

TRANSDANUBE TRAVEL STORIES

Danube Trade: The exchange of stories and goods

(by Jörg Zenker, coordinator / copywriter)

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Geographical scope

Trail #5 is one of six interconnected, themed routes in the Transdanube Travel Stories project. Each route follows a specific section of the Danube. Trail #5 encompasses a long section of the river including destinations and points of interest in **Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia** and **Romania**.

The Danube is one of the oldest trade routes in Europe. As early as the Dark Ages, traders used rafts to convey furs and other goods to faraway places. The Romans regarded the Danube as a “wet *limes*” marking the boundary of their empire to the north, but also as a channel for commerce.

A story fit for a storyboard

New routes mean new approaches. While there is little sense in reinventing the wheel, it is possible to change it a little, bend it into a new shape. Our Danube project is similar in that sense: while we cannot force it in an entirely new direction, we can shift perception of it, or find ways to

shed light on its tremendous historical significance. This route looks at the merchants who travelled the Danube throughout centuries.

Merchants have traditionally known a great deal more about distant cultures and countries than other professions, particularly merchants of the past. Earlier times saw large groups flocked together in taverns, listening to incredible new tales of other lands and customs, most of them told by a trader. Ulm, where our trail begins, was home to some 21 guilds in the Middle Ages. The largest of them was the merchant guild. These were rich men, of course, but they could also boast another kind of wealth: that of worldly experience. Merchants and tradesmen also gathered in other at cities along the trail including Regensburg, Budapest, and Bucharest. The diversity of cultures along the river's shores makes the Danube region an especially rich one for stories. Modern-day travellers also want to hear those tales; in that sense, they are not so different from the travellers and tavern-goers of bygone times.

Profit-seeking

How much might an 18th-century merchant stand to profit, for example, if he had purchased wine in Smederevo to sell at the well-known wine market in Ulm? While closing the sale he might have told the purchaser about Smederevska Jesen, the famous wine festival, as a way to promote his product, reinforce his relationships and perhaps even eventually raise his prices – a “win” in more ways than one. Profits have a ripple effect, affecting nearly everyone and everything around. The effect is there even when the only real benefit is a good experience, as we expect to have with our trip. Sustainable thinking is the wave of the future. How can we travel in a way that leaves no traces? How can we benefit from something and give back at the same time? This kind of thinking goes beyond the profit-centric “art of the deal” to focus on intercultural exchange.

Merchants in the Danube region obviously had ample opportunities to broaden their horizons, as their movement from country to country, city to city shows. Another fascinating aspect is the Ottoman-influenced bargain culture seen mostly in the Balkan Peninsula, which stands in contrast to the more fixed-price culture found on the western section of the river. While markets named after their historical focus (e. g. pig market, fish market, thread market) appear in communities from Regensburg to Linz, cities such as Sfantu Gheorghe in the east feature vestiges of the traditional bazaar. Historically, the goods sold at these locations varied not only by the region, but also according to the trade routes to which they were connected (Prague, Venice, etc.). Two goods in particular – wine and iron – appear nearly everywhere along the route, as does steel as we approach the modern era. But this is also a story of salt, snails, slaves, soldiers, clothes, grain, and more.

Trendsetters

Trends usually revolve around novelty and products. In that respect, merchants have not only been innovators, but also a source of new ideas and fresh inspiration. Have a look at where some of the world's best-known inventions saw the light of day, including Budapest, birthplace of the Rubik's Cube. Trace the path the product took to Germany (though this particular modern commodity was not ferried along the Danube.)

“We crave for new sensations but soon become indifferent to them. The wonders of yesterday are today common occurrences.”

Nikola Tesla

Transdanube Travel Stories, co-funded by the EU (ERDF, IPA, ENI), the State of Upper Austria and Tourismusverband Linz

Role in heydays and decline

Every city has its heyday and low point, and these often go hand in hand with the ups and downs of commerce. Ulm enjoyed particular prosperity in the 14th century, when medieval consumers craved its reputable, high-quality products. Similarly, steel production in Smederevo brought an influx of people to the city, making it an important Danube port.

