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Thank you for your interest in Budget Europe Travel Service (BETS) and our European Planning & Rail Guide! This Guide is a useful travel tool designed to assist you in making the most of your European adventure, helping you to make the tough decisions about where to go, what to see and how to get around.

- **BETS’ #1 Goal** • BETS was established in 1978 to serve the needs of the independent, self-reliant traveler. Because we’re enthusiastic about European travel, our goal is to introduce you to the wonders of Europe and provide the latest in practical, cost-saving travel insights. Since 1978 we have assisted countless thousands of our valued clients prepare for their trips; plan itineraries; cut costs; avoid common travel problems; get off the beaten track; purchase railpasses, travel luggage, moneybelts and other travel accessories — in short, helping each traveler achieve a dream vacation. Many of our past clients say that they couldn’t have planned a trip to Europe, let alone embarked on one, without our European Planning & Rail Guide. Though we believe that everyone will immensely enjoy travel in Europe, we are rewarded in knowing that we at BETS made a difference! Let us show you how easy it can be to explore Europe on your own!

- **BETS’ Travel Experience and Travel Research** • For ten years we organized and led our Bike Europe Tours showing thousands of bicyclists the “backroads” and “nooks and crannies” of Europe. And from that time onwards, we have actively worked at increasing our travel knowledge through the best way we know — travel itself! Even though we are now “travel veterans,” we continue to take annual research trips to Europe, traveling with railpasses and continuing to learn from each trip. The tips we provide are based on our own current and actual travel experiences! Through BETS and the European Planning & Rail Guide, we have the opportunity to share all that we learn with our clients.

- **BETS’ Travel Philosophy** • Travel is one of the best teachers we know! Besides the inevitable learning, broadening and growth which is inherent in any travel experience, you will also have fun. We highly encourage you to see Europe on your own terms; the European tourist infrastructure provided to travelers of all budgets is tremendous. There is no need to lock yourself into a whirlwind guided tour — a “16 countries in 16 days” rigorous program — instead design your own personalized tour, at your own pace!

- **BETS’ Independence** • We have no corporate affiliation with any other travel firm, nor do we accept outside advertising — therefore, our perspective is not clouded by a built-in loyalty to any one advertiser or brand name! You can count on us to tell you the real story as it appears to us without any hidden strings attached; for in the final analysis, our loyalty is to our clients alone. It is your invaluable input through your calls, faxes, letters and, finally, your purchases that determines our future growth and direction.

- **BETS’ Customer Service Policy** • Service is part of our name because we believe our customers always come first! We process all orders within 24 hours of receipt!

- **BETS’ Rail Expertise** • As European rail travel is our ONLY focus, and our BETS team has been booking rail for eons and traveling by rail in Europe for decades, we pride ourselves as being among the best (if not the best) at providing answers to rail questions. In fact, we’re so confident in our knowledge that we invite you to check us out — challenge us! And it is our pledge to always recommend the best lowest-costing railpass or ticket for your itinerary!

If you like what you read, please let us know by bringing your friends and your business our way! We look forward to bringing you the best!

**Bon Voyage!**

**More Info on Our Website**
For current prices, rail schedules, hotel reservations, special rail deals and rail updates, please go to our website at www.budgeteuropetravel.com.

**Rail is our Specialty!**
Have any European rail or itinerary questions? Call BETS to get the answer:
800-441-9413 or 800-441-2387
Mon-Fri 9am-5pm (Eastern)
Europe is an adventure — dreamy castles, medieval-looking cities, outdoor cafés lining cobblestone streets, elegant shops, spectacular mountain vistas, sandy beaches strung along shimmering seas — it has it all! And there is no better way to see it than by train. But no matter how you choose to experience Europe, this Guide will help you plan an unforgettable vacation.

Although Americans have a natural inclination to want to drive when traveling, in large part due to the abysmal state of American trains, most Americans vacationing in Europe will make a wise choice by taking advantage of the superb European train system. One of the greatest benefits of rail travel is that you can relax in worry-free comfort while being whisked from the heart of one city to another. While riding a train, you can read about your next destination, enjoy a meal, write a postcard, tweet your trip, or simply let your eyes feast on the passing scenery. You also maximize time by riding the high-speed trains between cities, spending time sightseeing rather than being stuck for long hours in a car. (For example, trains take less than three hours to cover the over 400 miles between Paris and Avignon in southern France, which would take at least double that by car!) What’s probably most rewarding is the chance to meet other folks: tourists from around the world, with whom you can swap experiences, and, of course, Europeans, most of whom go by train when traveling. By comparison, travel by car is isolated and often fatiguing: you must negotiate thick road traffic; the driving itself is monotonous and tiring (Europe isn’t as small as most believe; i.e. it’s over 900 miles from Paris to Rome); and it is surprisingly easy to get lost even with GPS navigation. Then after a long day’s drive, it can be a terrifying horror of congestion to arrive in an unfamiliar often gridlocked city like Paris or Rome, where many city streets are nothing more than narrow alleys, wide swaths of city centers have been made off-limits to motorists, and, most frustrating of all, parking is nearly impossible to find, and even few city-center hotels offer it (and then at a pretty penny, up to $300 a day). There is also a problem of theft from parked cars in big cities, so you can leave nothing of value in them. Plus there is the huge problem of backtracking. If your circle is large covering several countries, you can save a travel day by flying into one city and out of another. For example, if wishing to visit Paris, Nice, the Cinque Terre, Florence and Rome, by flying into Paris and home from Rome, you save the long return trip to Paris giving you an extra day of sightseeing in Rome.

Between major cities, there are overnight trains that leave in the evening and arrive the next day. For example, if wishing to visit Paris, Nice, and Salzburg, see if you can comfortably stay between these cities by train, and a car is the only practical alternative. For these occasions, we believe the best idea is to train to the nearest large city and rent a car for a day or two — you can minimize the drudgery of long drives, but still benefit from the flexibility of a car for exploring the local area. Once you hop aboard a European train, you’ll probably, like us, become hooked on them — we can’t imagine a better way to travel and heartily recommend that you skip the car and explore Europe by rail.

BE SMART: CHOOSE TRAINS OVER CARS

Call BETS — the European experts who have hiked, biked, bused, boated and railed their way around Europe!
next morning. These make sense if you need to save time; for example, after visiting Paris you can travel overnight to Venice, Florence or Rome while you sleep.

If possible, use a base city where you can explore the surrounding area via short day trips; the great plus here is that you can travel around luggage free, and planning is easier as you have fewer hotels to book. For example, from Munich you can easily visit Salzburg, Neuschwanstein Castle or Berchtesgaden, returning to your Munich hotel each night.

### Tip!

As railpasses often go up in price every January 1 (about $20-150), you can beat the price increase by ordering your pass before the end of the year at the old price as long as you plan to start using it within six months of issuance.

### Railpass Discounts

Most railpasses offer group, youth or senior price reductions.

- **Saverpasses** • Families or groups of two or more people always traveling together typically save about 15%. (Germany calls this a “twinpass” and limits it to just two people.)

- **Youthpasses** • People under 26 get about a 33% discount. (Note: Student passes do not exist; any young person qualifies.)

- **Senior Passes** • Unfortunately, these exist only for France and Great Britain, but all is not lost — the saverpass discount available with most passes would be equal to a senior discount if it were available.

- **Children** • For most passes, children ages 4-11 pay half price, and kids under 4 are free. On most saverpasses, children get the saverpass discount and a child discount, paying only half the adult saverpass price.

- **Families** • Two countries, Switzerland and Great Britain, have family discounts. In Switzerland, all children under 16 travel free with their parents (unfortunately, not grandparents). In Britain, the rule is slightly different for children under 16: one child travels free per adult or senior (not limited to parents only) All-Brit or England railpass.

### How To Rail

Long ago when the railpass first arrived on the scene, there was only one railpass covering most of Europe; no thought required, buy the pass and fly off to Europe. Today, there are dozens of different types of railpasses and rail ticket available, and the one or combination that suits you best often takes careful planning on your part.

### Railpass Bonuses

Railpasses give several significant bonuses, some of which are described later under the country sketches. A few of the most popular are free passage on selected Rhine and Mosel riverboats and a 20% discount on the Romantic and Castle road busses, all slicing thru castle-studded Germany (with passes valid in Germany); free cruises on many picturesque Swiss lakes (with passes valid in Switzerland); free deck passage on several ferries, including ones between Italy and Greece (with passes valid in both Italy and Finland); and 50% off ferries between Sweden and Finland (with passes valid in Sweden or Finland).

### Railpass or Ticket Prices?

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Unless you need to get from A to B as fast as possible, we highly recommend that you travel Europe by rail. You will find this to be an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

The big advantage of trains is the simplicity; you travel from city center to city center — no transferring to the airport, arriving at least an hour early for check in, enduring the cramped conditions of economy class, waiting for your luggage after arrival and then getting from the airport into the city center.

And for train journeys of up to three or four hours, the train will often be quicker than any flight. For example, the one hour flight from London to Paris will take at least four hours in total transit time when you count the time getting to the airport, checking in and then getting back from the airport; and that is if your plane departs on time. Alternatively, you can jump on the train in the heart of London and hop off in the center of Paris, a little over two hours later.

Also trains are a joy to ride. Besides a comfortable seat, you will get a panoramic view of the countryside as it glides past you, unlike on the plane where often all you can see, if you can peer out the window at all, is the plane’s wing or the clouds below.

When doing a long trip, it is best to break it up into shorter segments. Although this will take much longer than flying, it is the key to a fantastic European vacation. If wishing to get from Munich to Rome, you could first rail to Innsbruck in Austria, visiting its charming old town; then train up and over the Brenner Pass, one of Europe’s most scenic rail routes thru the Tyrolean Alps, to incomparable Venice; then rail to historic Florence still dominated by the imagination of Michelangelo and many other Renaissance artists; and, finally, train on to Rome. By flying you would get to Rome fast, but in the cocoon of the plane you would be missing out on the experience of what Europe is truly about: small mountain villages, the rural pastoral countryside, ancient fishing hamlets clinging to a rocky seaside coast, small cities with historic old towns dating back hundreds of years — in essence, you would be missing out on the real Europe.

Types of Railpasses

Railpasses come in two formats: the consecutive-day pass, which allows rail travel on any one date and time only; and if you miss your train for any reason, you probably will need to buy a completely new ticket, losing all of the money (or a substantial portion) you paid for your original ticket — if a railpass costs just slightly more, consider getting the railpass for the flexibility in case you miss a train or have to change plans.

