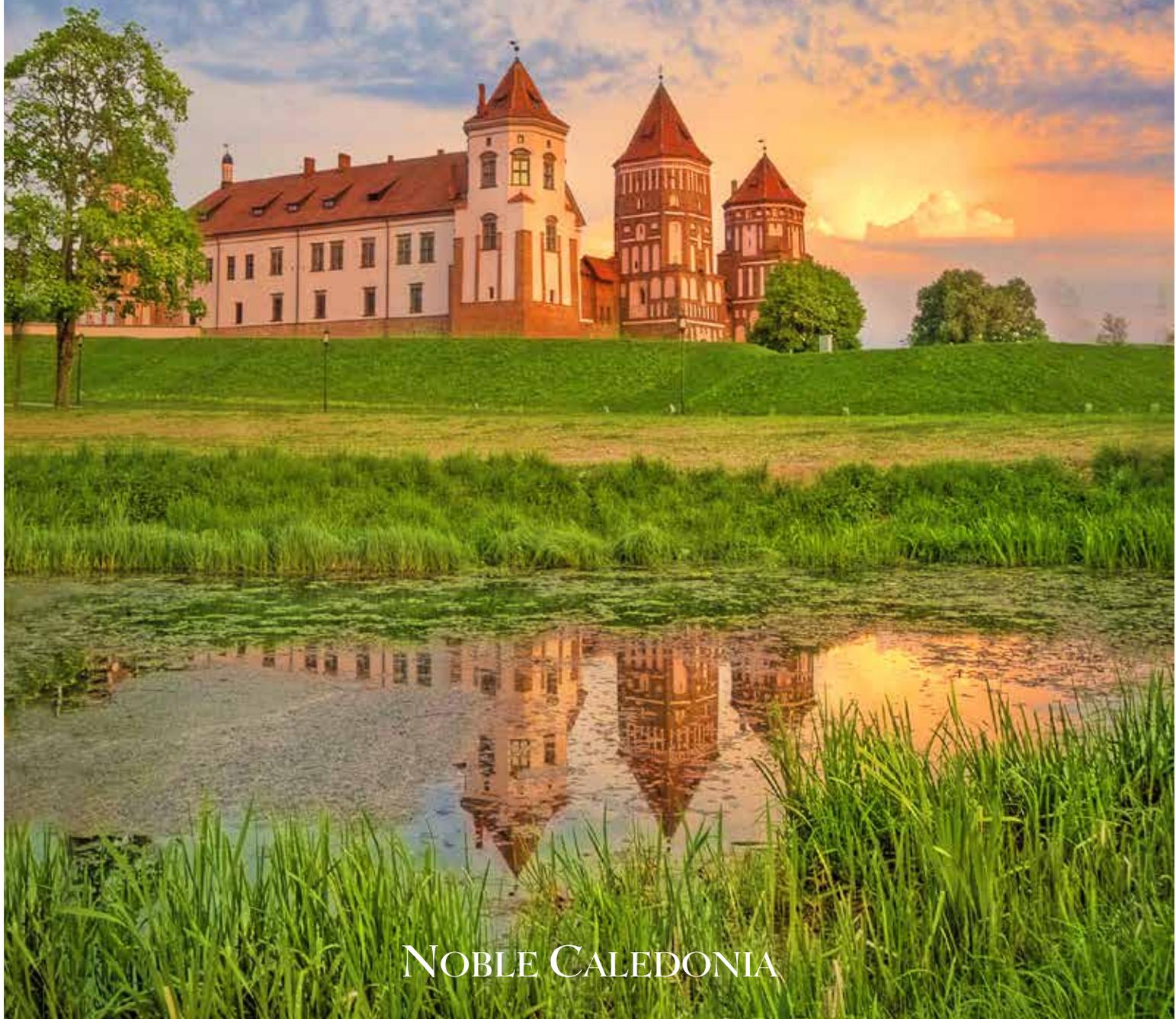


EXCLUSIVE SMALL GROUP TOURS

EASTERN EUROPEAN DISCOVERIES

A SELECTION OF ESCORTED TOURS

2018 & 2019



NOBLE CALEDONIA

THE HIDDEN BALTICS & BELARUS

An escorted tour of Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus

5th to 14th September 2018 & 6th to 15th September 2019

Having operated voyages around the Baltic for over twenty years, we thought it was time to devise an escorted tour which allows for some more time to discover the many facets of both Latvia and Lithuania with the added benefit of time to explore the little visited yet intriguing city of Minsk in Belarus. This in-depth journey offers the perfect balance of guided excursions with visits to some stunning National Parks, glorious palaces and gardens, natural wonders such as the Curonian Spit, fascinating museums showcasing remnants of the Soviet era as well as time spent wandering the charming streets of Riga and Vilnius admiring the Gothic architecture.

Despite the often turbulent history of conquests and partitions, since the departure of their Soviet masters, both Latvia and Lithuania have retained their unique character and enchanting old quarters which combined with natural treasures has meant they are fast being recognised as two of Europe's gems and now is the time to discover their many riches. In contrast, the city of Minsk was razed to the ground in World War II and very little remains from the pre-war years, there are however a myriad of places of interest to those interested in the Soviet period and just outside the city is Nesvizh Castle, a combination of Medieval, Renaissance and Classical architecture which we will explore during our time in Belarus.

