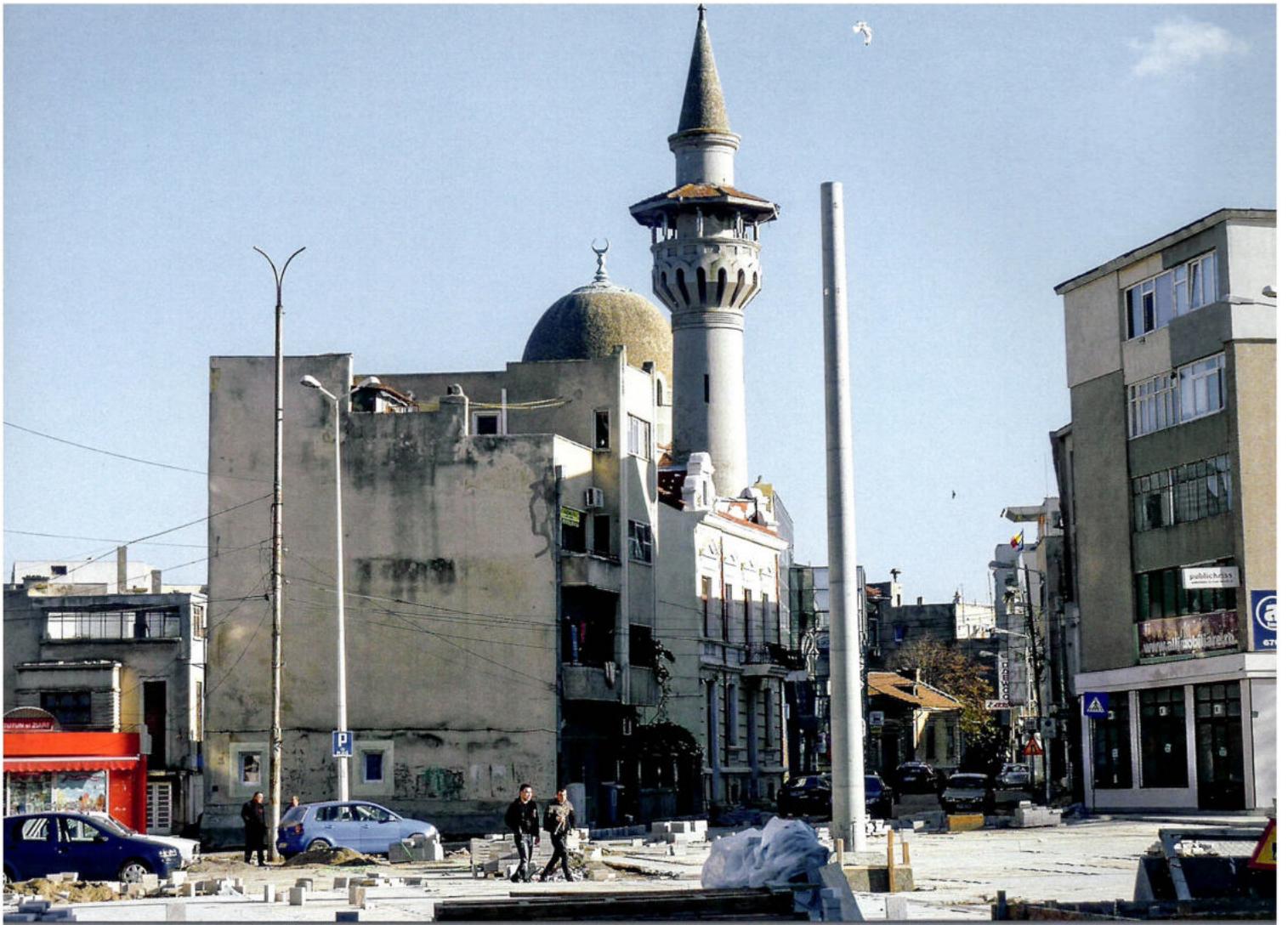




Kathedrale in Konstanza









Casino



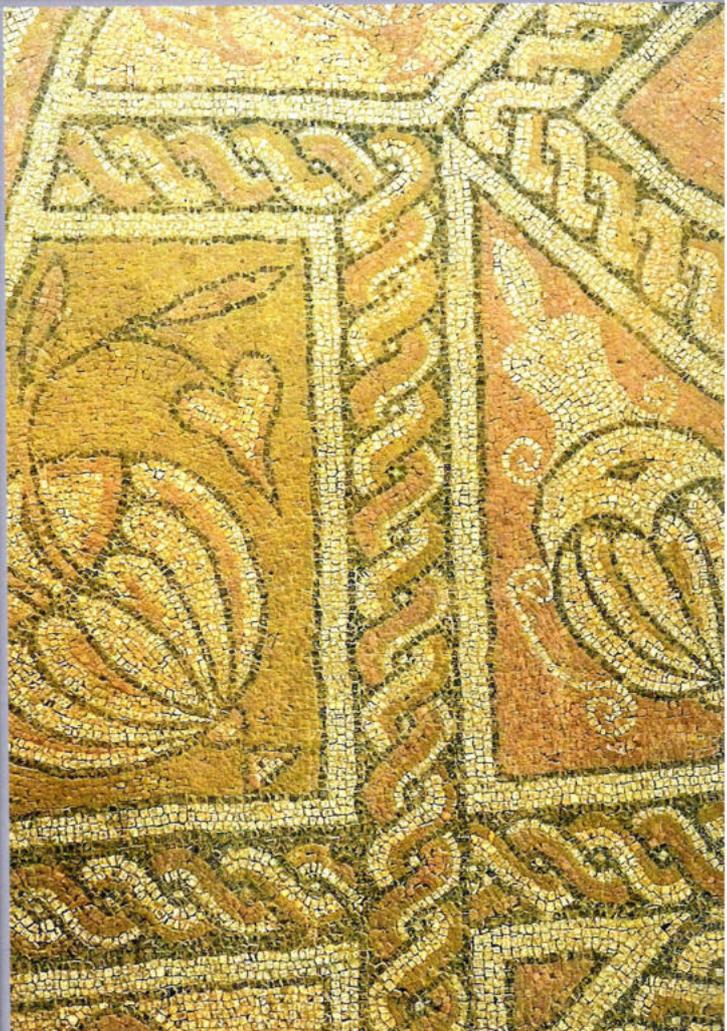
BARPELE GYLKON - DIVINITATE A BIHELIA, PROTECTOR AL CASEI SI AL FAMILIE. PADTOR AL TEMPELOR. TOMIS, SEC 3 P. CHR.  
 LE SERPENT GYLKON - DIVINITE DU BIEN, PROTECTEUR DE LA MAISON ET DE LA FAMILIE. BARDIEN DES TEMPLES. TOMI, 3<sup>e</sup> S. AP. J.-C.  
 THE GYLKON SERPENT - DIVINITY OF GOOD, PATRON OF HOUSE AND FAMILY GUARDIAN OF TEMPLES. TOMIS, 3<sup>RD</sup> CENT. A.D.  
 DIE GYLKON-SCHLANGE - GÖTTIN DER GUTEN, BEHÜTERIN DER HAUSER UND DER FAMILIE, BESCHÜTZERIN DER TEMPEL. TOMIS, 3. JH. N. CHR.



Nationalmuseum für Geschichte und Archäologie



Mosaikmuseum





Mamaia



Unsere Tischgemeinschaft am Schwarzen Meer

## Day 10, Monday 21 October

We can take it easy this morning. The excursion to Pleven (Bulgaria) starts after lunch. In glorious weather, we enjoy the journey overland from our landing stage in Nikopol [km 597] to the largest and most important town on the Danube plain. The houses are poor, the landscape slightly hilly and characterised by agriculture.

The importance of Pleven as a transport hub is also documented in its history. The historic and probably decisive battle against the Turks was fought here in 1877. A huge panorama impressively depicts this battle. A mausoleum in the town's largest square also commemorates this war event.

In Kajlakapark, in the 4-star hotel of the same name, we stop for a coffee break. We are traditionally welcomed by two ladies in colourful costumes with fine, still warm bread and roasted saiz. After coffee and typical local pastries, four musicians play traditional instruments. Two dancing couples performed Bulgarian folk dances.