Plane Versus Train

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Railpasses</th>
<th>Study Abroad Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consecutive-Day Pass</strong></td>
<td>Flexipasses, usually valid over a two-month period, often are the ideal pass for students on study abroad programs, who typically attend classes Monday thru Thursday but have three-day weekends for exploring neighboring areas. Besides being able to use the pass during the program, it could also be used to travel before or after the study abroad program. Many people ask if they can get a flexipass that lasts three or four months, but, unfortunately, none exists, so you must spend some time planning how to make the best use of your flexipass. Also young travelers find the flexipass versions to be ideal for those who want to break up their rail trip by lounging on a Greek island, relaxing on a Riviera beach or partying on the Spanish island of Ibiza.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Flexipass** | These are all flexipasses.
| **Multi-Country Passes** | • Austria & Germany  
| **Best Railpasses** | • Austria & Hungary  
| | • Austria & Switzerland  
| | • Benelux*  
| | • Benelux* & France  
| | • Benelux* & Germany  
| | • Croatia/Slovenia & Hungary  
| | • Czech Republic & Germany  
| | • Denmark & Germany  
| | • Denmark & Sweden  
| | • Finland & Sweden  
| | • France & Germany  
| | • France & Italy  
| | • France & Spain  
| | • France & Switzerland  
| | • Germany & Poland  
| | • Germany & Switzerland  
| | • Greece & Italy  
| | • Great Britain & Ireland  
| | • Hungary & Romania  
| | • Italy & Spain  
| | • Norway & Sweden  
| | • Portugal & Spain  
| | *Benelux = Belgium, Holland & Luxembourg  
| | **Single-Country Passes**  
| | • Austria  
| | • Czech Republic  
| | • Denmark  
| | • Finland  
| | • Germany  
| | • Greece  
| | • Ireland  
| | • Italy  
| | • Norway  
| | • Portugal  
| | • Romania  
| | • Slovenia  
| | • Sweden  
| | • Switzerland  
| | *Great Britain has several passes: All-Brit (valid in England, Scotland and Wales), England, Scotland and London Plus (valid in the area around London). The All-Brit and England passes are also available in consecutive-day versions. **Switzerland also has a consecutive-day pass.  
| | **The Nuts and Bolts**  
| | • Railpasses  
| | If you have purchased a railpass, you must “activate” your pass at any rail station before getting on your first train. At this time, the railroad official will validate your pass, which are issued open dated, by filling in the beginning and ending dates on your pass. This should take only a few minutes; however, in a large city like Paris, you may have to wait in a lengthy line, so allow plenty of time. It’s best to write your beginning and ending dates on a piece of paper to prevent any problems, such as a rail official filling in a wrong date — remember to write the day before the month as Europeans do. You must not fill in the beginning and ending dates on the pass yourself. You will be heavily fined for traveling with an unvalidated pass, |

Flexible passes: A typical pass gives 5 to 10 rail days to be used within a 1- or 2-month period; its days don’t need to be used consecutively; and each rail day gives you unlimited travel to be used as you like, including stopovers or round-trip journeys, as long as you reach your final destination prior to midnight.

Multi-Country Passes

If traveling in three or more countries, the best railpass will be one of these railpasses.

- **Eurail Global Pass**, which comes as both a consecutive-day pass or a flexipass and is valid in 21 countries.
- **Eurail Select Pass**, a customizable flexipass that allows you to select 3, 4 or 5 bordering countries from a 24-country list and to also select the number of rail days you need for your itinerary.
- **Scandinavia Flexipass**, valid in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland.
- **European East Flexipass**, valid in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Austria.
- **Balkans Flexipass**, valid in Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.

Other Multi-Country Passes

These are all flexipasses and exist in the following combinations.

- **Austria & Croatia/Slovenia**
- **Austria & Czech Republic**

More Info About Any Railpass

Go to www.budgeteuropetravel.com for details and current prices.

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unless you are training in from a country not covered by your railpass in which case the conductor will validate your pass. After your pass has been validated, just board your train and show the conductor your pass when asked. Flexipass holders, before boarding the first train or ship each day, must also enter the date of use in ink in the corresponding calendar box on their flexipass. If you forget to do this, it is like traveling without a ticket, and you can be fined as much as 100 euros; the reason for the fine is that on some rides a conductor may never get to you, and you would end up with a free travel day. On trains requiring seat reservations, these must also be made prior to boarding your train if you have not made them with Budget Europe before leaving home.

Point-to-Point Tickets
If you have purchased your rail ticket thru Budget Europe, you do not have to do anything in Europe except show up for your train and find your seat. If buying tickets locally, you do this at the rail station, either at a ticket counter or from a ticket machine; sometimes you can buy a ticket on the train, but usually at a much higher price. For expensive trips, buy your ticket as soon as possible as tickets are often sold in tiers; and when the tickets allotted to the cheapest tier are gone, you must go up to the next price level. For expensive trips, buy your ticket as soon as possible as tickets are often sold in tiers; and when the tickets allotted to the cheapest tier are gone, you must go up to the next price level. For expensive trips, buy your ticket as soon as possible as tickets are often sold in tiers; and when the tickets allotted to the cheapest tier are gone, you must go up to the next price level. 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Finding the Right Train
First locate your train on one of the schedule boards to learn from which platform it departs. Once on the platform, you will find a confirmation of your train’s specifics, often via a computerized information sign hanging over each platform. As trains (especially long-distance trains) often split en route with the front portion going to one city and the rear to another, you must make sure that the car you board is going to your destination. On the outside of each car, there is an identification panel: on the top of this sign is the city from which the train originated and on the bottom is the city of final destination. In between are listed the main stops. Not all stops are listed; if yours is not there, you need to determine from the schedule boards or from the conductor when and if that stop is made. There is usually a conductor on the platform; and if not sure, it is always best to ask if you are getting on the right train! Tip: You might want to write down your destination and show it to the conductor so as to eliminate a potential communication gap!

In order to get off at the right stop, you should know the stop or two before yours or
Finding the Right Train Car

After finding the right train, your next job is to board the right car. On most trains, cars are marked first class or second class with a large “1” or “2” on the side of the car, and sometimes first-class cars also have a yellow stripe running along the top of the car. And for trains that are reservable, each car and seat are numbered. If you have a reservation, your best and easiest bet is to walk along the outside of the train until you locate the correct numbered car, then board it and look for the correct numbered seat, rather than traipsing through the inside of the train bumping everyone with your luggage as you look for the correct car. So as you wait on a platform while your train pulls in, look at the numbers (or the markings for first and second class) on each car so that you know which direction to head when the train stops.

As an aid to finding your car, many train platforms are divided into sectors (often A-E) that are marked with overhead signs and lines painted on the platform itself. Then by referring to the train composition board usually located in a sign box on the platform, you can find a diagram, also divided into sectors, showing the layout of your train and where it will stop along the platform. For example, if the first-class cars are in Sector B on the diagram, simply walk down the platform to Sector B; and when the train arrives, the first-class cars will stop almost right in front of you.

Changing Trains

Although it’s common to have to do this, it’s usually as simple as getting off one train, walking across the platform and getting on another train, though often you will have to descend one flight of steps, cross under the tracks and ascend to a platform on the other side of the tracks. At major interchange points, trains are usually timed to arrive at about the same time. If the train is not just across the platform, look for a schedule board on which to find the platform number of the next train to your final destination.

Borders and Customs

Between most countries in Europe, customs formalities are almost nonexistent, and many times you will not even realize that you have crossed a border. You should, however, always have your passport with you. Customs officials may walk the length of the train looking at each person’s passport, though often they make only spot checks.

ITINERARY IDEAS

These sample itineraries are designed to illustrate: 1) how you can easily include many of the lesser-known, but rewarding, off-the-beaten-track places; and 2) how much ground can be comfortably covered using the time-saving Loop and Base City strategies. These itineraries are not intended to be prescriptive, but only to assist you in customizing your own personal tour.

As an aid to planning, the approximate transit times have been provided here, and all of the places listed are discussed further in the country-sketch section. Those touring Britain or Ireland will find sample itineraries included in the country skecthes. (More itineraries on page 9.)
Traveling by train is fairly self-explanatory, even if you don’t speak a foreign language, as Europe has adopted an internationally recognized pictogram system. These universal symbols, similar to our road signs, are easy to understand. One of the most important symbols is the one for information—where you see one of these, you can find pertinent information or even help if necessary. Many larger stations have staffed information counters at which you can ask questions about train matters (English is often spoken).

Food

Most long-distance trains have a dining car; however, meals are expensive. Somewhat cheaper is the snack fare (sandwiches, etc.) available from the buffet or bar car present on most trains. As many train stations have a plethora of quick-food shops and sometimes even a small grocery store, a good way to save money with more choice is to buy your food before boarding and then eat picnic style on the train as many Europeans do.

Note: On some premier trains, a meal or snack served at your seat is included in the first-class ticket price. This is common on many Spanish intercity trains; on Thalys trains between Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne; on Eurostar trains between London and Paris or Brussels; and on many X2000 trains in Sweden. Railpass holders sitting in first class on these trains must pay for the meal as part of the mandatory seat reservation fee.

Luggage Concerns

The watchword here is to travel as light as possible. As there is no porter service at most European stations and luggage trolleys are almost always unavailable, you’ll be responsible for carrying your own luggage, and often this means up and down the stairs to train platforms (or your hotel room). Travel light: there is no greater drawback to a pleasurable vacation than lugging around unwieldy, heavy luggage.

Choose your luggage wisely. Settle on the smallest bag possible, as you will have to lift it and port it yourself. Fortunately, there are many great bags perfect for train travel. Make sure that your main bag can roll as some trains approach a quarter-mile in length.

On trains you do not check your luggage, but take it with you. There are luggage racks above your seat for small- and medium-sized pieces, and a storage space at the end of most rail cars for oversized pieces. One of the advantages of first class, with its much greater personal space, is that often you can store your luggage right at or behind your seat.

Lockers

Many train stations have coin-operated lockers (often hidden away). These are ideal for those travelers stopping off en route for a few hours, or who don’t want to lug all of their luggage to their hotel. Pack what you need to take in a small daypack — a good idea is to carry an empty, folded-up daypack inside your luggage for this purpose or to buy one of the bags with a detachable daypack. Lockers are usually readily available in the smaller stations; however, in a few of the large stations, empty lockers can be hard to find. In a pinch you could use the attendant-operated checkrooms that usually exist in larger stations. As the charge is per piece of luggage, this service can be quite expensive.

Note: In Britain lockers are seldom available; and in France, Italy and Spain, lockers are usually only available at major stations.

Reservations

Reservations are not formally required on most trains in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, Belgium and Great Britain; and although you will usually find seats, especially in first class, it is best to make seat reservations for long-distance trains. At peak times without seat reservations, you may have to sit apart or even stand until a seat opens up; however, you are always allowed to board the train regardless of how full it is.

In France, Italy, Spain and on quality express trains in many other countries, seat reservations are usually required. Point-to-point tickets are sold with the reservation included; for railpasses, the seat reservation must be made separately at an additional charge.

On local trains, reservations generally can’t be made, and seats are occupied on a first-come, first-served basis. Try to board these trains as soon as they arrive in the station. Speciality trains like the Glacier or Bernina express trains in Switzerland also require reservations and should be made as soon as possible in order to get prized window seats. Reservations can be made 90 days prior to the departure for Swiss, French, German, Italian and many international trains, and 60 days out for most other trains.

See page 33 of this Guide for more about train reservations country by country.

No Smoking on Trains

After a long, hard-fought struggle, smoking is no longer permitted on trains across nearly all European countries. In many countries, smoking is not permitted in train stations or only in designated areas.

Weather/Tourist Season

Another factor to consider is the time of the year of your trip. Weather is straightforward. Northern Europe has mild summers with bouts of rain, especially misty rain, common; while southern Europe (Greece, Spain, southern France, Italy) has hot and often humid summers. If possible, visit the north in the months of June, July or August; whereas, spring or fall are ideal for the south. Additionally, most Europeans take their vacations in July and August with millions of Northerners heading south to the sun and beaches of the Mediterranean. If possible, avoid the Mediterranean area at this time of the year — you’ll still find it crowded in September, but at least it’s manageable then. June is the least crowded summer month for the south. In July and August, trains in the south (and ones heading there) are packed, and accommodations can be hard to find — it’s probably a good idea to make reservations for any long-distance train rides.

Even winter travel is not out of the question, as across much of Europe winters are fairly mild. The great bonus of off-season travel is that you’ll have tourist meccas like Florence or Venice nearly to yourself and hotel prices can be considerably cheaper.

See the Temperature and Rainfall Chart on page 38

When To Arrive at the Station

As ticketing is done on the train, there is no formal check-in time (except for the Eurostar trains between London and Paris/Brussels). We advise getting to the station about 20-30 minutes early so that you can leisurely find your train without resorting to sprinting and jumping aboard the trains as it pulls out.