Dynasties

"A person should always teach his son a clean and easy trade, and pray to the One to Whom wealth and property belong, as there is no trade that does not include both poverty and wealth."
Jewish proverb

Jewish communities faced legal restrictions and hostilities that made a strong international network all the more imperative. Many of these families have branches in a number of metropolises along trade routes. The Kiechels in Ulm, the Runtingers in Regensburg ... every one of these cities is home to a number of families that have traded goods for centuries, from generation to generation.

One obvious way of connecting cities and conveying their history of trade is to tell the story of one of these merchant dynasties.

There are of course drawbacks to that approach: something that might seem easy to convey to a tourist might be hard to find in reality. Even if we were to pinpoint a family that was as widely ramified as required in our case, it would be like finding a needle in a haystack. Especially as we would want to cover as many eras as possible.

This is where a bit of creativity could come in. Tourists could be introduced to a fictional family whose life and fate would be entirely plausible in real life. This would be a family that never produced famous people, but whose members bore witness to every important event in our cities. This kind of creative dodge could simultaneously offer a glimpse of real life in different periods.

It's a never-ending narrative incorporating one of the main tenets of Hollywood magic: an event that is not true, but might as well be or is even better than true.

This kind of historical fiction is also the stuff of a number of legendary novels, including "Buddenbrooks", Thomas Mann's masterpiece chronicling the decline of four generations of a wealthy merchant family from 1835 to 1877. The acclaimed publication won its author the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1929.

Imagine beginning the route with the story of a family that lived in the Danube region. To start with, we would need a family name. If a solo traveller or family is doing the tour, the story could even adopt their last name. An individualised approach might increase the appeal. Genealogy is fascinating, even when the family is fictional. Like any good theatre play, the important thing is to simply inhabit a situation, a stage, sometimes just a feeling. Artistic license guides the rest. What is crucial is that the name and family story are the only fictional elements of the information along the trail. The fiction should serve to illuminate genuine, lived history. What follows is a brief attempt at such a story:



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Merchant Johann Leberecht “Steiner” (surname can be changed) was born in 1829 and died in 1902. The history of his family can be traced as far back as the 12th century and is documented in a number of papers, receipts, diaries, and parish registers. Johann himself penned a four-volume chronicle of the Steiner family history, complete with a meticulous index that makes it easy to identify every city and location along the trail. Originally from Wessobrunn, Bavaria, the Steiners enjoyed a brisk business trading a variety of different goods including wine, salt, and – for a short time – even pianos.

Johann’s death in 1902 did not mark the end of the Steiner story. His descendants – though decidedly less prosperous in recent decades – can be found all over the region.

That was the introduction, to (possibly) be continued. Individual fictional family members could give accounts of history from their individual points of view, but we do not actually need a long story; only a few short “bites” to pique travellers’ interest.

Another opener could be the following (italic font to indicate fiction): *Elisabeth Steiner, a niece of Johann L., fell in love with a Jewish merchant from Pest. Though the couple faced many obstacles, they eventually married in 1875. Elisabeth moved to Hungary ...*

This fictional tidbit would be followed by facts: Jews comprised nearly 60 percent of all Hungarian merchants in the second half of the 19th century, and it was many years before they could enjoy the same rights as Christian Hungarians. Though a number of important institutions resisted this lifting of legal restrictions – including the Catholic Church – the community’s sterling reputation as traders and a belief that they would eventually make the country more wealthy contributed to their acceptance.

Many Jewish sites can still be found in Budapest today, among them Nagy Zsinagóga, the largest synagogue in Europe. Located in Dohány Utca (Tobacco Street), it also called the “Tobacco Temple”. That same building complex also includes the Magyar Zsidó Múzeum (Hungarian Jewish Museum), built where Zionist movement founder Theodor Herzl’s parental home once stood. And so on ...

Visitors are given a glimpse of Jewish history, the trading tradition, the problems and joys of life. They have the option of delving deeper into the topic (e. g. by visiting the museum), immersing themselves in the Jewish way of life (e. g. in the synagogue) or taking a walk back in time (e. g.

with a stroll down Tobacco Street). They are given the opportunity to be part of the narrative with each city, era and location they visit.

This family produced all kinds of characters: from scammers and inventors to scoundrels, heroes and humbler types, so the story is always colourful and partners at the particular points of interest have room to be creative. There are a number of easy ways to link that fictional family with experiences or particular institutions.