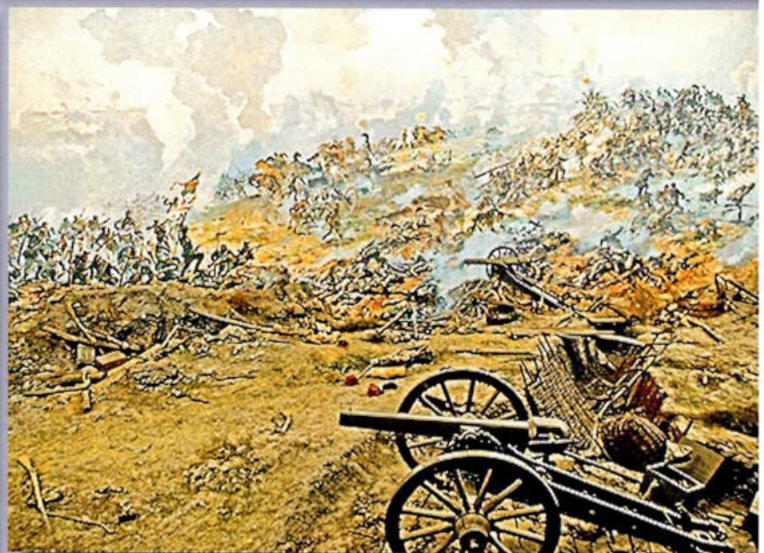
A walk through the pedestrianised zone concludes the excursion. The mausoleum is designed like an Orthodox church, i.e. there is a central square room with a dome and four side aisles with semi-domes. In the basement there are three sarcophagi with bones of the fallen Russians, Romanians and Bulgarians.

The Church of St Nicholas dates from the time of Turkic rule. It was built about 5 metres below street level as it was not allowed to rise above the mosque. It houses a very beautiful collection of icons. During our visit, a church service takes place. It consists of a priest constantly reading out people's prayers.

After dinner, together with Schulzes, we watch the first part of a video filmed by the radio operator during our river trip. I'm unlikely to buy this video!



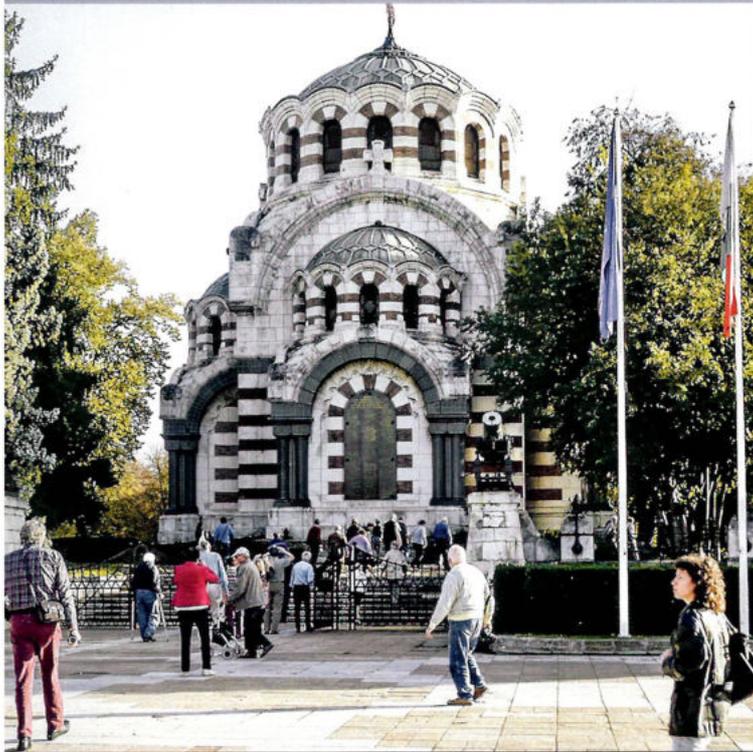
Das futuristische Panoramamuseum in Plevna





Bulgarisches Brauchtum in Pleven





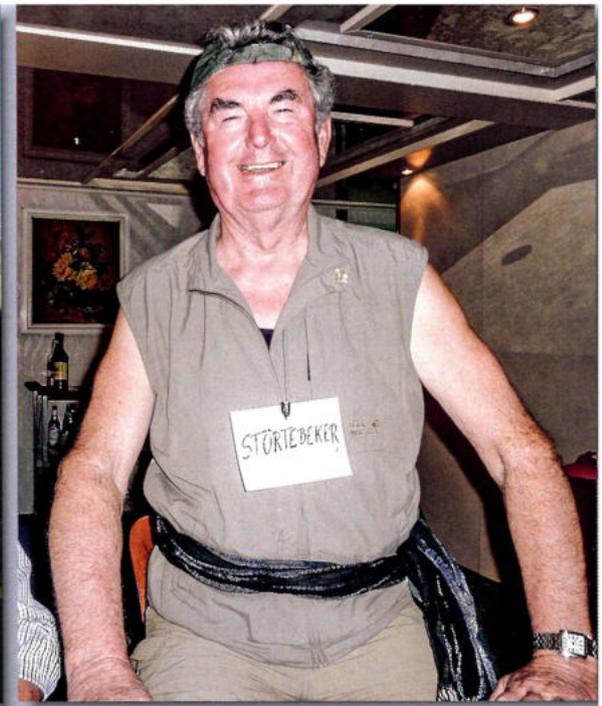
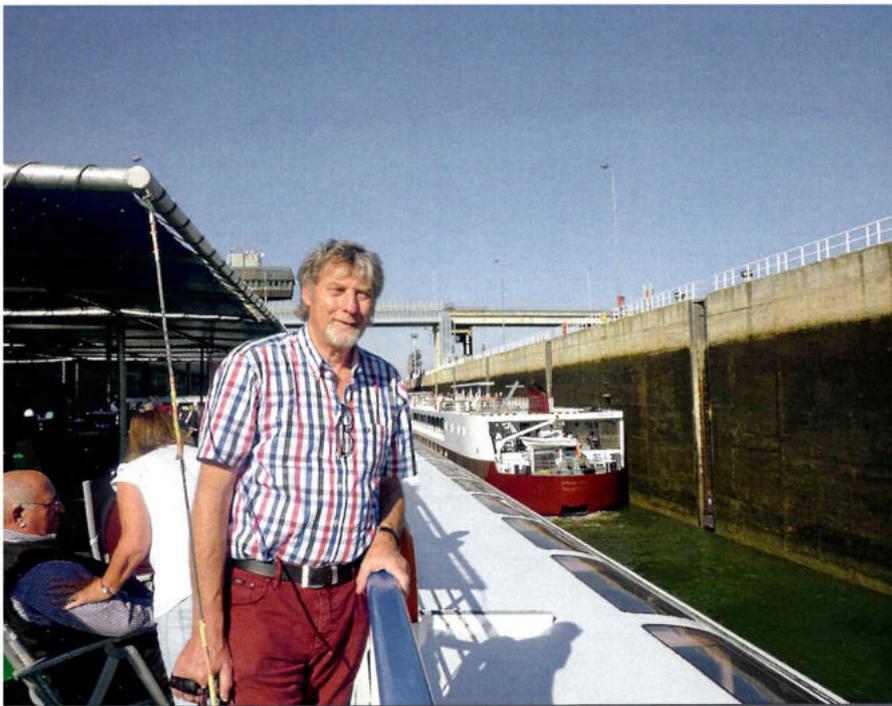


# Day 11, Tuesday 22 October

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oday we travel through the Catharact section at the Iron Gate again, so there are no excursions on the programme. The weather is great. We let the sun warm us up like shirts. We set up our tents in the far corner of the sun deck and enjoy the day reading, sunbathing, taking photos, filming, chatting and, of course, feasting.

After the fantastic, atmospheric evening cruise through the Danube gorge in the Carpathians, there is a pirate party. Dieter has transformed himself into a veritable pirate with a gilet and a baseball cap and has also given himself a name with a sign: Stortebecker.