Tips for Reserving in Europe

At the reservation window in the train station, show the clerk your railpass and, if you don't speak the language, a note with the following info:

- departure and arrival cities using the spelling off the Eurail map (i.e. Milano→Roma)
- travel date using European format (i.e. 30/12 or 30 Dec)
- departure time using the 24-hour clock (i.e. 1300 for 1pm)
- number of passengers
- travel class (1 Cl. or 2 Cl. as indicated on railpass)
- seat info (i.e. window or aisle; sometimes you can ask for forward-facing seats)

Before leaving, check everything over for correctness! Note: Reservations made in Europe often must be self-validated in machines on the platform before boarding your train!
### More Itineraries

#### France • Italy • Switzerland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Starting in Paris; ending in Paris or Zürich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Train to Avignon (2.75 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Day trip to Arles or Nîmes (0.5 h each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Train to Nice (3 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Day trip to Cannes and its beach (0.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Day trip to Monaco (0.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Train to Florence (6.75 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Train to Venice (3 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Train to Tirano (6 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bernina Express train to St. Moritz (2.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Train to Luzern (4.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Train to Interlaken via Brünig Pass (2 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Visit the mountain villages of the Jungfrau Region; hiking in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Train to Paris (6.5 h) or Zürich (2.25 h)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Germany • Austria • Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Starting in Frankfurt; ending in Rome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>From airport, train to Heidelberg (1.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Castle Road Bus to Rothenburg (5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Romantic Road Bus to Munich (5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>Sightseeing; day trips to Füssen (2 h), Salzburg (1.5 h) or Dachau (0.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Train (4 h) and ferry (0.25 h) to Halstatt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sightseeing; hiking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Train to Vienna (4 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11, 12</td>
<td>Sightseeing; day trip to Melk (1.25 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Train to Venice (8 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14, 15</td>
<td>Sightseeing; visit Burano and Murano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Train to Florence (3 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17, 18</td>
<td>Sightseeing; day trip to Siena (1.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Train to Rome (1.5 h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20, 21</td>
<td>Sightseeing in Rome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Germany is a “must” on any European itinerary. Half-timbered houses; hilltop castles overlooking the Rhine; Bavarian beer halls with “oomphal” bands; bratwursts; dozens of small medieval-looking cities like Rothenburg, Cochem or Heidelberg — Germany has it all! Enjoy its delights and don’t cut your visit short.

Trains: Germany’s rail system is one of the best in Europe. Trains are fast and frequent, and none are more comfortable. The only drawback is that tickets are expensive (a second-class ticket for the 285-mile journey between Frankfurt and Munich costs $285 round trip), making railpasses a great value here. In addition to train travel, all railpasses valid in Germany give you free passage on the Rhine and Mosel river cruise boats — two of the most enjoyable of the many railpass bonuses. See our website, www.budgeteuropeetravel.com, for details and prices of all railpasses valid in Germany.

THE RHINE VALLEY

Be sure to travel along the Rhine — either by trains which parallel the river or, preferably, by touristic steamers (free with any railpass valid in Germany) which ply the river between Cologne and Mainz. Although you can speed thru the whole Rhine Valley without stopping in a few hours, we suggest slowing down to the river’s meandering pace and visiting several of the many interesting cities en route. Plan to stay in one of the small river villages — accommodations right on the river’s edge are plentiful and reasonably priced. The Rhine between Koblenz and Bingen is famous for its many hilltop castles — many of which offer public tours. The Rhine is also a working river — you’ll see a nearly nonstop parade of barges chugging up or gliding down the busy waterway.

Cologne (Köln) makes a great short stop if passing thru — and no matter where you go in northern Germany by train you almost always have to pass thru this busy rail junction. The main sights are only a few steps from the station. The massive Köln Dom, one of the world’s largest cathedrals, is well worth the visit alone. There is also an impressive archaeological museum displaying artifacts from Cologne’s Roman past, and the city’s shopping district is one of the finest in Germany. (A classic 2-4 hr stop.)

Bonn is a delightful stop between Cologne and Koblenz. Though a fast-growing city, Bonn still retains much of its small village charm. Beethoven was born here, and his house is open to the public.

Frankfurt is a mega-city with little to offer the typical traveler beyond its fine museums; but if you’re not an art aficionado, you may find its drab modern appearance a disappointment, paling in comparison to such nearby gems as Heidelberg or towns on the Rhine. So if landing here, consider taking trains right from the airport to one of those!

Heidelberg, nestled in the Neckar Valley, is a lively university town with an impressive Altstadt and an imposing castle overlooking the city. Its student inns offer interesting nightlife for young people. If landing in Frankfurt, Heidelberg is an ideal place to spend your first night (1 hr from the airport). Rüdesheim, wedged between the Rhine and steep-terraced vineyards that rise behind it, is probably the most popular town in the Rhine Valley, especially as a weekend getaway for Germans. There is a footpath (and chairlift) thru the vineyards, from which there are great views of the Rhine. At Rüdesheim it is easy to catch the Rhine River boats.

Baden-Baden, one of Europe’s most venerable spa towns, is an easy stopover on the way to Switzerland or France. Weary travelers will want to take a long soak in its centuries-old thermal baths, a leisurely stroll

Rhine River Steamers

All railpasses valid in Germany give free boat travel on the Rhine between Cologne and Mainz. Sit back and let the river and its many clifftop castles unfold as you laze on the deck — perhaps with a picnic lunch and a bottle of local Rhine wine at hand. You can board or leave the boats at many intermediate points along the route with convenient train connections. Best Part: For seeing the fabled hilltop castles, go between Koblenz and Bingen (4-6 hrs). On this stretch is Boppard, a stately river town, and St. Goar, the site of the Lorelei — a steep cliff rising out of the river where in German mythology a golden-haired siren lured boatmen to their deaths on the rocks below. Boats are expensive if you don’t have a railpass: Koblenz to Bingen, about $40; Cologne to Mainz, about $75.
along its pleasant riverside park promenade, and a not-to-be-missed guided tour of its extravagantly lavish casino.

Freiburg is a quaint university town offering many hikes and excursions into the Black Forest Region surrounding the town. The town itself is renowned for both its Müns ter, one of Germany’s greatest Gothic cathedrals, and for its famous university at which many Americans study each year. Scenic trains run from Freiburg into the Black Forest with its picture-postcard towns — Freudenstadt makes a good stop. If heading to Switzerland from Freiburg, a most scenic way is via the sideline thru the Black Forest to Schaffhausen (Switzerland), which merits a look not only because of the town but for its Rhine Falls, a most impressive thundering waterfall only a short walk from the town.

Basel, where Germany, France and Switzerland all meet, is one of Europe’s largest rail hubs. From here it is easy to catch a train in any direction. The Swiss Basel is very pleasant — well worth a stop.

Stuttgart, an easy stop on the main rail line between Munich and Frankfurt, lost much of its tourist appeal when its historic buildings were decimated in WWII, but may well be the cat’s meow to car fanatics. Highlights, besides the first-rate art in the Staatsgalerie, are the Porsche Museum, the Mercedes-Benz Museum, as well as a tour of a M-B auto plant, to see the fancy cars come off the assembly line and to buy memorabilia or even a new Mercedes to take back home!

THE MOSEL VALLEY

The tranquil Mosel River runs in a deep vineyard-covered gorge from Trier to Koblenz, where it meets the Rhine. By train it’s best seen from Koblenz to Cochem — the only place the tracks go right along the river. It’s better seen from the boats (free with railpasses) that also go from Koblenz to Cochem. Cochem is the jewel of the many picturesque wine towns that dot the Mosel. Narrow twisting cobblestone streets lead up to the castle of your dreams perched high above the town and river below. At the Hieronimi Winery or winestubes (tasting rooms) along the town’s riverfront, you can sample the acclaimed Mosel wines. Cochem’s many zimmers (rooms in private houses) have soft feather quilts and prices much lower than in larger cities.

Burg Eltz, one of Europe’s most majestic castles, is a short and highly recommended detour off the river. Sitting high up in the Eifel Mountains, it is easily reached by local train or boat from Koblenz or Cochem to Moselkern, from where it’s a short and lovely uphill walk thru the forest.

Trier, Germany’s oldest city, has superb Roman ruins — an amphitheater, baths and a massive gate — the Porta Nigra — “the gateway to the northern empire.” Trier also offers the Karl Marx House (birthplace and museum), a fine cathedral and great shopping. If going to France, Luxemburg or Belgium from the Rhine, the Mosel is an ideal route. (Koblenz–Luxembourg: 2 hrs; Luxembourg–Brussels: 3 hrs.)

The Mosel Boats

Try to take the small steamers between Cochem and Koblenz to best appreciate the dramatic Mosel Valley and its many colorful wine-growing villages. You may consider the Mosel boats as an alternative to the Rhine boats — the scenery is perhaps nicer and the boats are not as crowded. (Boat rides cost $36 one way, but are free with railpasses.)

BAVARIA

Füssen, a small town at the end of the Romantic Road in the Bavarian Alps, is a “must” place to visit because of its two exceptional castles, Hohenschwangau and Neuschwanstein. Hohenschwangau, a 12th-century castle, was lavishly restored in the 1830’s, while Neuschwanstein was built in the 1880’s according to the surrealistic fantasies of “Mad King Ludwig” of “what a castle should look like.” This castle is literally a dream castle — inside there are dozens of rooms of unbelievable beauty and richness, and outside turrets and towers without purpose soar into the sky. The neighboring castles are a two-mile walk thru a forest or a short bus ride from the station.

From Füssen you can go to Munich by train (3 hrs) or go on to Austria and Innsbruck by rail, although you must take a short bus ride to Reutte in Austria to connect with the Innsbruck line. Garmisch-Partenkirchen is on the latter line — this most famous of Germany’s mountain resorts makes an interesting stop. The Reutte–Innsbruck rail ride is a very scenic mountain line.

Munich (München) can make a great base city. Not only does it have attractions enough to fill several days, but there are many day-trip possibilities. Munich’s attractions include several world-famous museums (the Neue Pinakothek and the Alte Pinakothek plus the Deutsches Museum, the world’s largest technological museum) and the famous Glockenspiel in the Marienplatz where at scheduled times the clock does its “thing.” Munich’s pedestrian streets around the Marienplatz are a shopper’s paradise. For relaxing, try the Englischer Garten, a large park popular with locals since the 18th century. There are many walking trails, pavilions and lakes plus the city’s largest beer garden.

Munich is also one of Europe’s most intriguing “night” cities. Beer halls are a Munich tradition. The Hofbrähaus is famous worldwide. Here you’ll see the strong-armed waitresses carrying an unfathomable number of heavy beer-laden steins to thirsty customers. Besides the beer, these places serve unpretentious but filling German food, and, of course, there are the ubiquitous oompah bands belting out German folk music and drinking songs. Many people join in the singing, and the dancing at times jumps to the table tops. Multi-tiered places like the Hofbrähaus seat literally thousands of merrymakers. The Schwabing — a restaurant, club and live music (jazz is a specialty) ghetto — is one of Europe’s foremost night districts famous for its festive ambience. The party lasts until the early morning.

Day Trips From Munich: Dachau, 30 minutes by train from Munich, is the site of the infamous (and first) concentration camp. Now a museum and memorial to victims of Nazi brutality, Dachau, while soberly depressing, is a consciousness-raising must. Berchtesgaden (3 hrs from Munich) is a fun trip for its salt mines. You’ll don a miner’s hat and glide down slides into the old mines before taking an underground boat trip. Perched high on the Bavarian Alp of Kehlstein (near Berchtesgaden) is Hitler’s retreat, the Eagle’s Nest. Now converted to a café, the views remain the same — outstanding! Herrenchiemsee. “Mad” Ludwig’s famous island castle, is at Prien (1 hr by train from Munich or Salzburg). Salzburg and Innsbruck are also possible day trips being less than two hours away from Munich by train.