We do hope you can join us for what promises to be a fascinating tour of some relatively unknown places of much interest which are unlikely to remain 'hidden' for too much longer given their wealth of cultural and natural wonders.



Riga Cathedral and the Old Town



Rastrelli's magnificent Rundale Palace

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Riga, Latvia. Fly by scheduled flight from London to Riga and transfer to the centrally located Radisson Blu Elizabete Hotel for a two night stay. Explore Riga at leisure this afternoon before meeting for dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 2 Riga. Riga, the 800-year-old capital of Latvia is famous for its historic centre and Art Nouveau architecture. On a morning city tour we begin with a panoramic drive along the boulevards of the city, passing by the iconic Freedom Monument. We will take a walking tour of the Old Town, visiting Dome Square to view the exterior of the Dome Cathedral and to see the House of Blackheads; now the temporary residence of the President of Latvia. This house with its 14th century origins was destroyed in 1948 and restored in 1999. Pass through Theatre Square to view the Riga Russian Theatre and the Great and Small Guilds which reflect Latvia's period as a Hanseatic City. Continue to the Swedish Gates, constructed during Riga's period under Swedish rule in the 17th century before viewing other interesting buildings such as the Parliament and the 'Three Brothers', the oldest complex of dwelling houses in the city. Our tour ends with a walk down Albert Street admiring the interesting Art Nouveau architecture. Enjoy an afternoon and evening at leisure.

Day 3 Rundale Palace & Klaipeda, Lithuania. After a leisurely breakfast transfer to the Zemgale region of Latvia and the beautiful Rundale Palace. Constructed in the 1730s to a design by Bartolomeo Rastrelli, Rundale Palace was originally the summer residence of Ernst Johann von Biron, Duke of Courland. The 136 room palace was badly damaged in 1919 during the Latvian War of Independence but has been fully restored to its former glory and is now considered one of the most outstanding monuments of Baroque and Rococo art in northern Europe. Take a

guided tour through the Palace halls and private quarters, enjoy lunch in its restaurant and explore the Baroque style park and rose garden. This afternoon we journey south and, after crossing the border into Lithuania, we visit the Hill of Crosses, a pilgrimage site to the north of the city of Siauliai. Enjoy a brief visit before we continue on to Klaipeda and check in to the National Hotel for a two night stay.

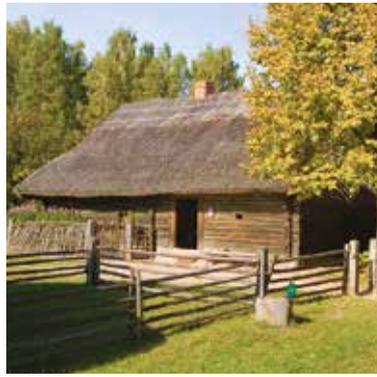
Day 4 Klaipeda & the Curonian Spit. After breakfast we take a panoramic drive through Klaipeda and a ferry across to the Curonian Peninsula, a UNESCO-listed 60 mile long curved sand dune spit that separates the lagoon from the Baltic Sea coast. Admire the beautiful craftsmanship of 80 carved wooden sculptures at the Hill of Witches near Juodkrante before driving to the main settlement of Nida, home to a collection of traditional fishermen's houses and weathervanes. Following lunch at a local restaurant continue to the 52 metre high Great Dune for panoramic views over the



Rugged landscape of the Curonian Spit



Hill of Crosses, Siauliai



Traditional cottage at Rumsiskes open-air museum



Mir Castle



Cathedral Tower Square and Gediminas Castle in Vilnius



Trakai Castle, Lithuania

dunes and lagoon. On a clear day it is possible to see into the Russian territory on Kaliningrad at the southern end of the Spit.

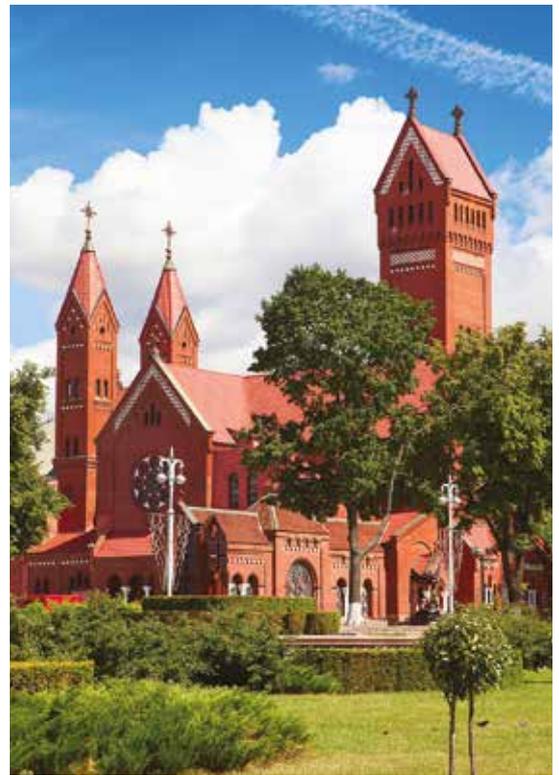
Day 5 Plateliai, Lapiai & Kaunas. This morning we drive to Plateliai National Park, where we will visit the nuclear missile site built under great secrecy in 1960 by the Soviets. From here nuclear missiles were targeted towards the biggest European cities including Berlin, London, Madrid and Paris. It was from this very same site in 1962 that missiles were deployed to Cuba in what became known as the Cuban missile crisis. We will visit the four remaining decommissioned nuclear missile silos, their control station and the underground facilities, giving an insight into the hidden secrets of the Cold War period. After lunch we visit Lapiai and the home of the first British defence attache to Lithuania. He will recount stories of his life from his time as a bomber pilot, a diplomat during the Cold War in Moscow and of life now in independent Lithuania. We will visit his refurbished old house and the original outbuildings built in 1926, wander around the large garden and see the Lapiai Castle Hill. Following the visit transfer to Kaunas and check in to the Daugirdas Hotel for an overnight stay. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant this evening.