Trajanstafel am Eisernen Tor



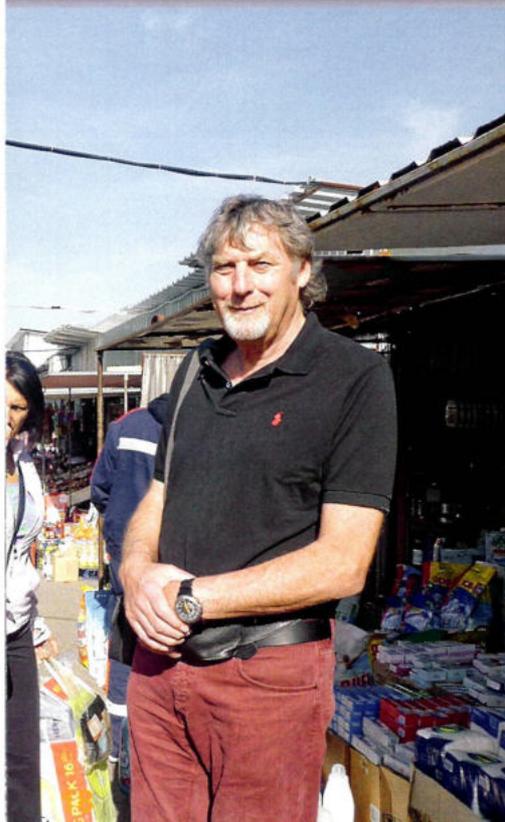
Ehemalige Signalstation

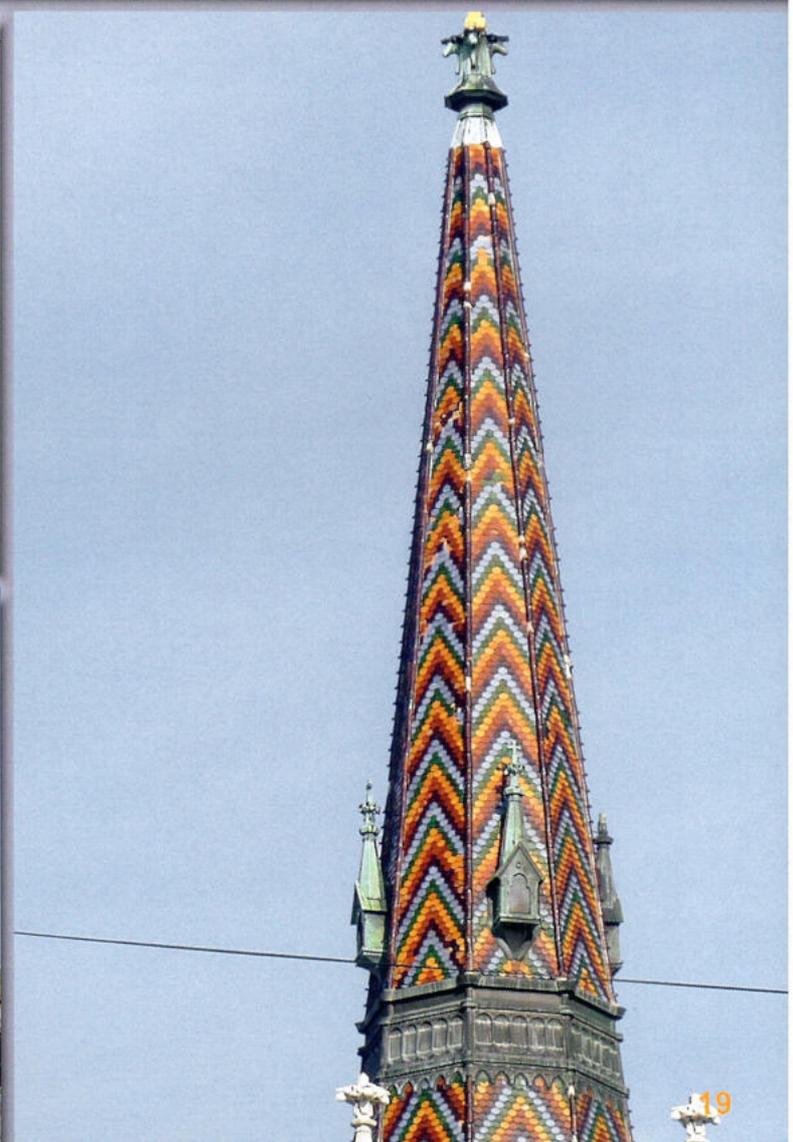
## Day 12, Wednesday 23 October

We take it easy again today and reach Novi Sad [km 1255] at around 10.00 am. We have time to marvel at the Petrovaradin fortress from the boat. It is also known as the Gibraltar of the Danube, is the symbol of the city and is considered one of the largest fortresses. The only pity is that it is not on our programme because it cannot be reached by bus. At 11.00 a.m. the customs formalities are completed and we can go ashore. We first turn right and visit the local market. The fruit and vegetables seem quite favourable. We take a road back parallel to the Danube and reach the pedestrian zone. We like it straight away. We don't have much time to stroll around because lunch is waiting for us on the boat. Novi Sad is the second largest city in Serbia and has a population of around 35,000. It is the centre of the autonomous province of Vojvodina and lies in the middle of the Pannonian Plain. We take a bus tour around the city and then stroll through the pedestrian zone, this time with a guide. The residential and commercial buildings dating from the 18th and 19th centuries and the public buildings have almost all been restored. The many, well-frequented street cafés invite you to linger. However, we are taken to a musty cellar for a break because of the toilets.

We continue by bus into the countryside to the holy mountains. We reach the KrusedoL monastery through a lovely landscape. The paintings in the church and the icons are beautiful, but unfortunately photography is forbidden.

The guide, who grew up in Austria, explains the elements of an Orthodox church very precisely. The vestibule and the main room are open to those attending the service. In principle, one stands in front of it. In front of the iconostasis is the earthly altar, behind it the divine altar. Immediately to the left of the door of the iconostasis is the icon of Christ and next to it the Mother of God. To the right of the ture is the saint to whom this church is dedicated, followed by the portrait of the founder of the church. There is no organ and the chants are almost identical to Gregorian chants. Although Christian, the rituals are strongly influenced by Judaism.

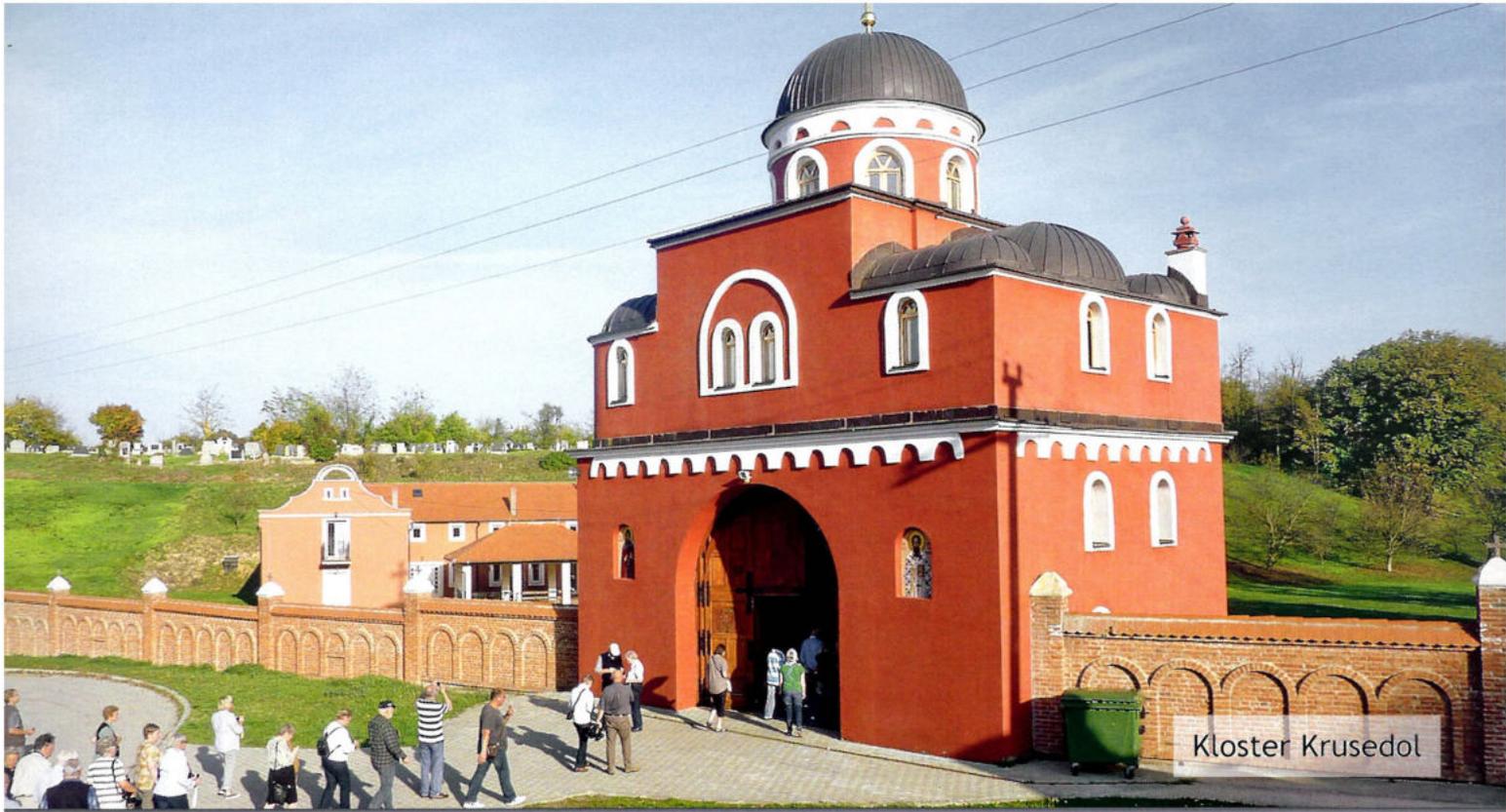












Kloster Krusedol



Festung Petrovaradin

## Day 13, Thursday 24 October

At 06:15 in the morning it's time for the face check. After barely noticing any border crossings on our way down the Danube to Hungary, the Hungarian border officials are again very strict. Finally, we enter the sacred area of the Schengen Agreement. Everyone on the boat agrees that these officials' efforts at other borders and groups of people were probably more necessary.