Money, money, money

The sole purpose of trade is profit. The profit margins for trade could be remarkably high, particularly for those who bought in Bucharest and sold in Ingolstadt, for example. This profit motive is a crucial part of the story and should always be kept in mind.

This particular section – as one might guess from its rather musical heading – is focused on the hard currency itself.

Money, money, money changed hands a number of times en route from A to B or B to A, and the coins jangling in pockets were not always what one might expect. While currencies always varied from era to era, country to country, different coins were used even within a country, especially within what is now Germany. A trip from Ulm to Ingolstadt in the 17th century would also have been a journey through many different territories, each with their own coinage. Coins are a fascinating part of the story and help shift perception, allowing visitors to see the area in a new light.

One famous example is the Guldenhaler of Ulm, minted in 1704. French and Bavarian troops besieged the city during the War of the Spanish Succession. In April 1704, the conquering commander demanded at first 265,106 Gulden, then another 150,000 just seven days later. The demand had to be met by the 25th of April. Should the citizens refuse to pay, the troops would sack the city of Ulm. Ulmers ultimately prevented destruction by hastily melting all the silver they could find. This so-called “siege coinage”, used as a kind of emergency currency, is notable for its distinct square shape along with the desperate inscription DA PACEM NOBIS DOMINE 1704 (“Oh Lord, give us peace,” 1704). An inscription on the reverse tells us the coin’s origin – MONETE ARGENT REI P(ublicae) ULMENSIS (Silver Money of the Free Imperial City of Ulm –, pictured along with the city’s coat of arms. This is only one example of different currencies circulating within a single city. There are many more historical examples.

Each of the three German cities mentioned above had its own minted currency at some point in history. The fact that Ulm had so many different coins (and even a bill) is a hopeful sign that we might find a sufficient number of other interesting currencies at different points along the trail. No problem if not – our main focus here is facilitating a kind of time travel, something that is also possible with more easily attainable money from another time period.

How might we benefit from the intrinsic fascination with money, this love of the numismatic? We hand it directly to visitors! One could imagine a purse filled with reproductions of various coins, a helpful app or even a simple sheet of paper with pictures of coins.

Those coins can tell stories, as we saw with the square Gulden, but they can also be used to *buy* stories at the various points of interest in Danube cities. Much like the fictional family narrative, this currency works as a means of capturing travellers’ attention. The purse is akin to a time machine; the coins are like buttons taking you to the year inscribed on their surfaces.

While every city would of course require its own purse, its contents point beyond just the city and its bygone currencies. We should always encourage visitors to move further, whet their appetite for the next station on the trail, create a spark of curiosity and fan the flames.

The more cross-reference between the stations, the better. An example would be if the traveller – let's say the new merchant – were also able to find one coin from another city, perhaps the next city on the trail. If the concept appeals to that particular visitor, then their journey will continue.

Go with the (cash)flow – purchase possibilities

The narrative provides a number of options for spending money from the purse. The story continues as soon as the visitor sets foot at the destination. It would open with a connection to the fictional merchant family, followed by a glimpse of the location's trade history. An example would be a photo station at what was once a significant marketplace, perhaps with a backdrop that shows the area in its heyday. Visitors can pull out their phones and shoot a selfie of themselves standing at that same spot 150 years ago. Beside them is a black-bearded man attempting to sell them a recalcitrant pig. This is one idea of the kind of experience we are looking for.

Here is another: a visitor notices an 1850 coin in their purse, one connected to a specific point of interest. What real value did a guilder have in the mid-19th century? While it's difficult to convert to euros or other contemporary currencies, various charts estimate a guilder's buying power to be between 12 and 15 euros, depending on what you aim to buy. Other interesting topics include the average income at a specific place and point in history. We should note here that the coin should only serve to arouse interest and encourage visitors to explore on their own, as too many facts can be overwhelming. The draw of this trail will be its ability to be both engaging and informative at the same time, appealing to the visitors' need for action, experience, and intuitive exploration.

The sheets of paper (or app) present three options for spending the money: A, B, or C. It's up to the institution behind the point of interest to fill in the content for those three options. A guilder, for example, can be used to buy A) two chickens (1 chicken = 24 Kreuzer, 1 guilder = 60 Kreuzer in southern Germany at that time, so someone who drives a hard bargain could afford up to three chickens); B) 60 eggs; or C) a trip to a nearby restaurant for good food and drink. The game might go on to explain the positive or negative impact of your purchase. What's important here is the new dimension that the coin opens, along with the real purpose of it: buying power.