The Romantic Road Bus

A great way to go from the Rhine area to Bavaria is via this bus line which runs from Frankfurt and Würzburg to Munich or Füssen (nestled in the Bavarian Alps); and with a railpass, you get a 20% discount off the $125-150 fare. These comfortable buses, with a running commentary in several languages, take you along a route sprinkled with old-world villages. Stops are made at the dreamy medieval towns of Rothenburg and Dinkelsbühl. We suggest taking the bus from Würzburg (excellent rail connections; and the best part of the route begins here) to either Munich or Füssen. If you’re rushed, you can make the whole trip in a day, but if possible stay in either Rothenburg or Dinkelsbühl — two exceptional towns. If you can overlook the voluminous hordes of tourists it attracts, Rothenburg, still surrounded by its ancient fortress walls, is the highlight of the trip, one of the most charming medieval-looking towns in all of Europe.
Octoberfest

Octoberfest, running from late September to early October, is Munich’s veneration of the local beer industry and an all-out party. Set in a park near the train station, the many large circus tents (each sponsored by a different brewery) bring out thousands to enjoy the oompah bands, fattening foods, and, of course, steins of beer. The highlight for many are the world-famous parades that kick off the opening weekend.

OTHER CITIES

Germany has an inordinate number of interesting, lovely-looking towns that are in some ways more preferable to the highly touristied places like Munich and Heidelberg. Space here prohibits a thorough description, but a brief listing of several of the more interesting ones follows.

Hamburg, a hub for trains to Scandinavia, is a large city with few “must” sights, but has an interesting port area and sailors’ quarter — the St. Pauli district. If you prefer smaller towns, you should consider visiting Lübeck to the north or Celle to the south of Hamburg; both are picturesque historic cities filled with the old-world charm often lacking in the big cities. Also worth stops are Goslar and Göttingen just to the south of Hannover.

Marburg (1 hr north of Frankfurt) is a fairy-tale town brim full of tall multi-hued half-timbered buildings. There is also an impressive castle as well as Germany’s oldest Gothic church (AD 1235).

Ulm, on the main line to Munich, merits a short stop if only to see and climb the tower of Germany’s tallest cathedral — one of the country’s most famous churches.

Bamberg, on the train line from Munich to Berlin, is one of Germany’s best-preserved old towns and is filled with architectural splendors. Give it a stop if looking for a dream town not inundated by tourists.

Regensburg, set on the banks of the Danube (90 mins north of Munich), fortunately hasn’t been marred by the scourges of modern war. The old quarter of this once-important city still hosts street upon street of old patrician homes, ornate Baroque edifices, plus numerous Romanesque and Gothic churches.

Lake Constance (Bodensee) is a beautiful 40-mile-long lake between Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Many picturesque towns dot its shores — Constance, Überlingen, Meersburg and Lindau, the latter built on an island in the lake. If going from Munich to Zürich, the train line traverses the Lake Constance area — break your journey here and enjoy a place few other Americans see.

WHAT WAS ONCE EAST GERMANY

Potsdam, the former royal seat of the Prussian Empire, is only an hour southwest of Berlin. Don’t miss Sanssouci Park.

Dresden is worth a visit to see its many great art treasures in the Zwinger (including the Old Masters Gallery) and the Albertinum. Nearby to Dresden is Meissen, famous for its porcelain. Visit the quaint castle quarter tucked high above the Elbe River. South-east of Dresden is an area of natural beauty dubbed Saxon Switzerland, most noted for its star attractions: the Elbe River Valley, the Bastei Belvedere, the Königstein Fortress and the riverside spa town of Bad Schandau.

Leipzig has few tourist attractions, but serves as a good base as it has many hotels. Close to Leipzig are Naumburg, a small medieval charmer, Erfurt, with its fine old quarter largely undamaged by war, and Weimar, the town built in a park, where the houses of Goethe, Schiller and Liszt can be visited. West of Erfurt is Eisenach, best known for the quietly-looking crag-top Wartburg Castle.

Schwerin, between Hamburg and Berlin, has a picture-perfect Baroque Schloss (castle) on an island and an immense Gothic Dom.

Berlin

The Wall is gone, and a bustling Berlin is once again Germany’s capital. Major sights are the recently restored Reichstag, whose highlight is the trek up to the top of its famous glass dome; the Brandenburg Gate (the symbol of Berlin); the avenue Unter den Linden leading from the gate, lined with a collection of impressive monumental 18th-century buildings; Museum Island with its extraordinary Pergamon Museum (one of the world’s greatest antiquity repositories); the architecturally thought-provoking Jewish Museum; and the Baroque Charlottenburg Castle. Berlin’s divided past is brought to vivid life at the East Side Gallery, where the best remaining stretch of Wall displays poignant murals, or at the Checkpoint Charlie Museum, which documents the infamous history of the Wall.

SWITZERLAND

Without doubt, Switzerland is the most beautiful country in Europe, with the Alps being the high point of any trip. The breathtaking vistas of sparkling mountain lakes and waterfalls, lush green valleys and picture-perfect chalets with their bright flower boxes are all more impressive than you can imagine. Don’t bypass the Swiss cities, they’re jewels in themselves. Because it’s centrally located, Switzerland can be easily included in any Eurail trip. Consider basing yourself and taking day trips to practically anywhere in the country from your home base.

Trains: The Swiss train system is superb with departures every half hour to every major city within Switzerland. Connections to other countries are also excellent; for example, Geneva is less than four hours from Paris. Railpasses are a bargain here in light of steep ordinary fares, even for short day trips, and are valid on some outstanding but expensive private mountain railways and steamers on many of the idyllic Swiss lakes. The Swiss Pass and Swiss Flexipass give unlimited travel on the Swiss national rail network and many private railways, postal buses and lake steamers. See our website, www.budgeteuropeotravel.com, for details and prices of all railpasses valid in Switzerland.

The Alps are most dramatic at Zermatt with the Matterhorn and at Grindelwald with the equally famous Jungfrau. Each area offers magnificent mountains, but the Jungfrau Region may be your best bet — for it is more easily reached and offers many more gentle hiking trails and attractive mountain villages.

Interlaken, set between two pristine lakes, attracts crowds of tourists as it is the gateway to the spectacular Jungfrau Region and the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau peaks. After a quick look at this pleasant but crowded city, head for the hills!

Glacier Express

A favorite with scenery enthusiasts is this photog-heaven train ride which traverses the heart of the Alps between St. Moritz, a glitzy mountain resort, and Zermatt, a car-less chalet-full village below the princely Matterhorn. From the glass-domed observation cars on Europe’s slowest “express” train, enjoy the rugged snowcapped Alps, rushing mountain rivers, thundering waterfalls, and alpine pastures. (8 hrs; $226 first cl., $136 second cl.; free with Swiss Passes only.)
Grindelwald is a charming village that allows a closer look at one of the most thrilling mountain regions. From here you can begin your firsthand adventure with one of the many chair lifts, cable cars or hikes on well-marked trails. A fabulous trip is the private Jungfrau Railway that climbs to 11,333 feet, ending at Europe’s highest train station, atop a glacier where the views are stunning (a hefty $163 round trip from Interlaken; 25% discount with railpasses).

Lausanne, a “French” Swiss university town, is set picturequely on Lake Geneva. Its famous Cathedral, called one of the finest Swiss Gothic buildings, has an exquisite window. The city also has one of Europe’s most bizarre art museums, Collection d’Art Brut, devoted to works by the insane.

Golden Pass Line
Not only is this one of Europe’s most scenic train rides, but it’s also an amazing way to go between Luzern, Interlaken and Lausanne or Geneva. From Luzern the train serpentine up and over the steep Brünig Pass and along a glittering lake to Interlaken. Then it glides along yet another glorious lake and more phenomenal mountain countryside until it reaches its grand finale — its breathtaking descent via a series of hairpin turns to Lake Geneva at Montreux, a fab lake resort noted for its swinging Jazz Festival (in July) and the neighboring Chillon Castle. Through other trains run this route, only the Golden Pass Panoramic trains have glass-domed observation cars, but the mountain panoramas are tremendous from any train. (This five-hour ride is free with railpasses.)

Geneva is a uniquely cosmopolitan city with the headquarters of many global organizations, like the Red Cross, located here. The city’s attractive setting on Lake Geneva with the Mont Blanc massif rising up from the opposite shore is memorable. The Jet d’Eau or “Peace Fountain” that shoots up from the lake is the world’s tallest fountain. Vevey (1 hr from Geneva), a smart resort on Lake Geneva, makes a great base for discovering the lake area if you prefer smaller towns. The hilltop village of Gruyères (1 hr from Montreux and Lake Geneva) is fabled for its 15th-century Castle and its cheese — leave time to visit the factory to see Gruyère cheese being made.

Luzern (Lucerne) with its mountain backdrop, elegant lake front and fashionable shops is perhaps the “nicest” of the nice Swiss towns. Don’t miss the famous covered wooden bridges with their 16th- thru 18th-century paintings and out-of-this-world spider webs. A walk along the lake is a great way to enjoy the ring of towering mountains. You can also stroll atop the town wall and climb the towers.

Bern, an unassuming capital city, has a wonderful Baroque-looking old town with an excellent shopping area. Due to its central location, Bern is a great base city with easy day trips to the Rhine Falls (see Germany section) and many Swiss attractions.

Zürich is a beautiful, opulent large city that offers a tremendous view of the mountains and Lake Zürich. The stately Bahnhofstrasse, called the world’s richest street, is lined with numerous Swiss banks and many of the world’s most luxurious shops and boutiques.

For a dramatic ride between Switzerland and Italy, take the Bernina Express (covered in our Italy section.)

A Jungfrau Jaunt
For a rewarding and unforgettable day in the Jungfrau Region, take one of the trails (or the gondola) from Grindelwald (3,392 ft) up to Männlichen (7,687 ft), then a cable car down to Wengen (4,180 ft) in the next valley, where you can catch a train or walk down to Lauterbrunnen (2,612 ft), another lovely valley town. From there you can take an incredibly steep funicular and another short mountain train to Mürren (5,397 ft). Gimmelwald, a leisurely half-hour walk from Mürren, is a tiny farm village lost in the high mountains. Stay overnight in the mountains or take the cable-car plunge back to the valley floor and then bus back to Lauterbrunnen. All of this route can be done by foot on well-maintained walking paths requiring no special hiking shoes. Trails are well marked with directional signs so that you can’t get lost. No matter how you go — on foot, train or by lift — it will be an uplifting experience!

Golden Pass Line
Not only is this one of Europe’s most scenic train rides, but it’s also an amazing way to go between Luzern, Interlaken and Lausanne or Geneva. From Luzern the train serpentine up and over the steep Brünig Pass and along a glittering lake to Interlaken. Then it glides along yet another glorious lake and more phenomenal mountain countryside until it reaches its grand finale — its breathtaking descent via a series of hairpin turns to Lake Geneva at Montreux, a fab lake resort noted for its swinging Jazz Festival (in July) and the neighboring Chillon Castle. Though other trains run this route, only the Golden Pass Panoramic trains have glass-domed observation cars, but the mountain panoramas are tremendous from any train. (This five-hour ride is free with railpasses.)

Geneva is a uniquely cosmopolitan city with the headquarters of many global organizations, like the Red Cross, located here. The city’s attractive setting on Lake Geneva with the Mont Blanc massif rising up from the opposite shore is memorable. The Jet d’Eau or “Peace Fountain” that shoots up from the lake is the world’s tallest fountain. Vevey (1 hr from Geneva), a smart resort on Lake Geneva, makes a great base for discovering the lake area if you prefer smaller towns. The hilltop village of Gruyères (1 hr from Montreux and Lake Geneva) is fabled for its 15th-century Castle and its cheese — leave time to visit the factory to see Gruyère cheese being made.