From Mohacs [km 1448] we take the bus towards Pecs at 08:30. Mohacs has become sadly famous in Hungarian history because it was here that the Hungarians lost the battle against the overpowering Ottomans in 1526 and were oppressed by the victors for 150 years. Although the houses in the countryside are still small, they are in remarkably better condition and the surroundings are cleaner than in the states downstream on the Danube. Huge plots of land are used for agriculture. We see large harvesters harvesting maize. Plantations and vineyards become more frequent the closer we get to the hills ahead. Pecs is built on a south-facing slope of the Mecsek Mountains and therefore has a mild climate due to its sheltered location. The flair of the town can also best be described as Mediterranean and we immediately feel at home here. We disembark near St Peter's Basilica and then visit this richly decorated building. Not far from there is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Romanesque burial chambers. Unfortunately, you can see very little of them through the walk-in glass covers. Szechenyi Ter is the name of the beautiful and large main square. A mosque from the time of Ottoman rule forms the upper end of the square, although it now serves as the parish church in the city centre. Other houses worth seeing surround the main square. The houses in the pedestrian zone have all been renovated and are mostly in Art Nouveau style. On the onward journey to the landing stage in Kalocsa [km 1515] we pass through several villages of the Danube Swabians, the former German settlers. Their churches can be recognised by their baroque style. In Kalocsa we take two walks before the MS Moldavia continues its journey in the evening.



Mohács





Dom St. Peter und Paul in Pécs







Imposanter Széchenyi-Platz mit Kassim-Pascha-Moschee







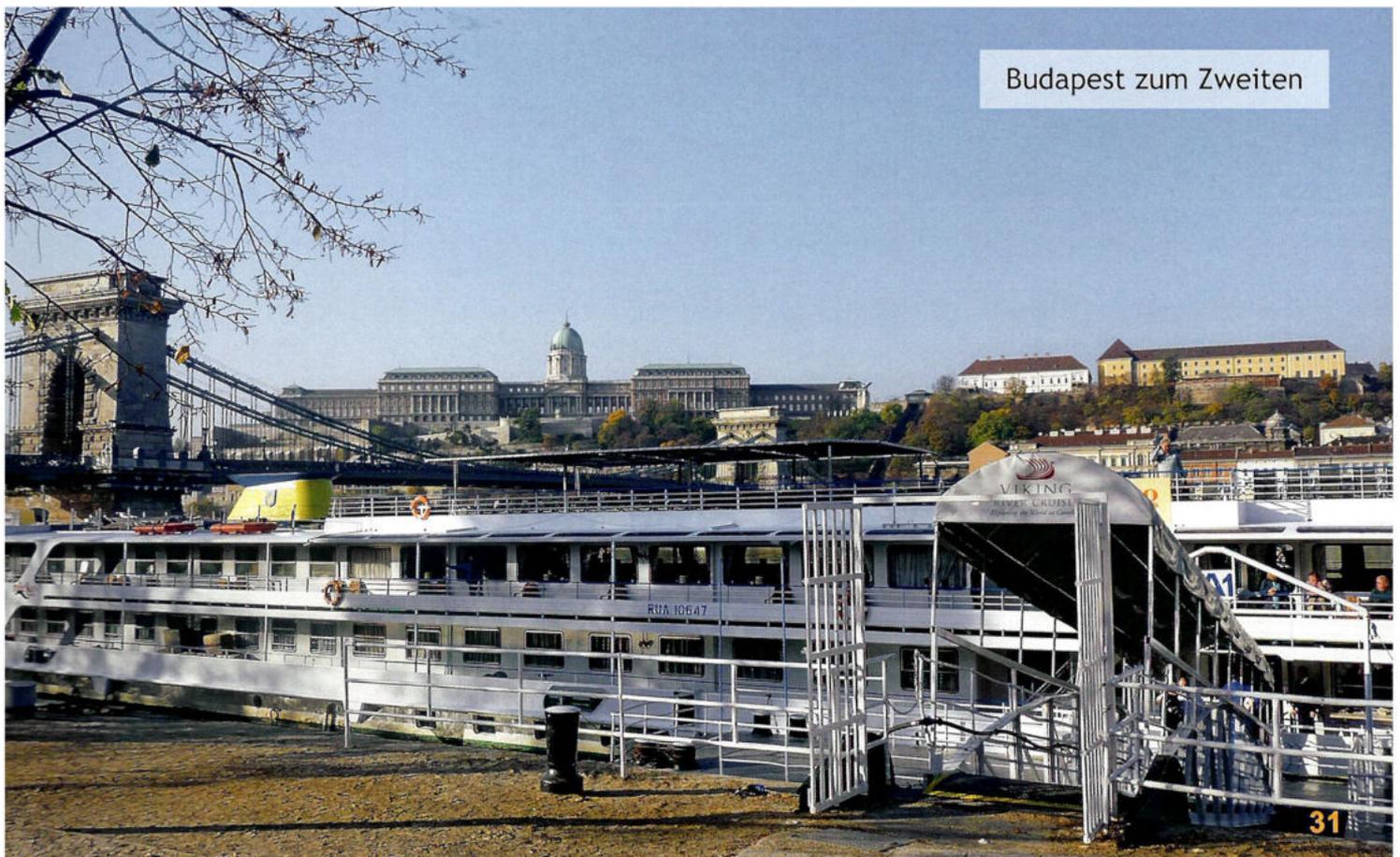
Spaziergang in Kalocsa



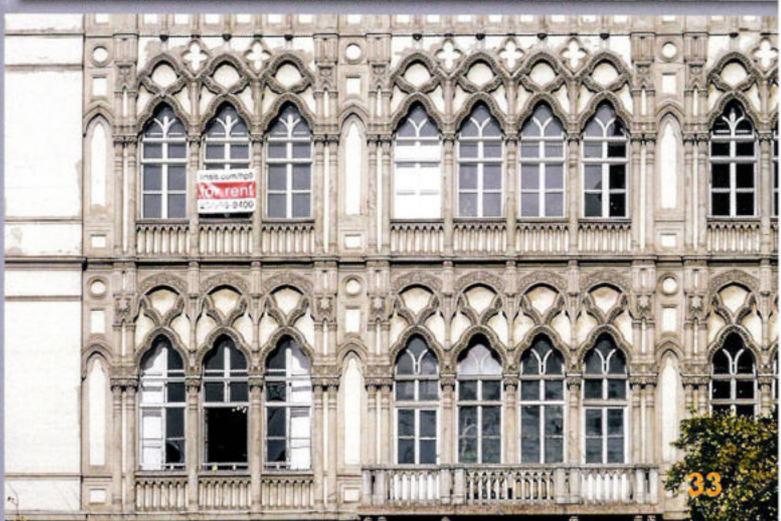
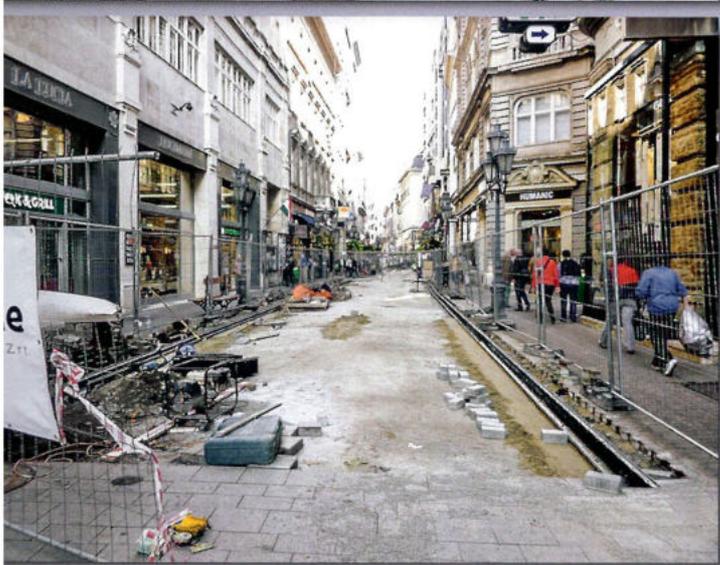
## Day 14, Friday 25 October