"A person should always divide his money into three: one third in land, one third in commerce, and one third at hand."

Jewish proverb

Conclusion:

A purse filled with old coins and currencies lends itself to a number of different narrative approaches to trade, era and history. One could even explore the Roman Empire if the money is virtual (i. e. on the mentioned app), true to the saying PECUNIA NON OLET (Money does not stink).

"If I had Strasburg's arms, Augsburg's charms, Nuremberg's esprit, Venice's mastery and Ulm's money, I would be the wealthiest man in the world."

15th-century saying

Zest for life

Other vital aspects of Trail #5 include its festive tradition and overall exuberant zest for life. One of the three options for spending money might be a visit to a local, season-appropriate festival. Festivals are closely tied to trade and should definitely be included on this route.

The Perpetual Diets convening in Regensburg – with one session in Ulm and one in Bratislava – attracted merchants from all over, and the atmosphere of these could easily be described as festival-like in medieval times. Interesting sights in Regensburg include the former assembly hall of the Perpetual Diet of Regensburg, but the route also covers a number of village folk- and wine festivals along the way. Examples include the Volksfest in Neu-Ulm, the Urfahrner Markt fairground in Linz, the Donaufestival (Danube Festival) in Krems, the annual Busójárás celebration in the town of Mohács or the yearly Gator Fest in Zmajevac. Why not immerse oneself in a festival, past or present? How much was a ticket 100 years ago, and what attractions did it have in store?

Forging links

This connection to the next city on the trail would ideally be more than our foreign coin. In the best case, we could incorporate a real story from the actual history books. As mentioned, iron works can be found all along our route. Philipp Jacob Wieland – founder of Wieland-Werke AG, now a multinational market leader in semi-finished metals with branches on most continents – began his career as a humble bell founder. As a travelling apprentice on his three-year-and-one-day journeyman period from 1817 to 1820, he resolved to visit every important bell foundry in Europe. He travelled on foot from Ulm via Linz and Bratislava to Ofen (German: Buda; now Budapest), where he stayed to study under a bell founder by the name of Müllner for four weeks. Wieland's fascinating travelogue "Ich sehnte mich danach, die Welt zu sehen" ("I Longed to See the World") gives a vivid first-hand account of the "Sau Winckel", a dance fest celebrated by the people of Ofen and Pest. As he notes in his description of the two villages in 1817, "Ofen also has beautiful nature and warm baths (...) Pest is very lively, a gathering place for many different nations, but very muddy." (p. 44)

Stories like these – of people with humble beginnings who eventually became some of Ulm's most prosperous, highly taxed citizens – are in themselves fascinating, and a closer look at these wandering apprentices is always worthwhile. They aren't just a historical phenomenon, either. Some 2,000 apprentices journeyed as the COVID-19 pandemic hit, with many travelling far beyond Europe in their three years of work and study. So where do they go and where do they stay along the way, what are their customs? How do they describe other parts of the world, how do they envision their future? These black-clad travellers can still be seen wearing loose ribbon ties – the colour of which indicates their profession – and the guild mark on their belts. Historically, their coin purses looked a bit like ours as we follow the trail: filled with a multitude of local currencies.

The connecting link between places is usually not hard to find. After all, exchange is a definitive trait of all trading cities. Take, for example, an event just before the turn of the millennium: the traditional, once grand but later unfortunately dilapidated Café Gerbeaud at Vörösmarty tér 7 in Budapest has reopened after extensive renovation, its splendour restored. Renowned for its

Rococo-style ceiling stucco, glistening chandeliers and fine wood furniture, the coffeehouse has been at the pulsating centre of the city since 1870. Hungarian Romantic composer Franz Liszt sipped coffee in its walls, as did Empress Elisabeth of Austria, Queen of Hungary.