Luzern (Lucerne) with its mountain backdrop, elegant lake front and fashionable shops is perhaps the “nicest” of the nice Swiss towns. Don’t miss the famous covered wooden bridges with their 16th- thru 18th-century paintings and out-of-this-world spider webs. A walk along the lake is a great way to enjoy the ring of towering mountains. You can also stroll atop the town wall and climb the towers.

Bern, an unassuming capital city, has a wonderful Baroque-looking old town with an excellent shopping area. Due to its central location, Bern is a great base city with easy day trips to the Rhine Falls (see Germany section) and many Swiss attractions.

Zürich is a beautiful, opulent large city that offers a tremendous view of the mountains and Lake Zürich. The stately Bahnhofstrasse, called the world’s richest street, is lined with numerous Swiss banks and many of the world’s most luxurious shops and boutiques.

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classical music lovers. Salzburg makes a good base for excursions into the surrounding Salzkammergut, the lovely “Sound of Music” mountains. For a quick look at the peaks, consider joining one of the tourist office bus tours (4 hrs; $55). Or from Salzburg hop a bus to St. Gilgen (1 hr), then steam across pristine Lake Wolfgang to picture-perfect St. Wolfgang (40 mins) and then go by bus to Bad Ischl (40 mins). At St. Wolfgang a thrilling steam train chugs to the Schafbergspitze summit ($40 round trip).

Hallstatt is in one of Europe’s most idyllic areas. The reflection of this bewitchingly beautiful village along with its mountain backdrop can be seen on a sparkling alpine lake (pictured on all the Austrian Tourist Office posters). If coming by train from Salzburg, change at Attnang-Puchheim to a gorgeous sideline which takes you into this mountain area via Bad Ischl (2 hrs from Salzburg). Reasonably priced Zimmer (bed-and-breakfasts) abound in local dwellings here. Wonderful hikes into the surrounding forests and mountains can be taken on well-marked, gently sloping trails. If looking for a quiet spot away from hectic big cities, the Hallstatt area is it — either as a day trip from Salzburg or, better, as an overnight stop.

The Innsbruck–Salzburg Train

This ride, one of Austria’s most scenic, takes you thru the heart of the Tyrolean Alps on its four-hour run. If you wish to break your journey, stop at Kitzbühel, a world-famous upscale ski resort, or at Zell am See, a small mountain-ringed lake-side town. In the summer you can take super hikes in the neighboring Alps from either place.

Vienna (Wien) is a city which reflects a grandiose past and a distinctive central European flavor. Until WWI, Vienna was the elegant capital of the powerful Hapsburg Empire, which ruled over most of Eastern Europe. Today just the capital city of a small country, Vienna’s grand palaces and other vestiges of its former Empire loom out of place but still hint at its one-time importance. Vienna, one of the world’s great culture capitals, is renowned for its State Opera and Vienna Boys’ Choir (both on hiatus in summer) and for three of the world’s finest art collections, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Albertina, and the Museum of Modern Art in the Museums Quarter. Another Viennese institution is the Spanish Riding School and its famous Lipizzaner Stallions. Though shows are sold out months in advance, try to attend one of the daily (and much cheaper) rehearsals instead. Other Viennese sights include Sigmund Freud’s House, with its office and museum, and the Prater, an amusement park where you can ride the Big Wheel (a huge ferris wheel) which has become the symbol of Vienna. At Grinzing and other villages on the edge of Vienna, the heurigen (wine-houses serving only wine produced on the property) make for festive and memorable nights.

South from Vienna: Northern Italy can be easily reached in a day (Vienna–Venice: 8 hrs). Take the day train so that you won’t miss the mountain scenery. Stop off in Klagenfurt, a pleasant town set near an idyllic mountain lake, if you wish to break your journey. Graz, an unusually attractive city with an Eastern European influence, is worth a stop even though it’s just off the main Vienna-Italy rail line (on the rail line that branches off to Slovenia and Croatia).

HUNGARY

Hungary, situated east of Austria, is easily accessible by rail from Vienna — go to Hungary to get an Eastern European experience.

Trains: Service is good between the major cities. EuroCity (EC) train service between Vienna and Budapest takes less than three hours, making a day trip possible. See www.budgeteurotravel.com for details and prices of all railpasses valid in Hungary.

Budapest, the lovely Hungarian capital, straddles the Danube River — with Buda on one side and Pest on the other. The heart of the “old quarter” with its Baroque houses, inviting cafés and crooked cobblestone roads is located on Castle Hill (Várhegy) in Buda. Here you’ll find Mátyás Cathedral, coronation site of Hungarian royalty; the Fishermen’s Bastion (so-called because fishermen once manned the citadel), which offers fine views overlooking the city and the Danube; and the reconstructed Royal Palace, which houses the Historical Museum and National Gallery. Contrasting with the “old” is modern Pest, the city’s commercial and governmental hub, with its wide boulevards, bustling markets and plentiful shops. The Parliament, National Museum, Museum of Fine Arts and Museum of Applied Arts are all located here. In the middle of the Danube is the island of Margitsziget — a park with a sports stadium, pool, lovely gardens and walking paths. In the summer, many outdoor plays and concerts are staged here.

Sopron, near the Austrian border (2 hrs from Vienna), is one of Hungary’s loveliest and best-preserved ancient towns. Amazingly, it escaped the destruction that devastated much of this region over the centuries, leaving much of its medieval beauty intact.

Győr, though an industrialized city, has a surprisingly large and romantic “old town” at the confluence of the Danube and Rábá rivers. (It’s on the Vienna-Budapest rail line; 90 mins from Vienna.)

Balaton Lake, one of the largest lakes in Europe, and one of the most touristed recreation areas, is easily reached by rail (from Budapest: 3 hrs; Vienna: 6 hrs). Its 118 miles of shoreline are dotted with spas, resorts and cafés. Besides its many beaches and water-sport possibilities, there are also mineral springs pouring forth curative waters. The northern side of the lake with its vineyard-and-forest-covered hills, especially the Tihany peninsula, is the most beautiful, and is crowded during “high season.”

The Best of the “Blue” Danube

An irresistible day trip out of Vienna is to take a cruise between Melk and Krems, the best part of the Danube. This two-hour ride will give you a look at three picture-postcard towns: Melk with its famous abbey, the Kloster Melk, a Baroque fantasy; Dürnstein with its castle ruin where Richard the Lion-Hearted was imprisoned after returning from the Crusades; and Krems, a historic wine town (see the wine museum). A possible day trip is to take a train to Melk, a boat to Dürnstein or Krems, and then a train or boat back to Vienna.

To Order, Call 1-800-441-2387 or 1-800-441-9413 or 734-668-0529!
Although much of Europe is quite modern, not so in Italy. Even though the country has prospered greatly in recent years, its cities still retain an ancient look — much more so than Northern Europe. Although the major tourist draws — Rome, Venice and Florence — get all the attention, there are many other beautiful Italian towns. If the tourist crowds in Venice or Florence get you to, escape to one of the other towns — you won’t be disappointed. A trip to Italy is unique — in many ways, more the Europe of your dreams than other spots.

Avoid July or August if at all possible as trains are crowded in both classes and the weather is stifling with many days in the humid 90s. August is also the time of the annual month-long vacation when much of Italy (apart from Rome, Florence and Venice) is completely “shuttered.” Hotels and tourist sights are open, but the normally bustling and lively character of the towns is missing. The best months are April, May, June and September — the weather is delightful and the crowds are smaller.

Trains: Italy has improved its rail system greatly in recent years. Eurostar Italia (ES) trains are among the fastest and most comfortable we’ve seen in Europe. Eurostar Italia trains between Milan, Florence, Rome and Naples top off at 186 mph. A few journey times from city center to city center: Rome–Milan, just 3 hours; Rome–Florence, only 95 minutes; Rome–Naples, 70 minutes; and Rome–Venice, less than 4 hours. See www.budgeteuropetravel.com for details and prices of all railpasses valid in Italy.

NORTHERN ITALY

Milan, though a huge industrial city, has several landmarks of interest for those who stop briefly here: the formidable Cathedral (Duomo), which has 135 spires and 2,245 statues adorning its elaborate exterior as well as immense stained-glass windows; the world-famous gaudy Neoclassica opera house, La Scala; and the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, an ornate iron and glass shopping arcade, the precursor of the modern shopping mall. Milan has frequent trains to nearby Switzerland, with express trains zipping under the Alps thru some of the world’s longest tunnels. For a most scenic way to go from Switzerland, take the sideline route from Milan to Tirano, to connect with the Bernina Express which will take you up and over the spectacular Alps.

Lake Maggiore and Lake Como, both one hour north of Milan on main rail lines between Italy and northern Europe, are good stopovers when going north or south. Catch boats at Stresa to visit three of Maggiore’s islands: Bella, with its Borromeo Palace and magnificent terraced gardens; Pescatori, an ancient fishing village; and Madre, one large exotic garden. The resort Como, known for its silks, is the jumping-off point for exploring Lake Como; a wonderful cruise is to Bellagio, an enchanting lake-side village. But also be sure to wander Como’s timeworn cobbled streets and visit its Cathedral. Enjoy fjord-like Lake Garda by boating to its cute resorts, especially fairy-tale Sirmione, with its nifty castle and remarkable Roman ruins (1 hr from Milan to the lake’s railheads: Desenzano or Peschiera). Worth a look are Parma (90 mins from Milan), with its sweet pink-and-white Baptistery, Cathedral, and the amazing recreated wooden Farnese Theater, or the Pavia Monastery, an art treasure inside and out (rail to Pavia, 40 mins, then bus 5 miles).
Trento and Bolzano, on the rail route to Austria or Munich, are nice stops often ignored by tourists. Here Italian and Austrian cultures meet, with Bolzano reflecting Germanic values more than Italian as most people here are of Tyrolean ancestry; in fact, German is still the predominate language.

Merano (40 mins by train from Bolzano), a small photogenic alpine resort, is a prime example of the Italian Tyrol at its best. Another tiny mountain delight, Cortina d’Ampezzo nestles below the towering Dolomites (3 hrs from Padua by rail to Calalzo, then 1 hr by bus). The mountain backdrops make these towns a pleasant respite from more famous but crowded Italian towns. From both Merano and Cortina, an option is to bus north to railheads to connect with trains to Innsbruck and Cortina, an option is to bus north to railheads to connect with trains to Innsbruck and Cortina, an option is to bus north to railheads to connect with trains to Innsbruck and Cortina, an option is to bus north to railheads to connect with trains to Innsbruck and Cortina.

Genoa, besides having an area of opulent palaces, is Italy’s largest port and has an intriguing (albeit a bit seedy) sailors’ quarter. Featuring incredibly tiny alleys crisscrossing one another in a byzantine maze, this old quarter, with nearly 200 churches, seems untouched since the Middle Ages.

The Cinque Terre

The Cinque Terre, near La Spezia on the Italian Riviera di Levante, offers a string of five picture-perfect seaside villages: Riomaggiore, Manarola, Corniglia, Vernazza and Monterosso. Each town has a train station; but as they are only a few miles apart, take the scenic footpaths that wind along the rugged coast from one village to another. Everyone can enjoy, at least, a part of this idyllic walk, as the one-mile stretch between Riomaggiore and Manarola is easy; and the views of the glistening sea are as romantic as your eyes will ever see.

Verona, 90 minutes from Venice by rail, is well worth a visit. The medieval town around the nearly intact Roman Arena exudes old-world charm — many grand churches and buildings next to colorful outdoor markets within a maze of narrow streets. The Verona Opera Festival in July and August offers nightly outdoor performances held in the Roman Arena; Shakespearean plays are staged in the ancient Roman Theater.

