

Escorted Rail Journey: London to Istanbul

From £1,799 per person // 12 days



Embark on an epic overland journey by rail from London to Istanbul, accompanied by a rail expert. Hosting a maximum of 12 travellers, this small group tour promises an unforgettable adventure, via France, Germany, Austria, Romania and Bulgaria.

The Essentials

- An epic overland journey with an experienced rail expert
- Interesting stops en route in France, Germany, Austria and Romania
- Time at leisure in each place – no destination tours
- Free time in Istanbul and then decide what to do next!

Tailor make your holiday

- Departure on 09 May 2025
- Add extra nights and destinations to the beginning/ end of your holiday
- Add a return journey by rail with stops in other cities

What's included

- First Class rail travel (where available) with seat reservations
- 10 nights' handpicked hotel accommodation with breakfast
- Sleeper service from Sofia to Istanbul in a two-berth cabin
- Return minibuses transfers in Brasov, Bucharest and Sofia
- Guided tour to Bran Castle & Rasnov Fortress from Brasov (including entry fees)
- The services of a guide for your journey from London to Istanbul
- All credit card surcharges and complimentary delivery of your travel documents

- Itinerary -



Friday 9 May - London To Strasbourg

Arrive at London St Pancras and meet your guide, Andy, who will be there to greet you before you board a late morning Eurostar to Paris. Once at Gare du Nord, it's an easy walk over to Gare de l'Est, where you'll board a TGV that'll whisk you down to Strasbourg in time for dinner. Check in for an overnight stay at Mercure Gare Centrale Hotel (or similar), conveniently located close to the station. There are plenty of tempting options for an evening meal, particularly in the historic centre of the city. You might like to join some of your fellow travellers for the first evening of your trip.



Saturday 10 May - Strasbourg To Munich

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before a quick jaunt around Strasbourg, the historic capital of the Alsace region. You'll need to be back at the station to rendezvous with Andy and your fellow travellers in time for an early afternoon high-speed ICE train to Stuttgart. Change here for your next train to Munich. An early evening arrival means you'll have some time to explore the city. You'll be staying for 1 night at Eurostars Book Hotel (or similar).



Sunday 11 May - Munich To Vienna

It's a late morning departure from Munich today, on a high-speed Railjet train to Vienna. After a 4-hour journey, you'll arrive mid-afternoon with plenty of the day left to stretch your legs in the Austrian capital. Check in to Star Inn Premium Hotel (or similar) for tonight. The Austrian capital is the largest city on the Danube, with a strong musical tradition and some of the most prestigious museums in the world. Don't miss a coffee in one of Vienna's historic coffee houses, accompanied by a slice of sachertorte or apple strudel.



Monday 12 To Tuesday 13 May - Vienna To Brasov

After breakfast, you've got most of the day to do as you wish in Vienna. Make sure you've visited all the sights you want to see before regrouping in the evening in time to board the Dacia Overnight Train. You'll travel more than 500 miles, mostly in the hours of darkness, arriving in Brasov the next day in time for lunch. A transfer is included from the station to your hotel, the Radisson Blu Aurum (or similar) where you have a 2-night stay. The rest of the afternoon and evening is yours to enjoy at your own leisure.



Wednesday 14 May - Brasov

Today, you'll be taken on a day trip to Bran Castle, one of the most famous landmarks in Romania. You'll be picked up from your hotel by minibus. Your first stop will be the dramatic ruins of Rasnov Fortress, dating back to the 13th century. The striking backdrop of the Bucegi Mountains enhances the beauty of the fortress and you can enjoy lunch in Rasnov village (own expense). From here, continue to Bran Castle. This dramatic Gothic castle, complete with high stonewalls and rust-red turrets, was used to incarcerate Vlad the Impaler and is therefore known as "Dracula's Castle". Return to Brasov this afternoon for time at leisure in this historic city.



Thursday 15 May - Brasov To Bucharest

Have an early breakfast this morning and check out of the hotel before being taken to the station in a pre-booked transfer. Arriving in Bucharest before midday, you'll check in to the Peakture Hotel (or similar) for 1 night, then have the whole afternoon to experience the Romanian capital.



Friday 16 May - Bucharest To Sofia

You'll go straight to the station after checking out of your hotel to catch the first of two trains today. The first leg takes you across the Bulgarian border to Ruse, where you'll have enough time to change platforms to catch your next train to Sofia. We suggest taking some food and drink supplies to keep you going, as it's a long day of travel on trains with limited facilities. Your guide, Andy, will be on hand to remind you to stock up before you leave! Once you arrive, check into Les Fleurs Boutique Hotel (or similar) for 1 night.



Friday 17 - Saturday 18 May - Sofia To Istanbul

You have a good chunk of the day to immerse yourself in the Bulgarian capital before you need to be at the station for your sleeper train in the evening. There's plenty to see and do while you're here. Why not not soak up the rich history by visiting some of the many museums and historic landmarks the city has to offer? Or perhaps a spot of shopping at Vitosha Boulevard – taking its name from the mountain that provides an imposing backdrop to the area. Whatever you choose to do, we would highly recommend having dinner before you leave – the overnight train to Istanbul has limited catering facilities onboard.



Sunday 19 May - Istanbul

You'll pull into Istanbul Halkali station early this morning. After you alight, Andy will guide you on the metro to Sirkeci station, from where it's a short walk to your hotel. Check in for a two-night stay at the Yasmak Sultan Hotel (or similar). It's time to bid farewell to Andy and enjoy your free time in the metropolis where East meets West. An ancient settlement dating back to 660 BC, Istanbul is enriched with thousands of years' worth of history. Spectacular sights and culinary delights await your arrival. Barter for souvenirs in the Grand Bazaar, visit the Topkapı Palace, once at the centre of the Ottoman Empire, or relax in one of the city's historic Turkish baths. Don't miss the fabulous Blue Mosque or the Hagia Sofia – a monument to power in Istanbul for well over a thousand years.



Monday 20 May - Depart Istanbul

What happens today is up to you! You can book your own flight home – there are direct flights from Istanbul to various UK airports. Alternatively, why not extend your holiday and travel further into Turkey? For example, we can look at rail travel to Cappadocia or capital Ankara. You might also like to make your way home independently by rail. The choice is yours! Let us know if you would like us to add a return rail journey or onward accommodation to your trip.

YOUR GUIDE: ANDY BRABIN



Andy Brabin is a self-confessed rail geek who has travelled, to date, through 75 countries around the world by train. He founded an award-winning rail travel company in 2003 and now shares his passion for train travel through his website Discover by Rail and via Andy

Travels on Twitter. He has travelled on (almost) every rail line in Europe and is very familiar with all the journeys on this London to Istanbul itinerary. He escorted a similar trip to Istanbul in 2022, which was a great success!

Pricing

From £1,799 per person

These prices are based on two people sharing a twin or double room. Single supplements will apply for sole occupancy. It is based on First Class rail travel (where available) and includes seat reservations as necessary. It is based on the best fares on the trains. If you travel during a peak period, particularly at short notice, then supplements may apply

Single occupancy from £2,299