Café Gerbeaud founder Henrik Kugler's travels as a confectioner journeyman took him to eleven European capitals. After years under the stewardship of Kugler and his successor Émile Gerbeaud, the coffeehouse was nationalised in 1948. Then, in 1995, a hairdresser from Ulm bought the crumbling coffeehouse and restored it to its former glory. Admittedly, Erwin Franz Müller's days as a practicing hairdresser were long behind him: "Drogerie Müller", the billionaire entrepreneur's eponymous drugstore chain, is one of the most important in Europe. The Müller success story has close ties to the Danube region. As of 2019, the chain had 87 stores in Austria, 83 in Croatia, 38 in Hungary and 18 in Slovenia. But it all started in 1953, with a hairdresser in Ulm opening a business.

On September 3, 1991, the company's founder fulfilled a long-awaited dream: an impressive Müller department store opened in Ulm's Hirschstrasse, one of the busiest pedestrian zones in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. Seven years later, on October 16, 1998, in Budapest, Müller celebrated 140 years of Café Gerbeaud. He had just managed to reopen the illustrious Hungarian institution. Six weeks later, he was awarded the "Golden Sugar Loaf" in Frankfurt, the food industry equivalent of an Oscar. Müller's empire is one of the top employers in Austria and is widely regarded as one of the most family-friendly companies. In 2018, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz distinguished the company founder with the Great Silver Medal of Honour for Services to the Republic of Austria, one of the country's highest awards. Müller also owns Kozmo, a Croatian grocery retailer.

A visitor stands in front of one of Müller's stores – perhaps in front of the entrepreneur's much-yearned-for department store in Ulm – and pulls a 500-D-Mark note from his or her (possibly virtual) purse. In 1998, when the coffeehouse opened in Budapest, it was the second largest banknote in Germany. Depending on the story and its associated links, that visitor might work out how many kilos of roasted coffee they could buy in the department store. A pound cost 7.52 D-Marks at the time.

But the note itself also has a story to tell. Take a closer look at the bill! The man with the fur collar and pageboy haircut is not Gérard Depardieu. He, too, is from Ulm – a man by the name of Hans Maler zu Schwaz. Or so one assumes from the image seen here: a portrait painted by Maler himself.

A signature indicates that Maler was born around 1488 in Ulm. He was court portraitist to the Kaiser in Innsbruck and died in Schwaz, Austria, sometime around 1526. A visitor might pass the city on their travels through the Danube countries. Though the portraitist of course rendered the Habsburgs (three paintings of King Ferdinand I, four of Anna of Bohemia and Hungary, ...), he also painted a number of merchants, especially and including the upper-bourgeois Fugger family. His paintings are also featured in the Louvre.

The dark side of commerce between the Black Sea and the Black Forest

There are, of course, many ways to view trade through a more critical lens, and it is high time we did. Where Danubian waterways once saw slaves conveyed from one end to the other, the modern equivalent is prostitutes – including many human trafficking victims. More than 90 percent of the women in German brothels are actually from Romania, and this type of trafficking should be included in the debate as well. One of the fundamental tenets of trade consists in the win-win situation facilitated by the exchange of goods and currency. But where do these “commodities” come from, where do they go? Few bother to ask. And yet the closer we look at this particular kind of story, the more concerning it gets. So maybe the euro, the forint or the leu in our purse are the currencies we focus on the most. While there *is* a chance of change in the present, the story of human trafficking could also be told through historical events. One dark Danube tale from the Roman Empire is its enslavement and sale of Thracians to richer provinces. Another 19th-century story involves the sale of prisoners to benefit Franz Ludwig Schenk von Castell, a wealthy Swiss nobleman near Ulm. The so-called “Malefizschenk von Oberdischingen” built his own penitentiary and profitably populated it with prisoners from all over southern Germany and Switzerland – this is yet another business model where the suffering of human beings has lapsed into obscurity. So, there are enough stories, both frequently-told and other, forgotten ones. All are true, none is all black or entirely white. Let’s tell them!

Narrative elements of the story

Genealogy – intriguing, even if it is fictional

Numismatics – fascinating facts about various currencies

Dealing – compare prices and goods throughout history

Love and fear – your fictional family suffers, but also enjoys life

Cultures – connect with unfamiliar mentalities and customs

Indulgence – eat and drink, but also learn

Critical thinking – insight into the darker sides of commerce (slaves, fraud, ...)