Day 6 Rumsiskes, Trakai & Vilnius. After breakfast at the hotel we will drive to Rumsiskes, home to an open-air ethnographical museum. The 150 cottages, windmills and even a church were transferred here from different villages to give an authentic representation of life in Lithuania in the 19th century. En-route to Vilnius we will stop in Trakai, the first capital of Lithuania and home to the stunning Trakai Castle, a well preserved 15th century castle beautifully located on the lake. Following lunch at a local restaurant we transfer to Lithuania's capital Vilnius for a two night stay at the Imperial Hotel.

Day 7 Vilnius. We have a full day to explore the Old Town of Vilnius which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. Our city tour will commence with a walk to the Gates of Dawn, historically the gates of Vilnius' original defensive walls. The tour continues with a panoramic drive around Vilnius. Make a short stop to see St Anne's Church, one of the city's best known landmarks and a masterpiece of the late Gothic period and make a stop at the 17th century Peter and Paul's church. After a short stroll through the winding streets of Vilnius Old Town we visit the 14th century Vilnius University. Following time for an independent lunch in the Old Town, visit the KGB Museum, representing the darkest days of the Soviet



Medieval castle at Nesvizh



Church of St Simon and St Helena, Minsk



Traditional fisherman's house in Nida

era. The museum contains hundreds of documents and photographs from the period and houses the cells used for the imprisonment of dissidents. Return to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

Day 8 Minsk, Belarus. Following an early breakfast transfer to Vilnius station and join a train for the transfer to Minsk, one of Europe's least visited capitals. Badly damaged in World War II, much of the city was rebuilt in typical Stalinist style in the 1950s, though our tour will begin in the Trinity District, an historic neighbourhood on the banks of the Svislach River that retains plenty of examples of 19th century buildings. Whilst here we will walk to the Island of Tears, a memorial to the Soviet Afghanistan war, before we transfer to the Upper Town to visit the Virgin Mary Church and the impressive Orthodox Cathedral. We will have lunch at a local restaurant before driving to Independence and Victory Squares. Our final stop is at a more recent landmark of the city, the modernist National Library. Opened in 2006, the 22 floor structure has become the most recognisable building from the city and our tour will include a panoramic view of the city from the open air observation deck. Check in to the Marriott Hotel for a two night stay.

Day 9 Nesvizh & Mir. Following breakfast drive to the small town of Nesvizh, whose palace and castle complex is one of the architectural treasures of Belarus. Construction work took place through the 16th to 19th centuries and therefore combined the techniques of Medieval, Renaissance and Classical architecture with the distinctive art of local craftsmen. Explore the many rooms of the palace and wander around the beautiful parklands before driving through the countryside to Mir Castle, an outstanding example of defensive architecture and one of the few

UNESCO sites in the country. On a guided tour we will learn about the mix of architectural styles and gain an insight in to the history of the castle and its grounds before we enjoy lunch in the restaurant. Transfer back to the hotel for some free time before meeting for dinner.

Day 10 Minsk to London. Transfer to Minsk airport for your return scheduled flight to London.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	2018	2019
Twin	£2895	£2995
Single	£3395	£3495

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just twenty participants

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • 9 nights hotel accommodation as described (or similar) on bed and breakfast basis

- All meals (except lunch on days 1, 2 & 7 and dinner on days 2, 4, 6 & 7)
- Excursions
- Noble Caledonia Tour Manager
- Gratuities
- Airport transfers.

Not Included: Travel insurance, visas, optional activities.

NB. It must be noted that this tour will involve being on your feet for long periods and navigating many cobblestoned streets and uneven paths. For security reasons portage assistance is not available at Vilnius Station. Guests will be expected to take their own luggage from the coach, through passport control and up onto the platform.

ANCIENT ARMENIA

An escorted tour discovering the cultural & scenic wonders of Armenia

5th to 16th September 2018 & 19th to 30th June 2019

Landlocked Armenia boasts beautiful scenery, a fascinating and diverse cultural history and some exquisite churches and monasteries. This comprehensive escorted tour will explore the many facets of this ancient land as well as include ample time at leisure to enjoy the lively café culture of the capital city, Yerevan, one of the world's oldest inhabited cities and home to numerous museums.



Some thirty years before Rome was founded, Yerevan was an important stop along the caravan routes from Asia to Europe and over the years has been invaded by Assyrians, Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Seljuks, Mongols, the Turks and later by the Soviet Red Army, making for a captivating history with the many invading influences evident in the architecture.

Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion and is scattered with Christian places of worship, many in stunning locations such as the Sevanavank Monastery located on the shore of Lake Sevan, the largest lake in the Caucasus, and the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, one of the oldest cathedrals in the world, both of which we will visit.

Aside from learning of the intricate cultural history of the land, we will visit the oldest cave winery and Ararat brandy factory (a reputed favourite tippie of Winston Churchill), enjoy both a culinary masterclass and a vocal concert and have the opportunity to interact with villagers.

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Kiev, Ukraine. Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this evening and transfer to Opera Hotel, Kiev for an overnight stay. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening.

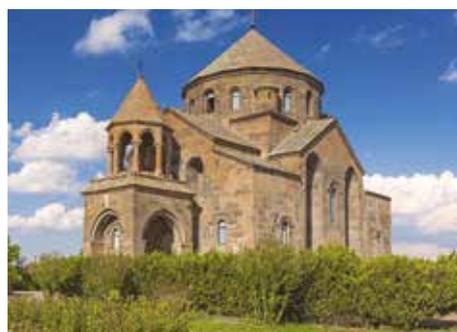
Day 2 Kiev to Yerevan, Armenia. After breakfast in the hotel transfer to the airport for the scheduled flight to Yerevan, Armenia. Arrive this afternoon and check in to the Royal Tulip Grand Hotel, our base for the next five nights. Enjoy time to settle into your accommodation before dinner in the hotel this evening.

Day 3 Yerevan. Following a leisurely breakfast we will explore the Armenian capital, Yerevan. During our city tour see Republic Square, Abovyan Street and City Park and visit the Genocide Memorial and the museum dedicated to the victims of the Great Genocide that took place in 1915. Also visit the Cascade which houses the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts, dedicated to bringing contemporary art from all over the world to Armenia and presenting the best of Armenian culture to the world. After lunch spend some time at leisure to relax or explore independently. Enjoy a welcome dinner this evening in a local restaurant with authentic Armenian cuisine.

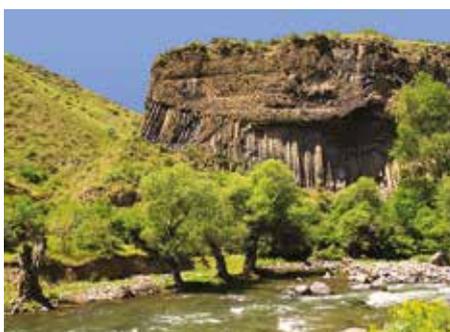
Day 4 Yerevan. Today we further explore Yerevan starting with a visit to Matenadaran, a Museum and Scientific Institute of ancient manuscripts

which holds one of the world's richest collections of Medieval manuscripts and books spanning a broad range of historical and cultural subjects. We continue to the Carpet Museum where specially trained weavers demonstrate traditional methods of Armenian carpet making. For lunch, a professional cook will demonstrate age old traditions of Armenian cooking and create a famous Armenian dish for us to enjoy. After lunch we will visit a Yerevan brandy factory. Brandy is a strong part of Armenian culture and heritage and has been for generations. Learn the local processes they use and special grape varieties chosen, finishing with a tasting of the famous Armenia brandy. Dinner will be at a local restaurant this evening.

Day 5 Etchmiadzin & Zvartnots. This morning following breakfast we will visit the Yerevan History Museum before making our way to the city of Etchmiadzin. The main Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is reputed to be one of the world's oldest cathedrals and is a special place of pilgrimage for all Armenians around the world. After a tour of the Cathedral enjoy a special authentic lunch hosted by an Armenian family. On our return journey to Yerevan we will stop en-route at Zvartnots Cathedral. Built in 7th century AD, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is today unfortunately in ruins, but even in ruins it reflects its unique architectural value and is still an impressive sight. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening.



Etchmiadzin Cathedral



Symphony of Stones basalt columns and the Azat River Gorge



Hellenic temple at Garni



Ruins of Zvartnots Cathedral



Khor Virap Monastery and Mount Ararat



Sevanavank Monastery and Sevan Lake

Day 6 Khor Virap & Noravank. This morning we will drive to Khor Virap Monastery which dates back to the 4th century. From here admire the beauty of Mount Ararat in the distance and also see the closed border between Turkey and Armenia located just 20 kilometres away. We will visit the chapel which was constructed over the deep dungeon where Gregory the Illuminator, the patron saint and first official head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, was imprisoned for 13 years. We then make our way towards Noravank, travelling through countryside that emerges into a scenic rocky mountainous gorge. The hot and dry climate makes this area renowned for wine making and is believed to be the location of the oldest winery, dating back 6000 years. We will visit the 13th century Monastery standing high in the valley surrounded by red cliffs before enjoying lunch in a local restaurant.

Day 7 Sevan Lake & Dilijan. Today we make our way to Dilijan, commonly known as the small Switzerland of Armenia, the town is surrounded by densely covered forest with surprisingly rich vegetation, and offers a cool and refreshing climate to the arid surrounds. En-route visit Sevanavank Monastery, originally made from three churches the monastery was built on an island on Sevan Lake. The island Monastery was, according to historians of the time, used both for worship and pilgrimage and as a place of exile for Armenian noblemen who had fallen into disgrace. The receding waters in the 20th century created the current peninsula we see today. Enjoy a scenic panoramic view of the lake before continuing to Dilijan where we will visit a local artist's home to admire works of art and enjoy a private lunch. We continue to the Haghartsin Monastery, beautifully nestled in the heart of the forest. Later check in to the Best Western Paradise Hotel for a two night stay. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening.