Venice — there’s no place like it in the world! If going to Italy don’t miss this unique city built on wooden piles with canals for its highways and gondolas for its cars. Actually, the famed gondolas are beyond the reach of budget travelers, and most use the vaporetti (water buses) which ply the canals — take them to see Venice as it’s best seen — from the water. Venice attracts far too many tourists; but if you can escape the tourist hubbub, you’ll be rewarded by an unspoiled Venice unchanged in hundreds of years. Avoid the steady line of tourists trekking straight from the train station to St. Mark’s Square to view its famous Basilica. Instead, sneak up on it via any of the small lanes thru the residential areas, and you’ll love Venice. Or take a vaporetto to one of the less-touristed outer islands such as Burano, noted for its lace making, or Murano, famous for its handblown glass, which visitors can watch being crafted at one of the island factories. Venetian glass is expensive, so don’t drop any! Venetian nights intensify the city’s romantic aura. The ubiquitous Venetian string quartets play nightly in St. Mark’s Square, which is lined with outdoor cafes. A problem in Venice is that it’s flooding more and more often, especially in fall and winter, when it’s not unusual to have to walk around on special catwalks! Easy rail day trips go to Padua (30 mins), with its famous Basilica, numerous Renaissance buildings and countless treasured frescoes, or to Vicenza (1 hr), notable for its Palladian-style architecture and superb re-created Olympic Theater.

Central Italy

Pisa, one hour from Florence, is a beautiful, unspoiled city — with, of course, the Leaning Tower. Besides gawking at the amazing tower (and the magnificent Cathedral and Baptistry next to it), make sure you walk thru the maze of intimate alleys and markets in the old town center. Walled Lucca (20 mins from Pisa) is a bastion of medieval Italian architecture, with some 60 Romanesque churches to wow you.

Bologna boasts an arcaded city center that many call Europe’s best-preserved medieval town. And its university, the oldest in Europe, adds pizzazz to this lovely town.

Florence, justly one of the world’s most famous tourist cities and a veritable open-air museum of the Renaissance, is a totally unique don’t-miss gem. The town’s focus centers around its Duomo, a wondrous multicolored-marble cathedral topped by a gigantic octagonal dome — climb the 464 steps to its top for a great view. The nearby world-renowned Uffizi Museum is stuffed with Renaissance masterpieces, and the neighboring unique Ponte Vecchio is a medieval bridge lined with jewelers’ shops. Michelangelo’s David statue and a number of his other works are housed in the Accademia. Other major sights include the Bargello Palace and Museum; San Marco Museum, in a former monastery, featuring Fra Angelico frescoes; Medici Palace, with a stunning chapel; Pitti Palace, and its fine Palatine Gallery; and the splendid churches of San Lorenzo (and the nearby Medici Chapel), and Santa Croce, where Michelangelo, Galileo and other luminaries are entombed (don’t miss the leather artisans and their shops in the back hallways).

Trek up to the Piazzale Michelangelo for a view overlooking Florence’s sea of burnt-sienna roofs far below, and wander the ancient narrow streets of the Oltrarno district across the Arno River. Shoppers will enjoy Florence’s leather markets and droses of fashionable boutiques.

Siena is exceptional. Old walls connect medieval watchtowers still encircle this ancient-looking city. Its Cathedral and town square are every bit as impressive as Florence’s. Palio, on July 2 and August 16, is a citywide celebration featuring a wild horse race with bareback riders in the town center.

San Gimignano is a dreamy-looking small town often called the best-preserved medieval town in Tuscany — the area around Florence and Siena. San Gimignano is famous for its tall sentinel towers built by nobles during a period of civil war in the Middle Ages (72 were built and 14 still remain). (From Florence, rail to Poggibonsi, 1 hr; then by bus, 20 mins.) To taste yet another proverbial ancient Tuscan hill town, head to Montepulciano. (From Florence, rail to Chiusi, 90 mins; then by bus, 80 mins.)

Perugia, Assisi and Arezzo are historic hill towns each worth a stop. Situated between Florence and Rome, they are easy day trips by train from either. Arezzo is the least touristied; Perugia plays host to thousands of foreigners studying Italian each summer — the town comes alive at night. Gubbio, Todi, Spoleto and Spello are Umbrian hill towns par excellence, all easy to visit by rail or bus.

Rome, with its plethora of diverse major sights, demands at least three days. The Vatican itself with the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter’s Basilica will claim most of a day. (Note: The Vatican strictly enforces a conservative dress code — no shorts, short skirts or bare shoulders.) Simply overpowering are the Michelangelos in the Sistine Chapel; the frescoes are even more stunning since their recent restorations. You’ll also want to see the Roman antiquities: the Colosseum, Forum and Pantheon. And then there are the Catacombs — eerie underground Christian cemeteries dating from the second century. (Of the 51 known catacombs, San Callisto and San Sebastiano are among the most impressive.) But the joy of Rome is not just its imposing sights, for this is also a fun town, especially at night when venues such as the Piazza Navona, the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain (toss a coin in, over your shoulder, to assure your return to Rome) are mobbed with strollers. Trastevere, across the Tiber, is a pleasant restaurant and pizzeria ghetto. And Rome is a shopper’s paradise — the area near the bottom of the Spanish Steps is one of the swankiest: the Via Condotti is...
lined with many fashionable shops. When you glimpse the Roman meter maids dressed in top fashions, you’ll understand how serious fashion is taken here.

**Day Trips From Rome: Orvieto** (1 hr) is a hill town famed for the multihued façade of its Cathedral; **Hadrian’s Villa** (45 mins by bus) is one of Italy’s most intriguing archaeological sites; **Tivoli** (1 hr) is home to the Villa d’Este with its medley of splish-splashing fountains; **Ostia Antica** (30 mins) was the port of ancient Rome and today is a colossal archaeological site.

Naples, 70 minutes south of Rome, has a flavor unlike other Italian towns. But poverty, slums and congestion (Europe’s most densely populated city) counter its charms — for most it will be more enjoyable to stay at a nearby smaller town such as seaside Sorrento while exploring the amazing ruins at Pompei and Herculanum or climbing Mt. Vesuvius — the volcano that buried the former cities under tons of mud and lava centuries ago. A cinder path circles up to the crater rim where you can peer into the smoldering behemoth.

From Sorrento, be sure to take the hair-raising bus ride on the cliff-hugging road along the dramatic Amalfi Coast. Stops worth making are at Positano, Amalfi and Ravello. Capri with its famous Blue Grotto is also a must visit (30 mins from Sorrento via ferry).

**Paestum** (90 mins south of Naples) is the site of three well-preserved Greek temples.

### THE ADRIATIC COAST

Look elsewhere for your beach vacation as the waters here are sadly polluted.

**Rimini** is a large resort catering to hordes of Europeans each summer. Though it has a fine beach, come here for pulsating nightlife. Nearby **Ravenna** is noteworthy for its glittering mosaics (1 hr north of Rimini by train). **Urbino**, a walled hill town, is famous for its Ducal Palace (train to Pesaro, 30 mins south of Rimini, then 1 hr by bus).

**San Marino**, the world’s oldest independent republic, sits remotely in the Apennine Mountains (1 hr by bus from Rimini). It’s well worth a look to see the tremendous panoramas of the hilly countryside as it slopes away to the Adriatic Coast. The main city, oozing medieval charm, is perched on rocky pinnacles topped by imposing forts.

**Brindisi, Bari and Ancona** are the embarkation points for Greece via the ferries that are **free or discounted** with Eurail. Bari has a unique old town close to the port worth a few hours look. (Italy—Patras: 15-22 hrs by boat; Patras—Athens: 4 hrs by train. Without a railpass, boats cost about $90 for deck passage; $120 for a sleeping chair.)

### SOUTHERN ITALY & ISLANDS

Below Rome, Italy lags economically far behind that of the industrial and wealthy North. A quasi-peasant lifestyle still clings to existence. Come here for a Europe that hasn’t changed much in the last few hundred years.

**Sicily** is only a 35-minute ferry ride (free with railpasses) from the southern tip of Italy. **Palermo** is the island’s major city with a plethora of old churches, a Norman palace, the ghoulish Capuchin Catacombs and several lively street markets. The Cathedral at suburban **Monreale** is a must for its multi-colored marbles and mosaics. **Cefalù** (1 hr from Palermo), a small beach resort, is picturesquely sandwiched between the sea and the Rocca, a massive rock outcropping. **Segesta**, an impressive Greek temple dating from the fifth century BC, stands silently alone in the stark countryside (1 hr by car or tour bus from Palermo; hard to reach by rail, requiring a one- or two-mile uphill walk on a shoulderless road from the nearest stations). The Valley of the Temples at **Agrigento** is the mother lode of Greek temples — you can view parts of nine surviving structures as you walk along the Sacred Way. Yet more archaeological treasures, especially its cavernous Greek Theater, can be seen at **Syracuse**, one of the greatest of ancient Greek city-states, whose medieval town is uniquely situated on an island.

**Taormina**, perched on a lofty terrace overlooking the sea, is worth visiting for its Greek Theater and wondrous views of the sea and Mt. Etna, Europe’s and one of the world’s largest active volcanos. Trains (not free with railpasses), leaving from **Catania** or **Riposto**, frequently circle the 10,000-foot-high mountain. From Catania you can approach the top of Etna by first taking a bus, next a cable car and, finally, a minibus (of course, suspended during eruptions).

**Stromboli**, on the Lipari Islands just off the Sicilian coast, is Europe’s most active, regularly erupting volcano. It can be climbed via cinder trails only on guided tours.

**Sardinia**, seven hours by boat from mainland Italy, is nice but not exceptional. The scenery is similar to central Italy. There are good beaches though crowded with tourists and modern high-rise hotels. Eurailpasses are valid for trains on the island, but not for ferry passage to the island ($50-85 each way from Civitavecchia to Olbia on Sardinia).

**Malta** is way off the beaten path but only four hours from Syracuse by boat. Life on this island nation is much different from Europe, and the beaches are superb. If looking for an exotic locale easily accessible on a Eurail trip, try Malta.

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**GREECE**

Even though it is far removed from Western Europe, try not to miss Greece with its unique character, beautiful beaches and striking archaeological sites. Most of all, you’ll appreciate its lower prices.

**Trains:** Though Greece has useful train lines allowing you to see several different regions, service is not on par with the rest of Europe. Yet taking the intercity and local trains will give you a glimpse of Greece outside the usual tourist bounds. See [www.budgeteuropetravel.com](http://www.budgeteuropetravel.com) for details and prices of all railpasses valid in Greece.

**Getting There:** If not flying into Greece, you will probably come by overnight ferry from Italy. Deck passage on selected boats crossing from Brindisi, Bari or Ancona to Igoumenitsa or Patras is **free** with Eurailpasses valid in Greece and Italy, but you must pay a $10 port tax all year, a surcharge ($15 in June and September, $30 in July and August), and for any sleeping accommodations if desired. Once you land in Greece at Patras, you can travel by train to Athens or, better, train around the Peloponnesian islands to take in some of the better classical sites before ending up in Athens. From Athens you can return to Patras direct or via Delphi and if you have more time, go north from Delphi to the Meteora Monasteries and then by bus ($30 to Igoumenitsa to catch the “Eurail” ferry back to Italy. And don’t forget to allot a few days for enjoying one or more of the Greek islands. Even if you don’t use your railpass much in Greece, the fact that it gets you there and back from Western Europe is a great travel bargain afforded by your Eurailpass (saving about a $100 each way with any railpass valid in Greece and Italy; holders of either the Greece or Italy pass get 30% off the fare on certain boats).