We are lucky again in Budapest [km 1648]. Our mooring is directly above the Chain Bridge. The pedestrian zone is just a stone's throw away. We stroll along Vaci Utca towards the market hall. We are still on the lookout for a T-shirt with a babushka, or more correctly a matryoshka, for Eleanne. A friendly shop assistant helps us and gives us the address of the shop with the largest selection. It's opposite Vaci Utca 65, a shop specialising in T-shirts with good quality, reasonable prices and a fair exchange rate in euros. Unfortunately, we don't find a matryoshka there either, but we do find a T-shirt with a Budapest cat motif. On the way back, we make a detour to St Stephen's Basilica. The largest church in Budapest was only completed in 1901. The embalmed right hand of the canonised King Stephen I is of great significance for Hungary.

The journey upriver from Budapest in beautiful, warm weather is once again impressive. During the day we pass the interesting town of Vác [km 1680] with its many churches. We moor at the jetty at Viségrad [km 1695]. The town in the Danube bend is famous for the ruins of the royal castle, which towers high above the town. An impressive sight.



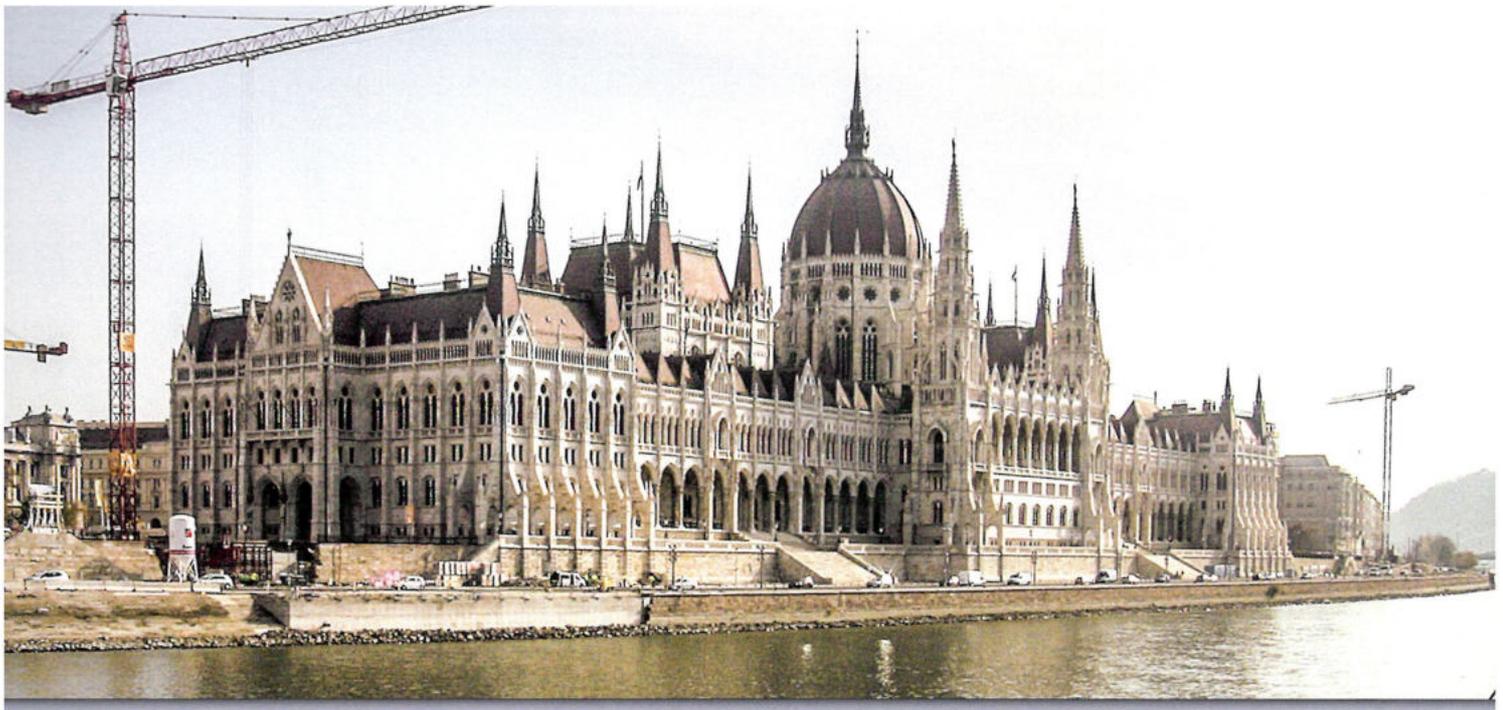






Stephansbasilika



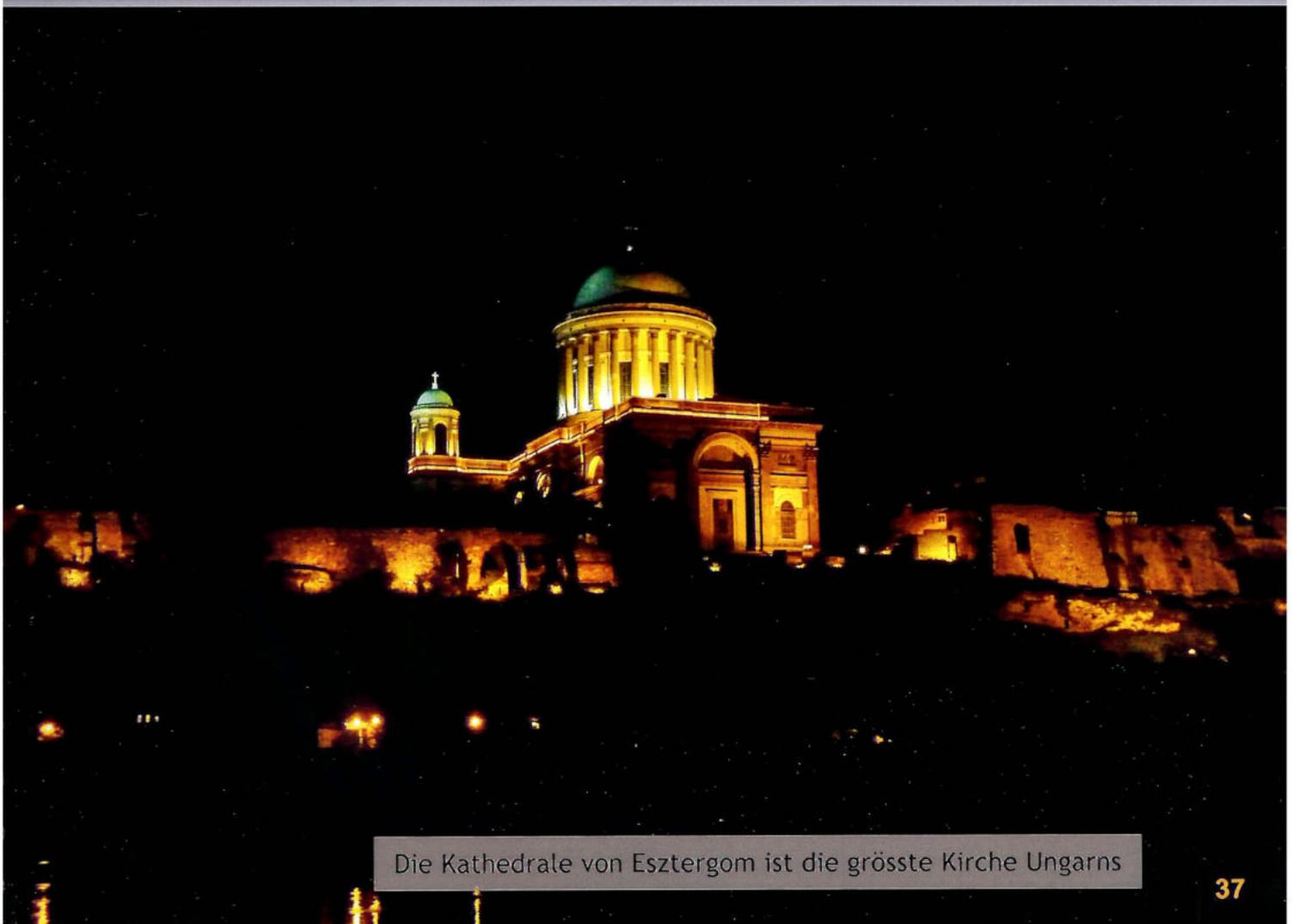




Vác



Festung Visegrád



Die Kathedrale von Esztergom ist die grösste Kirche Ungarns

## Day 15, Saturday 26 October

We don't expect much from Bratislava [km 1869], where we docked early this morning. Wrongly, as it turns out after the first few steps with the city guide. Less than 100 metres and we are already in the old town, car-free of course. Like all the buildings here, the concert hall and opera house have been carefully renovated. Where the moat and city wall used to be, there is now a wide promenade. The city guide calls it the "Ramblas". All the streets and squares in the old town are levelled and without steps. It would go beyond the scope of this report to list all the interesting historical buildings. You can tell that the city was spared by the Ottomans. Many shops and cafés invite you to linger. However, a bus awaits us for the second part of the tour. The new town also makes a spacious and clean impression.

The beautiful location of the town is to be shown to us on the hill of the castle hill. But in the fog, the endeavour is doomed to failure. We get off the bus at the castle and walk up the few metres. The impression of the spacious grounds is overwhelming. It has been restored according to old plans as it was in the days of the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa. In the immediate vicinity of the castle is the modern parliament building, beautifully situated above the Danube.