Day 8 Dilijan & Molokan Village. Following a leisurely breakfast embark on a short walking tour of the quaint town of Dilijan before driving to see the 13th century Goshavank monastic complex that is named after Mkhitar Gosh, a prominent writer, lawyer and author of the Code of Law. We will have a late lunch in a Molokan village at one of the local houses where we can learn of the lifestyle of the village people. Dinner will be at a local restaurant this evening.

Day 9 Ashtarak & Yerevan. After breakfast drive to Ashtarak, passing through Vanadzor, the 3rd largest city in Armenia, where you can still see traces of the Soviet Union times. In Ashtarak visit the 13th century Saghmosavank Monastery that received its name from the religious ecclesiastical songs performed in the monastery. Following a local lunch we will continue to Yerevan and check in to the Royal Tulip Grand Hotel for a three night stay. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant this evening.

Day 10 Geghard & Garni. After breakfast we drive to Geghard Cave Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is partially carved out of the adjacent mountain, assuring the great acoustics of this sacred place. We will enjoy a vocal concert of Medieval Armenian songs inside the cave. Afterwards take a light hike along the narrow serpentine near Azat river admiring the view of the Khosrov national reserve on one side and the unique natural

formation of rocks called 'Symphony of Stones' or 'Basalt Organ' on the other. During lunch we will have a demonstration of Armenian Bread 'Lavash' baking in an underground traditional oven, called Tonir. Enjoy a traditional Armenian barbeque of local produce and learn about traditional preparation techniques from the locals. After lunch we will visit the Garni pagan temple, built in 1st century AD and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Garni is the only pagan temple that remains in Armenia after the adoption of Christianity and inside we will enjoy a special Duduk performance, the national musical instrument made of apricot tree. Enjoy dinner in the hotel this evening.

Day 11 Aragatsotn Wine Region & Yerevan. This morning visit a local food market before driving to the region of Aragatsotn to visit a winery. The volcanic soil in the region is rich in minerals and properties that, along with the ample sunshine, makes the perfect climate for growing grapes. Visit the picturesque wine estate set against the backdrop of the inspiring Mount Ararat, Ara and Aragats and enjoy a wine tasting of different varieties and lunch. Return to Yerevan for some time at leisure. This evening our farewell dinner will be held at a local restaurant with a live music performance.

Day 12 Yerevan to London. After breakfast transfer to the airport for our return scheduled indirect flight to London.



Republic Square, Yerevan

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	2018	2019
Twin	£2595	£2795
Single	£3195	£3295

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just twenty participants

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • 11 nights hotel accommodation as described • All meals (except lunch on day 2) • Excursions as described • Entrance fees • Transfers • English speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities.

Not Included: Travel insurance, visas, lunch on day 2.

NB. We have planned the itinerary to be less strenuous than most to the region, however it must be noted that the tour will involve being on your feet for long periods and some long drives. Many of the sites are reached by uneven steps without handrails. To best enjoy your experiences in Armenia, you should be in good physical condition.

BESSARABIA & BEYOND

A unique escorted tour of Moldova and Odessa

6th to 15th September 2018 & 5th to 14th September 2019

There are few places left in the world, especially in Europe, that can be legitimately referred to as ‘off the beaten track’ but Moldova is certainly a country that can lay claim to the description. Our in-depth, escorted tour of this charming country, with its rich cultural heritage, will explore a wealth of interesting sites including Medieval fortresses, magnificent wineries and the autonomous territory of Transnistria with its Soviet architecture. Crossing into Ukraine we will visit Odessa, the ‘pearl of the Black Sea’, to admire the splendid architecture and explore the fascinating labyrinth of underground tunnels before returning to Moldova where our final days will be spent admiring the beautiful, untouched countryside and of course enjoying the local food and splendid wines of the region.



The Itinerary

Day 1 London Stansted to Chisinau, Moldova. Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this evening into Moldova’s capital, Chisinau and transfer to the Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel, our base for the next five nights. Meet tonight for dinner in the hotel.

Day 2 Chisinau & Capriana Monastery. After breakfast in the hotel, we will enjoy a walking tour of Chisinau including the Central Cathedral, Parliament building and the excellent National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History. After lunch at a local restaurant, continue on to the 15th century Capriana Monastery, the current residence of the Metropolitan Bishop and the base for many past rulers of Moldova including Stefan the Great. The monastery was closed during the Soviet rule but was reopened in the early 1990s following an extensive renovation, and is home to Moldova’s largest religious library. We return to Chisinau this evening and enjoy dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 3 Cricova Winery, Orheiul Vechi & Curchi. In recent years Moldova has become renowned for its wines and this morning we will visit one of the most popular cellars at Cricova, which produces some of the country’s best sparkling wine. We will learn about the production methods, which follow the

French system very closely, before exploring the huge cellar network. Situated 80 metres underground and stretching out for a total of 120 kilometres, these cellars are used by both the vineyard and many wine aficionados as a personal vault. After our tasting, we continue our journey to Butuceni for lunch in a local restaurant with national Moldovan dishes on offer. This afternoon we will visit Orheiul Vechi, Moldova’s most important historical site. See the impressive 13th century Cave Monastery, carved into the limestone rock, the ruins of the Geto Dacian fortress and visit the Ethnographic Museum. We will return to Chisinau via one of the oldest Moldovan monasteries – Monastery Curchi, which was founded in 1773 and is known as one of the most beautiful pieces of Bessarabian architecture. Return to Chisinau for dinner this evening.