Conclusion

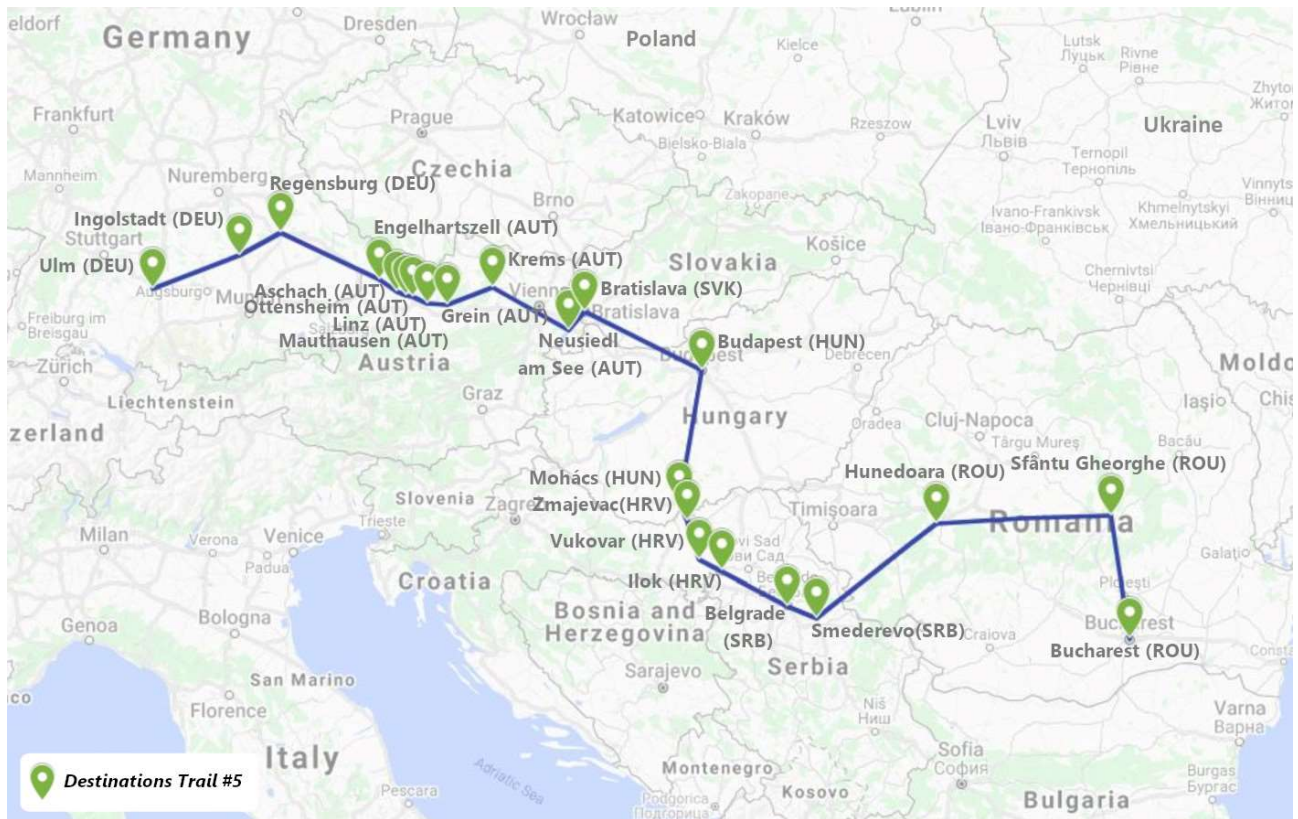
Each of the stories visitors are presented with on the trail should catch their attention, engage them at the emotional level. Each of them should spark a desire to travel to places on the route, but they should also be customisable to wherever the interested travellers find themselves, if this is the only stop on their journey. The Danube region with its diverse trade routes is a wonderful setting for this kind of story-rich experience.

We need new ideas, new approaches, new courage!

“I don’t care that they stole my idea. I care that they don’t have any of their own.”

Nikola Tesla

APPENDIX – Trail destinations & points of interest:



Germany: Ulm, Ingolstadt, Regensburg

Austria: Engelhartzell, Aschach, Ottensheim, Linz, Mauthausen, Grein, Krets, Neusiedel

Slovakia: Bratislava

Hungary: Budapest, Mohács

Croatia: Zmajevac, Vukovar, Ilok

Serbia: Belgrad, Smederevo

Romania: Hunedoara, Bucharest, Sfântu Gheorghe

Ulm

The **historic town hall**: long before its current purpose, the Renaissance-era building was a market and meeting place for traders. Butchers peddled their cuts in an eight-metres-tall **market hall**.