Bratislava is a city that we would have liked to stay in for longer and that we would like to visit again. As we cast off, the fog lifts and we enjoy the beautiful journey upriver in the sunshine.

The next highlight awaits us in the form of a ruined castle called Devin (Thebes). High above the mouth of the Morava, this fortress once guarded the gateway to the Carpathians. The Morava also forms the border between Slovakia and Austria. Interesting and picturesque places, which could tell many stories, pass us by.

In the evening we have our farewell dinner and afterwards members of the crew entertain us skilfully with Ukrainian and Russian songs.



Nationaltheater von Bratislava











Primitiaalpalais (ehem. Sitz des Erzbischofs)

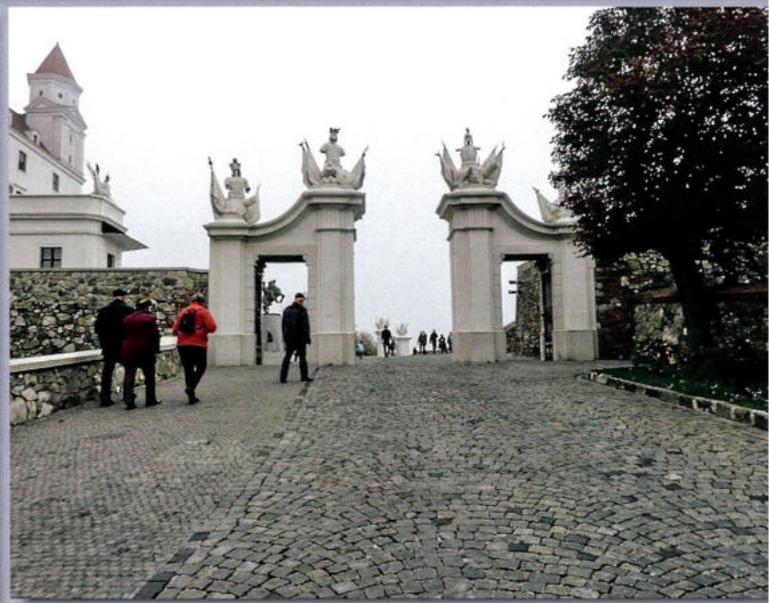




Das Parlamentsgebäude auf dem Burgberg



Das Wahrzeichen von Bratislava: Die Burg





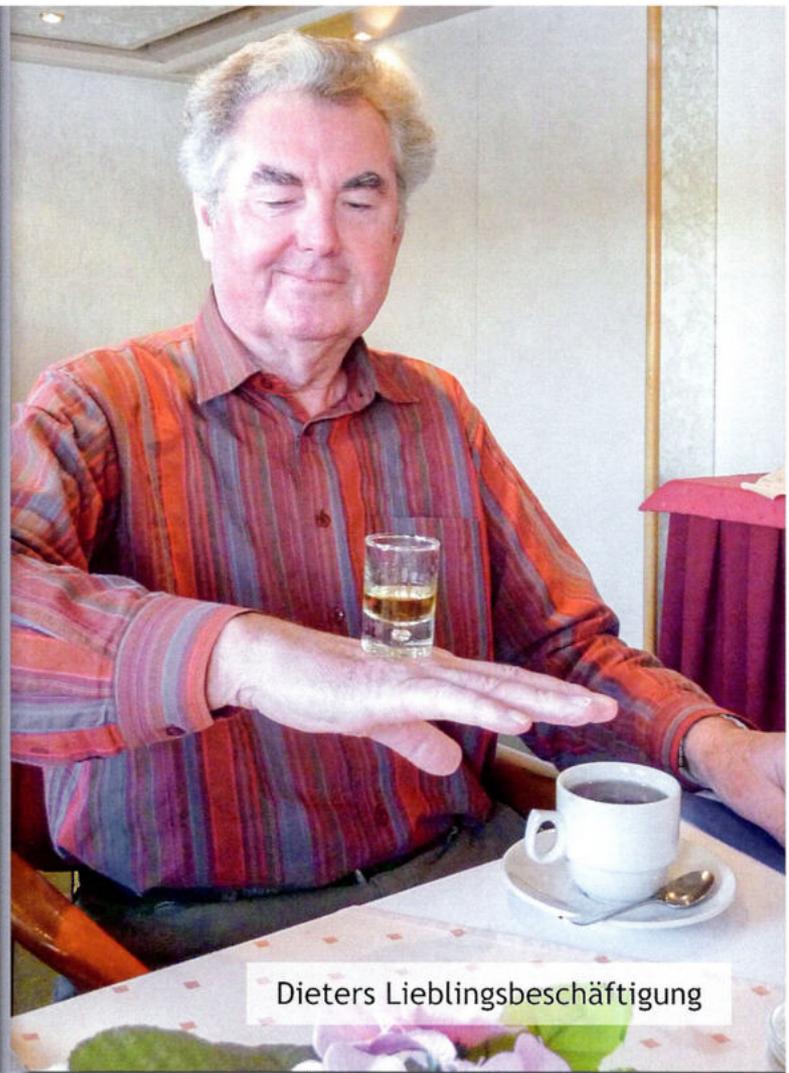
Burgruine Devin



Hainburg



Juttas Lieblingsbeschäftigung



Dieters Lieblingsbeschäftigung



Diese beiden Damen haben uns bei Tisch verwöhnt und besitzen noch andere Talente.

## Day 16, Sunday 27 October

Thick fog surrounds us. Fortunately, the MS Moldavia still finds its way, or rather the open water. So we don't miss anything when we watch the 2nd part of the video of our journey. Not really bad, but we can live quite well without it. After lunch, we visit the city of Linz [km 2135], the centre of which can be reached within minutes. Soon we are standing on the largest square in Austria, the main square. It is surrounded by stately houses with baroque façades. The pioneering astronomer Johannes Kepler once worked in the Landhaus, the most beautiful Renaissance building in Austria. There is a church around almost every corner we turn and we take a quick look inside each one. Unfortunately, they all look very gloomy and are barely lit. Of course we want to try the Linzer Torte on the spot. In Herrengasse we find the place of origin, Konditorei Jinrak. We find 2 pieces of cake and 2 coffees for € 8.80 and the quality is good.

Back on the Danube, the LENTOS art museum shines in neon blue. On the opposite side of the Danube, the ARS Electronica Center is bathed in a constantly changing play of neon colours. We find it all very interesting. The Brucknerhaus with its subtle, beautiful lighting almost fades into the background. The concert hall is dedicated to the composer and former organist of the parish church.