Day 4 Clisova Noua & Soroca. This morning we visit a handicraft museum in the village of Clisova Noua. Reflecting Moldavian way of life, customs and traditions, this small museum showcases samples of national objects of Moldavia’s people and culture. Afterwards, we head north towards Soroca near the Ukrainian border. Here, following a traditional lunch, we will visit the impressive Medieval fortress which played an important and key role in the defensive battle against the Turks and was one of the ‘stone belt of fortresses’ built to protect Moldova. Return to Chisinau for dinner this evening.



Vineyards of Cricova



Odessa National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet



Interior of the Cave Monastery at Orheiul Vechi



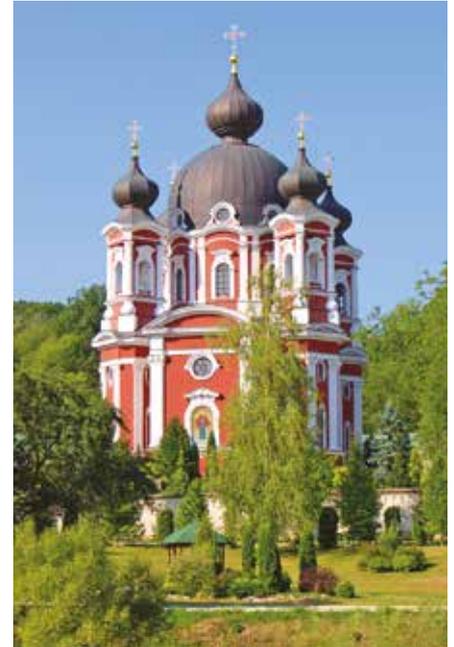
Ottoman fortress at Tighina, Transnistria



Interior of Capriana Monastery, Chisinau



Medieval fortress at Soroca on the Banks of the Dniester River



Curchi Monastery

Day 5 Gagauzia. Located in southwest Moldova is the autonomous region of Gagauzia. This little-visited territory is home to Gagauzians, a minority group of Turkic origin that affiliate with the Eastern Orthodox Church. We will visit the capital of the region, Comrat and, after a local lunch, tour the neighbouring village of Besalma and visit a local house to learn about life in the region. Return to Chisinau for dinner this evening.

Day 6 Transnistria & Odessa, Ukraine. Situated to the east of Chisinau, on the Ukrainian border, is the state of Transnistria. Officially part of Moldova, it is run as an autonomous territory and clings to its Soviet roots; statues of Lenin overlook the streets and Russian is the official language whilst the hammer and sickle flag flies from the buildings. We will start our day in Tighina seeing the impressive 15th century Ottoman fortress before transferring to Tiraspol, the capital of Transnistria. On a city tour we will see the monument of Lenin, outside of the Presidential Palace, the World War Two tanks, and the unique and typically Soviet architecture. We will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before travelling to Odessa, crossing the border into Ukraine, and arriving in the late afternoon at the Alexandrovsky Hotel, our base for the next two nights. Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

Day 7 Odessa. Founded by Catherine the Great in 1794, following the Russian victory over the Turks, Odessa today is a popular resort. On our tour we will see the famous Primorsky Boulevard and the Potemkin Steps which rise to a height of almost 500 feet from the sea to the upper town. Also, see the acoustically perfect Opera House which is one of the most impressive buildings in Europe. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant and this afternoon visit the Archaeological Museum. Established in 1875 it was the first museum of its kind in the former Russian Empire, housing jewellery and coins from early Black Sea civilisations. Following an early dinner, attend a ballet or music performance at the Odessa National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet (subject to schedules and availability).

Day 8 Odessa, Purcari & Chisinau, Moldova. Today we visit the fascinating Odessa Catacombs. The sandstone on which Odessa stands is riddled with approximately 1000 kilometres of tunnels, quarried out for building in the 19th century. They have been used by smugglers, revolutionaries and World War Two partisans. Our morning tour includes a visit to one of the network of tunnels in Nerubayske village on the north-west edge of Odessa, which sheltered a group of partisans during World War Two and now has been turned into the Museum of Partisan Glory, also known as Catacombs. Leaving Ukraine, we return to Chisinau and en-route visit the Purcari Winery where we can appreciate the local wines. Here, a unique micro-climate, the location of the vineyards on the south-western and south-eastern slopes, proximity to the Black sea and closeness to the Nistru River provides ideal conditions for the creation of high quality wines. Enjoy a tour of the cellars, the oldest in Moldova and unchanged since 1827, and a tasting before lunch at the winery. After our visit we continue our journey back to Chisinau where we will check in to the Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel for a two night stay. Enjoy dinner at the hotel this evening.

