

## OPTIONAL TOUR - FRIDAY, AUG. 11

### MELK - DÜRNSTEIN - WACHAU VALLEY

Enjoy a wonderful day exploring the Wachau Valley with a boat ride on the Danube River and stops in Melk to tour Stift Melk (Melk Abbey), Weissenkirchen and the medieval town of Dürnstein.

**Melk** stands at the western end of the Wachau Valley wine-producing region in Lower Austria, accessible from both Vienna and Salzburg. [Melk](#) is best known for its staggeringly massive Benedictine monastery, which was founded in 1089 in a medieval fortress belonging to the House of Babenberg. After 1,000 years it's still functioning as an abbey and school today. In the 15th century the abbey's monks played a leading part in central European monastic reform and it took its present magnificent Baroque form after a devastating fire in the early 18th century. The abbey church with its enormous dome and ornate golden-hued bell towers now stands proud on a rocky bluff high over the Danube River.



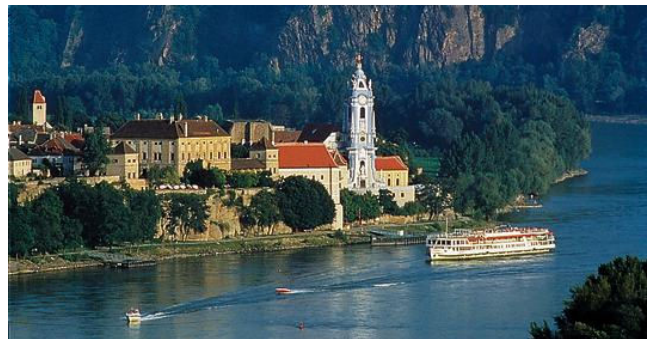
The interior of the abbey church is a mass of stained-glass windows, multi-colored marble, intricate gilding and elaborate frescos in the dome by Johann Michael Rottmayr. Melk boasts the largest ecclesiastical library in the world, with over 80,000 priceless volumes and a wonderfully frescoed ceiling, while the new museum has many jeweled reliquaries and manuscripts on show.

Napoleon used Melk Abbey as his headquarters when campaigning in Austria and the monastery also survived WWII, only to be badly damaged by fire once again in 1947. Today it is surrounded by landscaped gardens with spectacular views over the Wachau Valley and the Danube.



Melk Abbey library

Situated on the banks of the mighty Danube, [Dürnstein](#) is regarded as the most romantic place in the Wachau. This picture-perfect medieval town is fairly small, but delightful, with a charming walking lane through the old town, linked to the water front through a few old-style stairways. Up in the hills are the remains of a former fortification where King Richard the Lionhearted was imprisoned in 1192. It is a climb but the view of the valley and the Danube River is gorgeous! The Wachau is famous for its white wines so you will find plenty of "Heurige" where one can sit with a nice glass of wine or shop.



**Duration:** Bus departs Eisenstadt hotels at 7:00 am and returns about 7:45 pm.

**Price:** \$175 per person; includes transportation, guide, guided tour through Melk Abbey, 3-course luncheon menu at Wachauerhof Melk incl. salad buffet (excl. drinks), boat tour from Melk to Dürnstein. 20 person minimum required.