Hauptplatz in Linz



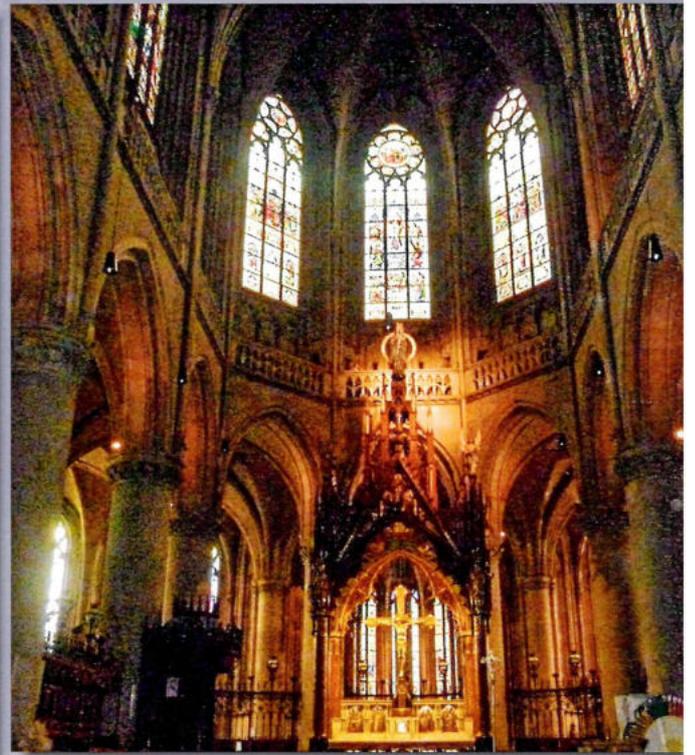


Die Linzer Torte, ein Muss



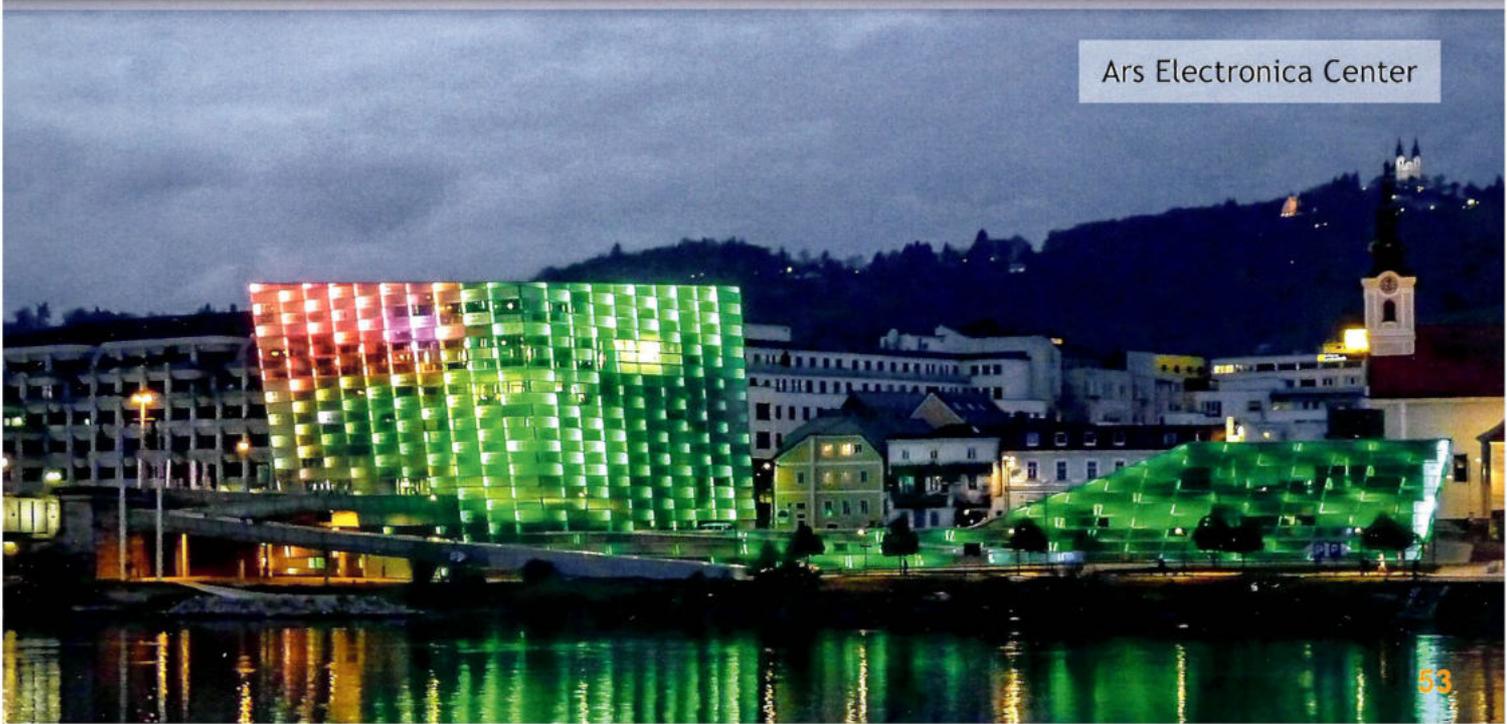
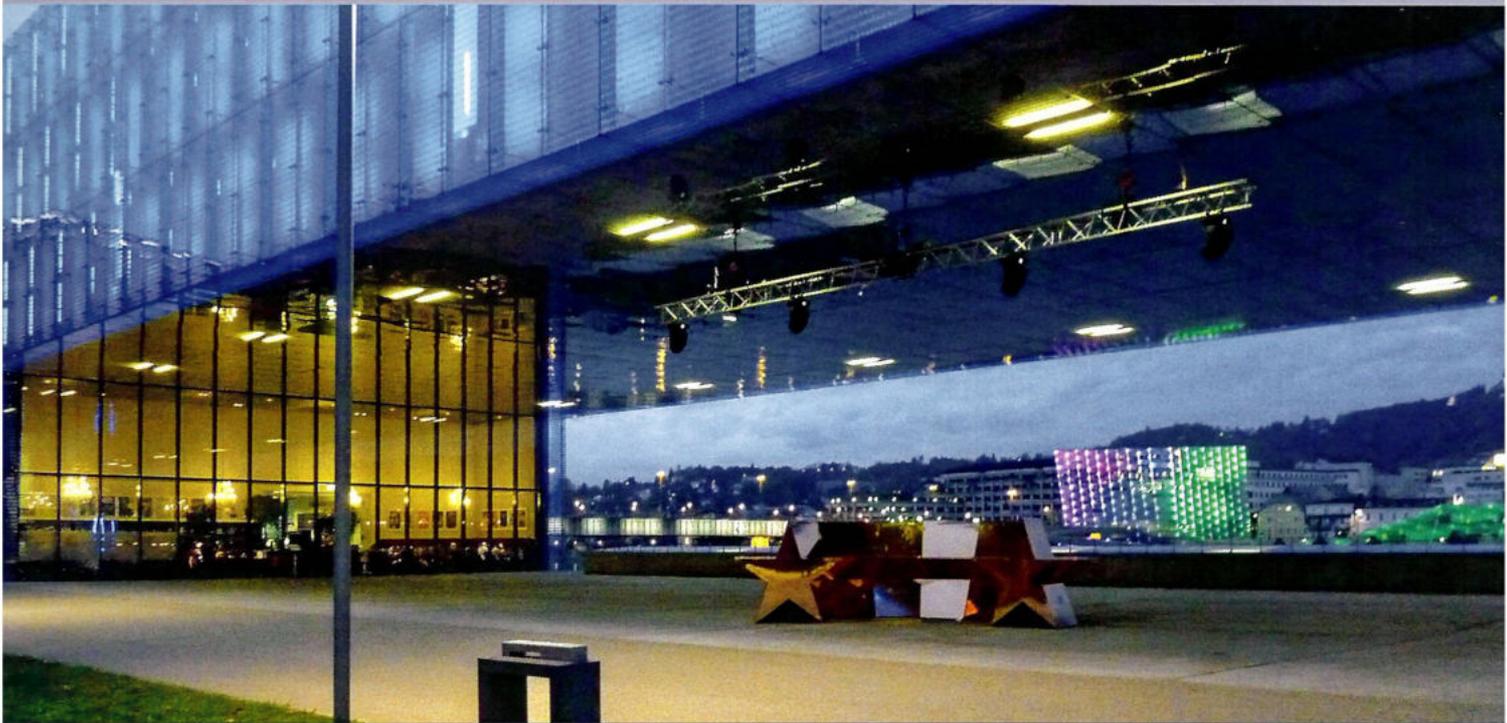