Day 9 Manuc Bei & Milestii Mici Winery. After breakfast we journey to The Manuc Bei estate and manor house which is located in Hincesti. Manuc Bei (1769-1817) was a wealthy merchant, diplomat, and inn-keeper during the period of the Ottoman Empire. In 1812 he played a major role in negotiating the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest between the Russian and Ottoman empires. Towards the end of his life, he retired to his estate of Hincesti where his son later built the manor house which was designed by famed architect Alexander Bernardazzi in the style of a French chateau. It is now a museum with more than 20,000 artefacts, which we will explore with our guide. After our visit we continue to Milestii Mici Winery which is renowned as having the largest cellar in the world with nearly 200 kilometres of caves situated 80 metres underground. There are now over one million bottles stored here and we will explore the cellars and have a tasting before enjoying lunch at the vineyard. Return to the hotel this afternoon and enjoy some free time before meeting for our farewell dinner this evening in a local restaurant.

Day 10 Chisinau to London Stansted. After breakfast we will check out of the hotel and transfer to the airport for our return scheduled flight to London Stansted.



Manuc Bei manor house



Statue of Lenin, Comrat

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	2018	2019
Twin	£2495	£2575
Single	£2795	£2925

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just twenty participants

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights hotel accommodation in Chisinau and two nights hotel accommodation in Odessa as described (or similar) on a bed and breakfast basis • Lunch and dinner daily • Excursions • English-speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

Not Included: Travel insurance.

BEST OF THE BALKANS

An escorted tour visiting Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia & Bulgaria

19th to 30th June 2019

Despite its often turbulent past, cultural and natural wonders abound in the Balkans and the region offers so much for the genuine traveller. At the crossroads of east and west and with a history forged over the centuries and influenced by so many, there are a wealth of fascinating cultural sites and natural world marvels to discover during this escorted tour of Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria. We will visit impressive cave monasteries and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, enjoy a cruise on Skadar Lake and stay on the shores of Lake Ohrid, one of Europe's greatest biological reserves and taste some of the region's wines. We also visit the bustling cities of Tirana, Skopje and Sofia and whilst driving between our destinations will witness some of the most beautiful scenery Europe has to offer with mountains that sweep down to lakes covered in rich vegetation. In addition to the guided tours, there will be some time at leisure for you to explore independently.



The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Budva, Montenegro. Fly by scheduled flight to Tivat. On arrival transfer to Budva and check in to the Hotel Budva for a two night stay. Enjoy a welcome dinner at your hotel this evening.

Day 2 Lipa Cave & Plantaze Vineyards. Today we explore Lipa Cave, one of the largest cave monuments in Montenegro. Boasting a beautiful and wild cave system with 2.5 kilometres of passages and halls, it offers a unique experience of the underground world. Continue to Plantaze Vineyards, a leader in the production of grapes and wine in Montenegro, and famous for its Vranac variety. After a drive through the vineyard, we will visit the Sipcanik wine cellar, which was formerly an underground aircraft hangar of the Yugoslav Army until the 1990s. In 2007 it was reconstructed and converted into a wine storage facility. We will enjoy a wine tasting and a tasty lunch before returning to the hotel. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant this evening.

Day 3 Skadar Lake National Park & Tirana, Albania. In the morning we depart Budva for a picturesque journey through the dramatic Balkan landscapes to the capital of Albania, Tirana. Entering Skadar Lake National Park, we will take a scenic cruise on the largest lake in the Balkans from Rijeke Crnojevica to Virpazar. Surrounded by dramatic karst mountains, the lake offers unparalleled vistas reflected in the lake's clear waters. Most of the lake is in Montenegro, with its tip reaching into Albania and it is one of the most important sanctuaries for wetland birds in Europe. Following lunch in a local restaurant we continue onwards, crossing the border into Albania and reaching Tirana in the early evening. Check into the MAK Tirana Hotel for a two night stay. Dinner in the hotel this evening.

Day 4 Tirana. After breakfast we will explore Albania's capital, starting in Skanderbeg Square with a guided tour of the Albanian National Museum, home to many of the country's archaeological treasures. Our exploration



Rila Monastery, Bulgaria



Lake Ohrid and the Old Town, Macedonia



Skanderbeg Square, Tirana, Albania



Fresco of the Last Supper, St Naum Monastery, Macedonia



The 15th century Stone Bridge, Skopje, Macedonia



St Jovan Bigorski Monastery, Macedonia



Rijeka Crnojevica River near Lake Skadar, Montenegro

of the city will continue on foot visiting the Blloku district, which is now home to many bars and restaurants but was a restricted area during the communist period. After lunch at a local restaurant the afternoon and evening will be at leisure to further explore this surprising city.

Day 5 Kalista, Struga & Ohrid, Macedonia. Leaving Tirana we will take a scenic drive eastwards through Albania towards the Macedonian border. Arriving on the western shores of Lake Ohrid, visit the 13th century Kalista Cave Monastery before continuing to the bustling town of Struga. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant followed by a guided walking tour. Continue to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lake Ohrid and check in at the Park Lakeside Hotel for a two night stay. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant this evening.

Day 6 Lake Ohrid & St Naum. After breakfast at the hotel explore Ohrid Old Town on a walking tour, before taking lunch in a local restaurant. The lakeside town of Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in Europe whilst the lake hosts more than 200 endemic species and is one of the great European biological reserves. It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. Board a local boat for a scenic cruise on the lake, visiting the famous Bay of Bones and the beautiful St Naum Monastery. This evening we will enjoy dinner and a music performance at a floating restaurant on the lake.