Ulm's squares retain the flair of their lively former marketplaces. A few still bear the original name. One example is the **Weinhof**: once the largest wine market in Swabia, it now sees the annual *Schwörrede*, a ceremonial speech and public accounting by the mayor on the balcony of the Schwörhaus (Oath House).

The *Schwörrede* is a festive, tradition-steeped occasion that citizens of Ulm treat as a holiday. Another age-old event known as the **Fischerstechen** ("fishermen's joust") has been held every four years since the 15th century. The joust has entertained many a historical ruler, some of whom wrote vivid accounts of the event.

The area's brisk trade is as far-ranging and diverse as it was when the merchants' guild was the largest of Ulm's 21 guilds. The **Wieland-Werke**, to name just one example, is the largest manufacturer of semi-finished metals in the world.

Ingolstadt

Today's fifth-largest Bavarian city is home to Bavaria's **oldest university**. Rich in student joie de vivre and home to a number of well-regarded **restaurants**, it also boasts a lively **theatre scene**. Visitors interested in Ingolstadt's rich Danube trade history should certainly pop into the Stadtmuseum (**City Museum**), but also the Spielzeugmuseum (**Toy Museum**). The interactive children's museum highlights an interesting collection of toys but also sheds light on the trade of that particular commodity.

The **Audi factory** is the current driving force of the economy and underscores Ingolstadt's success in shifting waterway-based trade to the road.

The **Audi Museum Mobile** offers insights into that development.

Regensburg

The city boasting Germany's most picturesque **Danube bridge** – a stone crossing over which traders pushed their goods-laden carts as early as the Middle Ages – had its own mint early on. Famed 17th-century astronomer Johannes Kepler links it to Ulm, the city we just mentioned. Ulm features the so-called Kepler kettle, a cauldron-like boiler Kepler cast to aid in measurements and callibrations. The caldron gave merchants and buyers a standardised way to measure their goods. The Regensburg **house where Kepler died** is also still there, along with a vivid account of his life. We'll be hearing from him again when we get to Linz.

Merchants flocked to the city during the **Perpetual Diet**, a veritable who's-who of 17th century European life.

Regensburg also marks the end of the **historic Bavarian Iron Route**, a onetime major transport channel that links numerous industrial and cultural monuments in Bavaria. It was along this route that metals and semi-finished products from the Upper Palatinate were conveyed to Regensburg.

Linz

Markets are also fairs, which generate sales but also fun and thrills. The most popular in Linz is the **Urfahrner Markt**, a biannual fair featuring rides, firework shows and a number of other attractions.

Passionate shoppers should head to the **Linzer Landstrasse**, Austria's busiest shopping boulevard outside of Vienna. Cruise past Linz's massive **harbour complex** for a look at Europe's largest **graffiti gallery** – the factory buildings of **Mural Harbor**. For further glimpses of the river's historic trade, look no further than the nearby Danube ports of **Engelhartzell, Aschach, Ottensheim, Mauthausen** and **Grein**.

Krems

Krems, like a number of other cities on our route, had its own **medieval mint**. While its autumnal **Donaufestival** satisfies our need for exuberant expression and joie de vivre, much of its commerce comes from the cultivation and harvesting of grapes. Austria's white wine capital also has its own 150-year-old **viticulture school**. **Kunsthalle Krems** is a former **tobacco factory** turned exhibition hall; the **Mauthaus** (former duty house) and **Salzstadel** (historic salt store) in nearby Stein bear witness to a centuries-old trade tradition.

Neusiedl am See

Like Krems, Neusiedl am See is a vineyard town. Another significant economic driver is **metal processing**, a sector it shares with many other cities along our route. Its **lido**, a popular leisure destination in the summer months, draws visitors from Vienna and southern Germany alike.

Bratislava

Bratislava charged a toll beginning in the 11th century. This city was an important business and trade hub in the second half of the 19th century. The **reception building** once used for the **Bratislava-Tyrnau Railway** gives some idea of this transit infrastructure's flair; it was soon joined by railway connections to Vienna and Pest.