Dom





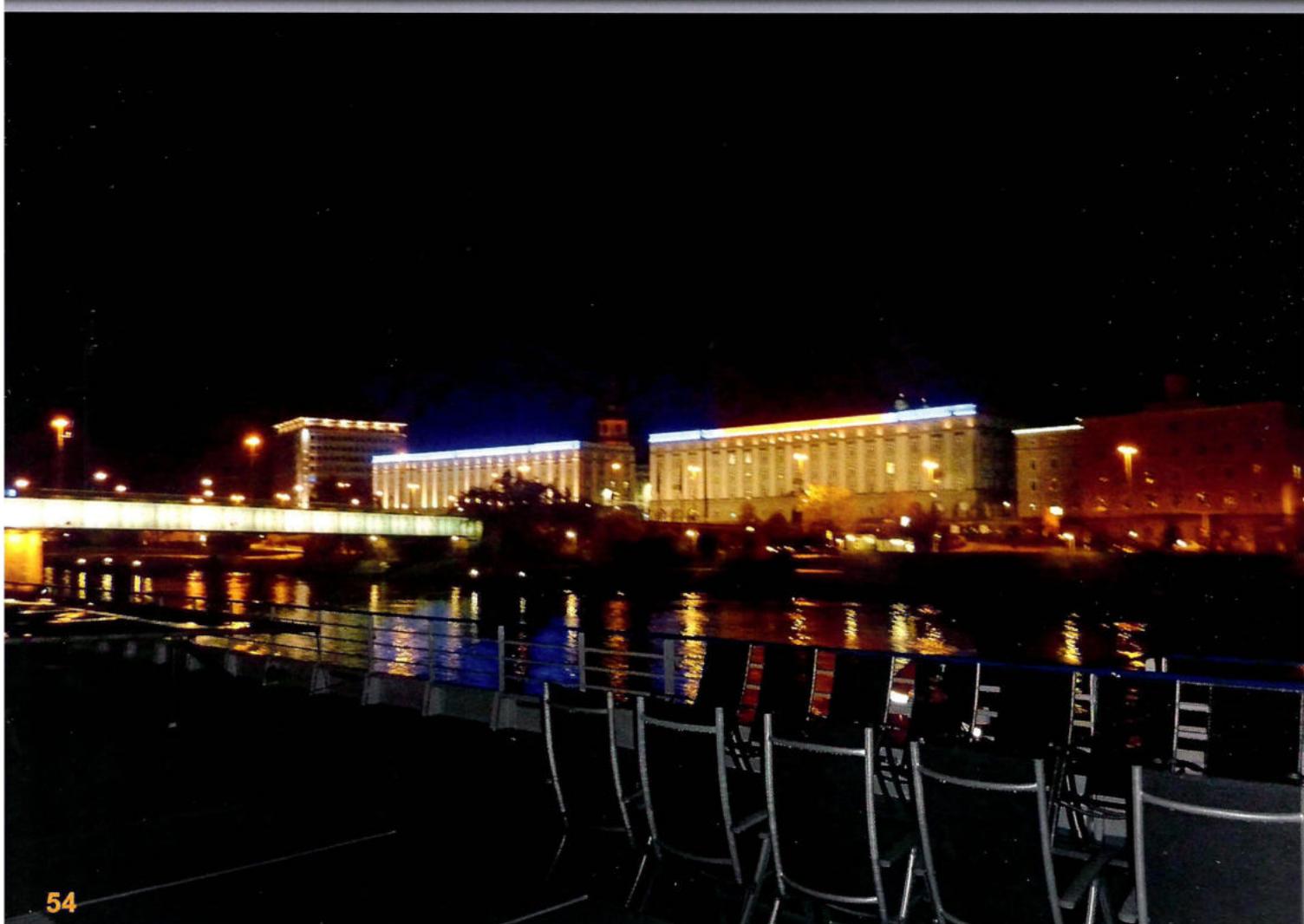
Lentos-Kunstmuseum



Ars Electronica Center



Brucknerhaus



## 17. Reisetag, Montag 28. Oktober

Hektik macht sich schon früh auf dem Schiff bemerkbar. Passau [km 2225] ist erreicht und das heisst Endstation, Ausschiffen. Allerdings ist alles bestens organisiert. Das Gepäck erhält je nach Transferort eine spezifische Farbe für die Etiketle, so dass das Personal genau weiss, was damit zu tun ist. Alles läuft wie geschmiert. Wir verabschieden uns von unseren Tischnachbarn. Wir hätten uns keine besseren wünschen können. Wir haben von ihnen viel erfahren über das Leben im Osten Deutschlands, sei es vor, während oder nach der Wende. Neben uns zwei werden noch acht weitere Kunden von Thurgau Travel, allerdings von anderen Schiffen, abgeholt und per Bus nach München transportiert. Mit Staunen hören wir, dass bei den anderen zwei Schiffen wegen der Schleusenrevision in der Slowakei das Schiff gewechselt werden musste. Auch ist auf einem der Schiffe eine Darmgrippe aufgetreten, so dass die Hälfte der Passagiere sich krank melden musste. Glück gehabt!

In München werden wir von einer Reiseleiterin auf den richtigen Bahnsteig geführt. Da wir aber zu früh sind, zeigt sie uns ein Restaurant, wo wir in aller Ruhe die Zeit überbrücken können. Das heisst, wir bestellen uns eine Portion Weisswürstl mit Brezel und eine Portion Hamburger mit Kartoffelsalat. Natürlich braucht René ein Bier dazu.

An unserem Tisch sitzt ein älterer Herr unserer Reisegruppe. Als wir uns auf den Weg Richtung Zug machen, scheint er mir leicht verwirrt zu sein. Wir passen uns seiner Fortbewegungsgeschwindigkeit an und nehmen ihn mit auf den richtigen Bahnsteig. Unsere reservierten Plätze in der ersten Klasse sind gleich im ersten Wagen. Hilflos blickt der Senior mich an, als wir einsteigen wollen. Ich nehme sein Gepäck und zusammen machen wir uns auf den Weg zu seinem reservierten Platz in der zweiten Klasse. Plötzlich trippelt der Herr neben mir in ganz kleinen Schritten und hat offensichtlich die Beine nicht mehr vollständig unter Kontrolle. Nach einigen Metern schliesst er in grossen Schritten wieder zu mir auf. MS! Multiple Sklerose, wie mich ein Bekannter später aufklärt. Ich führe Mann und Gepäck an den reservierten Platz im Zuge. Dankend verabschiedet er sich von mir. Hut ab, wenn eine Person mit dieser Krankheit noch den Mut aufbringt individuell zu Reisen. Er sei uns Vorbild für die Zukunft!

## Day 17, Monday 28 October

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he hectic pace on the ship is already noticeable early on. Passau [km 2225] is reached and that means the last stop, disembarkation.

However, everything is perfectly organised. Luggage is labelled in a specific colour depending on the transfer location so that the staff know exactly what to do with it. Everything runs like clockwork. We say goodbye to our table neighbours. We couldn't have wished for better people. We have learnt a lot from them about life in East Germany, whether before, during or after reunification. Besides the two of us, eight other Thurgau Travel customers, albeit from other ships, are picked up and transported to Munich by bus. We are amazed to hear that the other two ships had to be changed due to the lock overhaul in Slovakia. One of the ships also had an intestinal flu, so that half of the passengers had to call in sick. Lucky for us!

In Munich, a tour guide takes us to the right platform. But as we are too early, she shows us a restaurant where we can pass the time in peace and quiet. That means we order a portion of white sausage with pretzel and a portion of hamburger with potato salad. Of course René needs a beer to go with it.

An older gentleman from our tour group is sitting at our table. As we make our way towards the train, he seems slightly confused to me. We match his speed and take him to the right platform. Our reserved seats in first class are right in the first carriage. The senior looks at me helplessly as we try to board. I take his luggage and together we make our way to his reserved seat in second class. Suddenly, the gentleman next to me starts to stagger in very small steps and obviously no longer has full control of his legs. After a few metres, he catches up with me again in long strides. MS! Multiple sclerosis, as a friend later explains to me. I lead my husband and luggage to the reserved seat on the train. He says goodbye to me with thanks. Hats off to anyone with this illness who still has the courage to travel individually. Let him be a role model for the future!

We travel comfortably through the Allgäu, around Lake Constance and through eastern Switzerland to Zurich. Fabienne, Janne and Aino are waiting for us there. The two-and-a-half-year-old greets us waving a little flag. The joy of reunion is great on all sides. We sit down for a welcome drink in the Brasserie Federal. Another beer and then it's back home on the Sihltal railway.





Passau





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BAD FÜSSING TEL. 08531/84480  
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