Day 7 Mavrovo National Park & Skopje. Leaving Ohrid we travel past Lake Debar and through the stunning scenery of the Radika River Gorge to the Mavrovo National Park, the largest protected area in the country which is famous for its mountain peaks and picturesque villages. Visit the St Jovan Bigorski Monastery which was destroyed by Ottomans in the 16th century but restored by the Monk Ilarion around 1743. Famous for its intricately carved wooden iconostasis and situated on a steep slope surrounded by dense woodland, the monastery is not dissimilar to the cliff-top monasteries of Mount Athos in Greece. Continue through the National Park, passing Lake Mavrovo before stopping for lunch at a local restaurant. Explore the city of Tetovo in the afternoon before reaching Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. We will check in at the Marriott Hotel for a three night stay in the late afternoon. The rest of the day is free for independent exploration.

Day 8 Skopje. With remnants of Greek, Roman and Ottoman history contrasting with modern architecture, Skopje offers up a vibrant metropolis buzzing with activities. On our morning tour we will take a cable car up high above the city to the Millennium Cross before exploring the vast Kale Fortress that dominates the city skyline. We will continue to the 15th century Stone Bridge and the Ottoman Old Bazaar before enjoying a refreshment stop with Turkish tea. The afternoon and evening is at leisure, allowing you the opportunity to further explore this fascinating city.

Day 9 Matka River Canyon. Following breakfast at the hotel take a scenic transfer to the dramatic Matka Canyon, a mere 11 miles to the southwest of the city centre. A narrow canyon on the lower course of Treska River, with steep sided mountains on either side, it is a major centre for climbing and caving. We will visit the Sveta Bogorodica Monastery and St Andrew's Church before embarking a local boat and sailing through the canyon, exploring one of its caves. Enjoy a lunch in the canyon before returning to Skopje. Later this afternoon we will visit the award-winning Chateau Kamnik, located in the Vardar Valley to the east of the city. Tour the wine cellars and enjoy a wine tasting and dinner in the restaurant.

Day 10 Rila Monastery and Sofia, Bulgaria. Leaving Skopje, we head east towards the Bulgarian border via Kriva Palanka, crossing the Osogovo Mountain, a local ski resort. Following a stop for lunch, we visit the 10th century Rila Monastery, the largest in Bulgaria, located in stunning scenery on the slopes of Riva Mountain. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the monastery was destroyed by fire in the beginning of the 19th century and was rebuilt between 1834 and 1862. Continue on to Bulgaria's capital Sofia, and check in at the Grand Hotel for a two night stay. Enjoy the evening at leisure.

Day 11 Sofia. This morning enjoy a walking tour of Sofia, including the National Museum of History and Archeological Museum, followed by time at leisure to enjoy lunch independently and explore the city at your own pace. Meet this evening for a farewell dinner in the hotel.

Day 12 Sofia to London. Following breakfast at the hotel transfer to the airport for your return scheduled flight to London. Arrive this afternoon.

PRICES PER PERSON

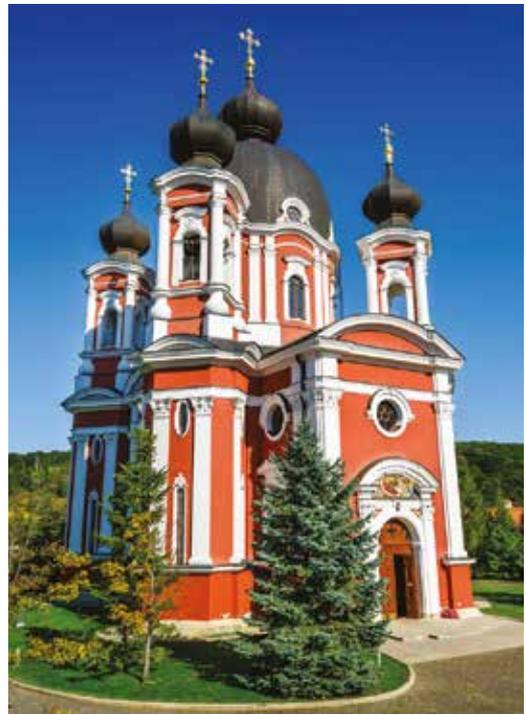
Based on double occupancy

Twin: £3395 Single: £3995

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just twenty participants

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • 11 nights hotel accommodation as described on bed and breakfast basis • All meals (except lunch on days 8 & 11 and dinner on days 4, 7, 8 & 10)
• Guided excursions as stated in the itinerary • All entrance fees
• Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • English speaking local guides
• Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, visa, lunch on days 8 & 11 and dinner on days 4, 7, 8 & 10.



NOBLE CALEDONIA

2 Chester Close, Belgravia, London, SW1X 7BE

+44 (0)20 7752 0000 | info@noble-caledonia.co.uk | www.noble-caledonia.co.uk

Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Itinerary subject to change.

Cover: Front - Medieval Mir castle, Belarus. Back - Spires of Riga Cathedral, St Peter's Church and St Saviour's Church in the Old Town; Fresco from St Jovan Bigorski Monastery, Macedonia; Curchi Monastery Church, Moldova; Landscape near Rila Monastery, Bulgaria; Trakai Castle, Lithuania