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**“It’s Greek to You”**

Although the Greek alphabet is completely different from ours, you will encounter few language problems here. Many Greeks speak “tourist” English, and most tourist information and maps include both English and Greek alphabet versions.
Corfu (Kerkyra), where some boats stop on their cruise between Greece and Italy, offers those on a budget the lures of a tropical paradise. Mopeds, which are easily rented, are the favored way of getting around the island. Snorkeling, cliff-diving, windsurfing and other water sports are all popular here.

CENTRAL GREECE

Athens can be uninviting in summer due to the torrid heat and suffocating auto pollution. Besides devastating the summer traveler, the smog has had a terrible effect on the ruins of classical Athens. Yet lively, thunderous Athens exudes an inexplicable charm. The many hectic markets, suave sidewalk cafés at Syntagma Square, the delightful night area in the Plaka with its many bouzouki bars (where traditional Greek music is played), as well as the impressive ruins such as the Agora (the administrative center and marketplace of classical Athens) and the Acropolis (with the Parthenon and three other edifices from the Golden Age of Greece on it) make Athens a unique world city not to be missed. Athens’ National Archaeological Museum preserves many of the pieces of the ancient ruins, such as the treasures of the tombs of the Mycenae, including the famous Death Mask of Agamemnon.

Daphni, 30 minutes by bus from Athens, offers its famous Monastery with its elaborate mosaics and huge Byzantine dome, plus a nightly wine festival from mid-July thru early September. A small fee admits you to a wooded park and unlimited tastings of many Greek wines. Souvlaki (grilled meats served in pita bread) and other foods are extra, but the performing bouzouki musicians and folk-dance troupes are free.

The Elgin Marbles

In 1801 the Elgin Marbles, the Parthenon’s famous frieze, were sold to a British man (Elgin) by the Turks, and removed to Britain. They were later sold by Elgin to the British Museum where they remain today! Greece vigorously demands their return, but to no avail so far.

Delphi, four hours from Athens, was considered the center of the Earth by the ancient Greeks. The Doric Temple of Apollo (which housed the famed Delphic Oracle), a stadium, theater and other ruins are set in an austere but beautiful mountainous region overlooking the Gulf of Corinth. To reach Delphi, train to Levadia where you transfer to a bus ($5); or take a direct bus from Athens ($20). If heading north, you can return to the station at Levadia and train to Kalambaka and the Meteora Monasteries. If you wish to go to Patras: bus to Antirrio, ferry to Rio and bus to Patras (total time: 5 hrs).

S. GREECE (THE PELOPONNESE)

The Peloponnesse is the peninsula southwest of Athens which offers many of the country’s foremost archaeological sites as well as marvelous coastal and rugged mountain scenery. Many of the best classical Greek ruins are easily accessible from the main circular train line which offers good service from both Patras and Athens. If coming to Greece by boat from Italy, you’ll arrive in the Peloponnesse at Patras, four hours from Athens.

Corinth, two hours from Athens, was one of the most important Greek cities during the Golden Age, but was leveled in 146 BC by invading Roman legions and remained uninhabited for a 100 years until Julius Caesar constructed a Roman city on the site. Today’s striking ruins at “Old Corinth” are largely Roman, except for the impressive Greek Temple of Apollo.

Mycenae, south of Corinth, is Agamemnon’s citadel city of Homer’s epic poems and once the center of the great Mycenaean civilization. The impressive ruins date back to 1500 BC — often said to be the most important archaeological find in modern times.

Mistra is the fascinating site of an abandoned and once-powerful Byzantine town with intact 14th-century buildings. To get there, take a beautiful bus ride from Kalamata thru the Taigetos Mountains to Sparta (almost nothing remains of ancient Sparta) and then to Mistra, three miles from Sparta. Olympia, home of the ancient Olympic Games, is impressive. See the outstanding museum; the Olympic Stadium; and the Temple of Hera where the ancient Olympic Flame was housed. Today when the Games are to be held, the sacred flame is relit here and carried by torchbearers to the host site.

NORTHERN GREECE

Thessaloniki, Greece’s second largest city, is a convenient stop on the way to Turkey or, if heading north, to central or eastern Europe.

The Kalavrita Railway

The Kalavrita Railway is justly included in our list of Europe’s top scenic train rides. From Diakofto, near Patras on the main line to Athens, this tiny rack-and-pinion railway rises 2,300 feet in 14 miles as it traverses the spectacular gorge of the Vouraikos River to Kalavrita. Get off the train on the return journey at Zahlorou to walk down to Diakofto thru the gorge in a leisurely three hours. Near Zahlorou (45 mins away by foot or donkey) is the Monastery of Mega Spileo (Great Cave) which attracts many pilgrims; only men can stay overnight here. If you can’t get to Crete to hike the Samaria Gorge, you’ll find this gorge as impressive and a lot less touristy. (Several departures daily: 1 hr each way.)
THE GREEK ISLANDS

Many people go to Greece only to experience the wonders of the many islands. The more popular party islands such as Mykonos, Santorini, Paros or Ios are several hours and about $40 ($60 fast ferry) away from Piraeus, Athens' port from ancient times. To save time when going to the islands, use one of the many night boats or fly; Olympic Airways offers economical flights to many of the islands. The best-known islands are overcrowded in July and August. In the past the Greek government has offered free boats to some of the less popular islands, in an effort to distribute the tourist crush more evenly.

Mykonos, the most popular of the party islands, offers splendid beaches and non-stop nightlife with hundreds of clubs. It's renowned for its Paradise Beach, Europe's most famous nude beach, as well as its gay counterpart, Super Paradise Beach.

THE SAMARIA GORGE

The Samaria Gorge, in southern Crete, offers one of the best hikes in Europe along its narrow ten-mile ravine. Catch an early bus from Hania (on the northern coast) to Omalos where the trail begins. Enjoy a leisurely hike, due to the gradual 2,000-foot descent, thru the spectacularly "gorgeous" gorge until you emerge at the sea and a fine beach. From there, you can catch a boat back to civilization — to Chora Sfakion (1 hr.), and then bus back to Hania.

Mykonos has long been known as Europe’s premier gay vacation spot, though many vacationers are not gay. Many tourists come just to see the extraordinary ruins at Delos, a small uninhabited island and only 30 minutes by boat from Mykonos. The legendary birthplace of twins Apollo and Artemis, Delos has some of the most extensive and interesting ruins in Greece, including the Sanctuary of Apollo and the famous Terrace of the Delian Lions.

Crete, much larger than the other Greek islands, has a “South Seas paradise” look. Crete offers not only heavenly scenery, but also a host of Minoan civilization ruins and a quasi-peasant lifestyle no longer found on many islands. Time may not have stopped, but it moves slowly in Crete.

DENMARK

Copenhagen can be encompassed into even the shortest of Eurail trips if you’re pressed for time and want a quick taste of Scandinavia. Famous not only for Tivoli, Europe’s most well-known amusement park, and the Little Mermaid, a bronze sculpture in the harbor, Copenhagen is one of Europe’s nicest strolling cities with many parks and pedestrian shopping streets. The city is also known as one of Europe’s great nightlife spots. Europe’s self-acclaimed jazz center, the city offers all types of live music in its many pubs and clubs. During the Copenhagen Jazz Festival in early July, thousands of people jam squares, streets, theaters, and jazz clubs to hear some of the greatest jazz stars in the world. Becoming very popular with tourists is the free city of Christiania, perhaps the most successful of the few surviving early 70s communes in the world. And the Carlsberg brewery tour is another fun way to fill a half-day. But if you’re a beer drinker, you may wish to plan an additional half-day to recuperate from the copious tastings.

Day Trips From Copenhagen: Use the great suburban train system (S-trains), free with Eurail/Scandinavia passes, to day-trip to any of several interesting sights. Helsingør (Elsinore), 55 minutes north of Copenhagen, is the site of Kronborg Castle, the legendary home of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Helsingør is also a good gateway to or from Sweden. Humlebæk, south of Helsingør, has the Louisiana Museum of Contemporary Art and Statue Park, one of the best in Europe. Also near Helsingør is Hillerød, with its superb Frederiksborg Castle. Set on an

Mykonos is a good stopover en route to the islands. The best-known islands are over-crowded in July and August. In the past the Greek government has offered free boats to some of the less popular islands, in an effort to distribute the tourist crush more evenly. Mykonos, the most popular of the party islands, offers splendid beaches and non-stop nightlife with hundreds of clubs. It’s renowned for its Paradise Beach, Europe’s most famous nude beach, as well as its gay counterpart, Super Paradise Beach.

Boats to Turkey

From Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Rhodes, you can catch boats to Turkey ($35-75). But these are subject to interruptions due to the volatile state of Greek-Turkish political relations.

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island in a lake, it’s called the best Renaissance building in Denmark. If not in a hurry, rent a bike in Helsingør and cycle six scenic miles along the coast to the Louisiana Museum at Humlebæk. As the Danish, along with the Dutch, are Europe’s most enthusiastic bikers, the country has many bike paths. (Few train stations rent bikes, but many tourist offices and bike shops do.)

Roskilde, 20 minutes from Copenhagen, was the Danish capital for 500 years. The traditional burial place of Danish royalty is here in Roskilde Cathedral, the country’s most famous cathedral. Also there is the Viking Ship Museum exhibiting five vessels that sank here nearly 1,000 years ago. The Roskilde Festival, held in early July, is one of Europe’s biggest rock festivals.

Bakken, over 400 years old, is Europe’s oldest amusement park. It offers everything that Tivoli does (concerts, dance halls, shows, rides, fireworks) without an admission charge and, unlike Tivoli, is not full of tourists (30 mins from Copenhagen).

Frederikshavn is an excellent gateway to Norway or Sweden. The three-hour ferry to Gothenburg in Sweden is 20% off with Eurail/Scan passes (without a pass: $30-60 one way). Good train connections exist from Frederikshavn to Germany via Århus.

Århus, three hours from Frederikshavn and two and one-half hours from Copenhagen, is Denmark’s foremost university town. It offers the Museum of Prehistory at suburban Moesgård with its 2,000-year-old Grauballe “bogman,” a corpse found in the nearby bogs (mummified by the indigenous tannic acid). Be sure to take a walk through time in the Prehistoric Trackway near the museum, an avenue of reconstructed pre-Viking settlements. A popular sight in Århus is the Den Gamle By (old town), a restored village with 16th- to 19th-century buildings removed from their original sites and rebuilt here. During the Århus Festival in early September, the whole town is alive with jazz, classical music, street musicians, drama and poetry readings. One of the most popular festivals in Europe, it is especially a magnet for young people.

Rebild hosts the largest Fourth of July celebration outside the U.S. at the Danish-American Emigration Museum, a log cabin built with logs from every state. Many Danish-Americans originally came from this area. Re bild is two miles from the Skarpning stop on the Århus–Frederikshavn rail line.

“Legoland,” with its mini-town built of Lego toy blocks including a harbor with model ships, a lilliputian railway and Tintin’s Palace (“the world’s most expensive doll house”), is not on a rail line but is a short bus ride from Vejle, south of Århus, to the small town of Billund.

Oslo’s sights will occupy only a day or two for most — make a short stop here on your way to or from Bergen via the dramatic Oslo–Bergen train line. The Viking Ship House, displaying several ninth-century vessels from the Viking heyday, is the main attraction. Thor Heyerdahl’s Kon-Tiki, Ra I and Ra II ships are housed in their own museum near the Viking Ships. Many also enjoy one of Europe’s outstanding statue parks, the Vigeland Sculpture Park — with its 150 groups of life-size works, depicting humans from toddlers to the aged. For a pleasurable outing in the Oslo suburbs, go to the Holmenkollen Ski Jump situated in a lovely forested area with dramatic views of Oslo and the fjord below.
Bergen to Stavanger by boat is an alternative way to connect with another scenic rail route back to Oslo (boat: $120; not free with Eurail/Scan passes; 4-5 hrs). Stavanger, the main oil depot for North Sea crude, has few tourist attractions; but worthy of a gender are the Cathedral, old quarter and fish market.