Dominating the cityscape is the **castle** featured on the Slovakian euro. **Coin collections** at the **Slovak National Museum** bring medieval trade to life.

Budapest

Bridges represent connections, and thus also stand for trade. The famous **Széchenyi Chain Bridge** of Budapest, a suspension bridge, reflects the iron trade mentioned in the description of our route.

Near the Liberty Bridge is the **Great Market Hall**, which was the nation's leading trading centre until 1932.

Budapest's colourful history and joie de vivre can also be experienced in the famous **Budapest thermal baths**.

Mohács

Folklore and joy abound at **Busójárás**, the annual celebration of the Šokci. Glance at the **signs** for an idea of the town's multilingualism and multiethnicity, both past and present: Hungarian, German and Serbian are practically everywhere you look. The Battle of Mohács in 1526 marked yet another turning point in the history of trade along the Danube. A number of **memorials** in and around Mohács commemorate the consequential massacre.

Zmajevac

This village in the Baranja region is an important wine-growing area in Croatia. The unique, centuries-old, so-called "**gators**" are little houses, often partially buried or tucked into a hillside. Most are surrounded by a brick wall and have a wine cellar. The annual **Gator Fest** on the last weekend of September is a testament to the people of Zmajevac's zest for life: it is widely considered the wildest, most fun-filled wine festival in the Danube region.

Vukovar / Ilok

The important **Port of Vukovar** is an interesting place to consider trade along the Danube. **Borovo** was the former Yugoslavia's largest shoe factory. Mostly abandoned and significantly damaged in the war, only a few of its halls still stand. They are testament to the gut-wrenching end of the former Tito state.

Wine and fishing dominate trade in Ilok. The area is known for its **white wine**.

Belgrade

Where gates are thrown open, trade begins. The **Belgrade Fortress** is considered the gateway to the Balkans. More than 30% of Serbs work in the city. The **Nikola Tesla Museum** focuses on physics and the biography of one of Serbia's most successful export geniuses. Another must-see is **Knez Mihailova Street**: Belgrade's main pedestrian and shopping zone is protected by law as one of the oldest and most valuable landmarks in the city.

Smederevo

This historic town, about the size of Ulm, is where the river Jezava meets the Danube. The city's exciting history, with its changing allegiances to Serbia, the Ottoman Empire and the Archduchy of Austria, has always been a place of pronounced cultural diversity and lively trade. The city is now home to the **largest steelworks** in Serbia. Metal processing is a major economic driver here as well. Master works from Smederevo's renowned artisan blacksmiths enjoy wide appeal. **Wine cultivation** is important for the region, as is its **Smederevska Jesen**, a much-loved wine harvest festival. Also linked to this wine-growing tradition is **Villa Obrenović**, a summerhouse of the royal Obrenović dynasty.

Hunedoara

Hunedoara marks the precise mid-point between Timișoara, capital of Banat, and Sibiu, capital of Transylvania. Unlike many of the aforementioned towns, its main cultural influence is not German; Hunedoara's influences are predominantly Romanian and Hungarian.

The historic train line between **Hunedoara Castle and Zlaști** is currently being developed for tourism. The **old steel mill**, once one of the most productive in the country, is worth seeing.

Bucharest

Hanul lui Manuc is the only surviving caravanserai. Built in 1808 by an Armenian merchant, it is now a hotel and restaurant. This is where Orient and Occident meet. Also interesting is the city's **Zambaccian Museum** in the former home of Krikor Zambaccians, likewise an Armenian. The businessman and art collector was a living lesson in the merger of joie de vivre and business acumen. The **Jewish Museum** highlights the conclusion of many Jewish merchants' journeys from Ulm to Bucharest.

Sfântu Gheorghe

The town of Sfântu Gheorghe near Tulcea is another must-see. 120,000-year-old **archaeological sites** at Enisala, Murighiol, Garvăn and Sarinasuf push the door to the past wide open. Yet the region's true heyday came in the 19th century, when it became a busy hub for trading such commodities as clothing, rushes, snails and fish. One of its main exports to the West is **black caviar**. Other highlights include the **bazaar**, not least on account of its unique, Budapest-made clock. **Szekler National Museum** is a veritable showcase of cultural diversity.