Narvik is Europe's northernmost outpost accessible by train. To reach it requires a great deal of time and crossing the Arctic Circle — it’s 1,000 miles from Oslo to Narvik! Narvik is mostly easily reached from Stockholm, or Helsinki via Haparanda; nearly 24 hours from either city. If you wish to return to Oslo via Bodo, you may take a boat along the rugged coast or ride the Northern Express Bus to Bodo ($65; not free with Eurail/Scanrail; 2 daily; 7 hrs) and train from there to Trondheim. The Nordland Line from Bodo to Trondheim is especially lovely.

Don’t miss the Feskekorka (Fish Church) which appears to be a church from the outside but is actually a fish market inside!

The Lapland and Reindeer Lines
Lapland, the far northern region of Scandinavia, inhabited by the nomadic Lapps who still tend their herds of reindeer, is one of the world’s few remaining isolated frontiers untouched by “modern man.” The best bet for seeing this unspoiled Arctic area is from one of two scenic train lines. The “Lapland Line” (Boden–Narvik: 7 hrs; free with railpasses), built at great cost to ferry iron ore from the mines of Kiruna (tours thru the world’s largest underground iron ore mine are available) to the sea, travels thru pristine alpine countryside. The “Reindeer Line” (Gällivare–Östersund: 14 hrs; late June to early August; no discounts with railpasses) offers another look at remote Lapland and its herds of reindeer.

FINLAND

The ferry from Sweden to Finland, discounted with Eurail, is an astounding ride as it follows the gorgeous coast and an archipelago of rocky islands much of the way. Night ferries are comfy; and with the long days, you can still see the scenery. On board you’ll find many amenities including saunas and a casino. (Boats: 10-16 hrs; fares start at $65 each way; 50% off with Eurail/Scandinavia passes.)

Helsinki, under Russian occupation for nearly 100 years until WWI, has a Russian look most visible in the onion-domed Russian Orthodox Church and the early 19th-century government buildings. Helsinki is famous for its modern architecture such as the gleaming white marble Finlandia Hall, designed by the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, and the Temppeliaukio Church (known as the “Rock Church”), which is built into a rocky hill with only its copper-domed roof visible from the street. Worth a look itself is the imposing Central Train Station, constructed by Eliel Saarinen, another famous Finnish architect. More old-world is the colorful handicrafts, fish and vegetable market by the harbor.

Consider stopping at Turku (2 1/2 hrs from Helsinki by train) on your way back to Sweden, and then catch the boat to Stockholm from there. Turku was the ancient Finnish capital before the Imperial Russian conquerors moved it to Helsinki in 1812.

Midsummer Eve is the celebration of the coming of summer. All of Scandinavia lets loose with all-night parties, fireworks, and the traditional bonfires stemming from heathen days when the fires were thought to scare evil spirits away from the new crops. The celebration continues the following day, called Midsummer Day — usually occurs on the Friday and Saturday nearest Midsummer Eve; check with the Scandinavian Tourist Board for exact dates.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands, popularly known as “Holland,” offers a host of intriguing cities as well as Amsterdam, one of the world’s unique cities. The Dutch countryside with its windmills, canals and unending but idyllic cow pastures is most pleasant.

Train: Dutch trains are excellent, with two “exactly-on-time” trains per hour between most cities. Ordinary fares are expensive. If you are without a Eurail or Eurail Select railpass, consider the Benelux Flexipass giving unlimited rail travel in the Benelux, which includes all of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg; or the Benelux & Germany Flexipass or Benelux & France Flexipass, adding Germany or France to the mix. All are available from BETS; see our website, www.budgeteuropepetravel.com, or call BETS for details and prices.

Bikes, rented by most train stations, are a perfect way to get into the countryside and do as the Dutch do — ride on the thousands of miles of bike paths that even have their own bicycle traffic signals.

Amsterdam is a city of remarkable physical beauty — it claims to have more canals than Venice. The city also has gained a reputation throughout Europe as being a wide-open, “anything goes” place. But quite distinct from this counterculture atmosphere is the fact that Amsterdam is a visual feast nor to be missed. The heart of the old city is built on wooden piles over a former marsh. The extensive system of canals were the city streets of the 17th-century town. Be sure to take the canal boat tours to fully appreciate these amazing waterways lined with stately townhouses. (Or try the small foot-powered pedalois if you want your own individual float around town.) And don’t miss these highlights: the Rijksmuseum (with paintings by Dutch Masters including Rembrandt’s The Night Watch); the Van Gogh Museum; the Stedelijk Modern Art Museum; the Anne Frank House; the Rembrandt House; and the Maritime (Scheepvaart) Museum. Museumed out? Then retreat to the peaceful courtyard of the Begijnhof, or stroll along the quaint streets and canals of the Jordaan. At night Amsterdam moves as much as any place in Europe. You’ll find one of Europe’s densest cluster of pubs, live music and dancing spots in the Leidseplein. Amsterdam’s

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sailors’ quarter, the Zeedijk, famous for its legal red light district featuring prostitutes behind picture windows, has become a de rigueur tourist sight, sad as that fact may be. The Zeedijk is also Amsterdam’s China Town, a good place to sample the Dutch-Indonesian rijsttafel, a feast of many spicy meats and concoctions served with rice.

Amsterdam’s Heineken Brewery is closed! But the ever-popular tours are still on; the draw here is not the tour, but the generous free quaffing afterwards in the “hospitality” room.

Outside of Amsterdam: Amsterdam is NOT Holland as many Dutch folk will quickly point out. To visit a real Dutch city, try to include in your itinerary one of the many picturesque regional towns, such as Leiden, Delft, Haarlem, Gouda or Alkmaar. With the fast trains and short distances, every point in Holland is an easy day trip from Amsterdam. If you don’t care for big cities, consider basing yourself in one of the smaller towns and commuting to Amsterdam! Saturdays are especially animated in the provinces, one of the best cities even if you can’t come on Friday mornings when the centuries-old cheese auction is held (30 mins by rail). Gouda offers a similar market (July and August) on Thursday (50 mins by train).

The Hague (Den Haag), 45 minutes by rail from Amsterdam, is the seat of the Dutch Government (while Amsterdam is the official capital). One of the most elegant of European cities, The Hague with its many foreign embassies and chic shops has a cosmopolitan look and feel. Its ornate Binnenhof houses the Dutch Parliament; and the Mauritshuis, a 17th-century palace, is the home of a world-famous collection of Dutch masterpieces. The North Sea Jazz Festival, one of Europe’s very best, is held here in mid-July.

Delft, an hour by rail from Amsterdam or 10 minutes by rail from The Hague, may be the loveliest of the smaller Dutch towns with its many canals and remarkable market square. Climb the 357-foot-high church tower for a great view and visit the Porce-leyne Fles factory to see the famous Delft Blue porcelain being handcrafted. Pick up a small tile or one of the company’s venerated Christmas plates for a novel souvenir.

Rotterdam, the world’s largest port, was smashed to smithereens in 1940 — only one building in the town center was left standing.

The Holland of Yesteryear
A nifty day trip from Amsterdam goes to a trio of dreamy historic port towns set near each other on the former Zuiderzee, which, after being diked off from the sea, is now the freshwater lake IJsselmeer. Bus from Amsterdam thru polders (farm-land reclaimed from the sea) to Marken, a fishing village where little has changed in eons, making it a virtual open-air museum of a bucolic bygone Holland. From Marken hop a boat to Volendam, explore its cute old town center, and then bus back to Amsterdam via nearby Edam, another quaint ancient town. Adding to the magic of Marken and Volendam are the locals who wear traditional costumes. Easy rail day trips from Amsterdam go farther up the coast to two more historic port towns, Hoorn (40 mins) and Enkhuizen (1 hr). Enkhuizen offers a popular open-air museum, to which have been transplanted scores of historical edifices to re-create an old Zuiderzee village.

The Kröller-Müller Museum
For a special interest day trip, take the train to Arnhem and then bus to nearby Hoge Veluwe National Park, a large expanse of sand dunes and pine trees and the site of the Kröller-Müller Museum, which offers oodles of Van Goghs, plus Picassos, Suerats, Monets, Mondrians, contemporary art and an outstanding outdoor statue garden. Inside the park you can ride bicycles free of charge on miles of special bike paths.

Come here not to see old-world beauty, but to see how a city rises from the ashes. Rotterdam also offers the highly acclaimed Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, with top-notch art, and tours thru its modern port.

Utrecht, though a large city, is one of the better Dutch towns. For a delightful earful, visit the novel Music Clock and Street Or- gan Museum featuring music boxes and all kinds of automated musical instruments from the 1700s to the present. But the real beauty of Utrecht rests in its pedestrian-thronged shopping area along the old wharves — especially bustling on Saturdays when it hosts a large flea market.

The North Sea beaches are a short train ride from Amsterdam. If the rare sunny day occurs, head for Zandvoort and miles of unspoiled dunes and sandy beaches. But be careful or be bashful — some sections have been officially designated nude beaches and are so marked.

The tulip fields are in full bloom April to early May. Though there are other flowers at all times of summer, nothing is as impressive as the miles of tulips undulating in the wind. Trains from Haarlem to Leiden run thru the heart of the flower belt. In Amsterdam you can buy tulip bulbs at the Flower Market.
and have them shipped home for you. If you wish to see a flower auction, visit Aalsmeer (bus from Amsterdam) or Naaldwijk (bus from The Hague) — the action begins at 7:30 and starts to tail off about 11 am. Tulips, and have them shipped home for you. If you age traveler. A few hours can suffice here to city (home of both alcoholic content!

Don’t just train thru Belgium when going from Amsterdam to Paris — the country offers great historic cities. Although most people see only Brussels, the real gem of Belgium is Brugge, one of Europe’s few medieval-looking cities. Brussels has its merits; but if your time is precious, you may find it is better spent in Brugge, Gent or Antwerp.

Bilingual Country: The Flemish in northern Belgium speak Dutch; the Walloons in the south, French. Brussels, where the two cultures meet, is a bilingual city.

Trains: The Belgian rail system claims to be the densest in the world. There are two trains hourly between all large cities. As Belgium is small, we suggest staying in a base city and using the superb train system to day-trip to other places. The Benelux, Eurail Select, Eurail, Benelux & France and Benelux & Germany railpasses are all valid in Belgium. (All are available from BETS; see www.budgeteuropetravel.com.)

Bikes can be rented at many train stations and returned to any of these. You’ll find numerous bike paths — seek out those along the many canals for a picturesque ride thru the flat countryside.

To Britain: Eurostar trains leave frequently from Brussels to London (2 hrs; special discounted passholder fares are available for all passes valid either in Belgium or Great Britain).

Food Treats: Loosen your belt when coming to Belgium! Belgian cuisine is equal to the best in the world. Taste the moules (mussels), carbonades flamandes (beef cooked in beer) or anguilles au vert (young eels served with herbs). Save room in your tummy for Belgian waffles and the “oh-so-good” chocolates, many with fancy fillings. Belgium is the frites (french fries) capital of the world; surprisingly appetizing are the copious portions served in huge paper cones at frite stands seemingly located on every corner — try the numerous and exotic toppings. The Belgians claim to be Europe’s biggest beer guzzlers. The country produces over 100 different brands of beer. Try the unique “only brewed in Belgium” Trappist beers (developed by cloistered monks) such as Gueuze and cherry-flavored Kriek. But watch out — the sweet innocuous taste of these brews masks an extremely high alcoholic content!

Brussels, while an important bureaucratic city (home of both NATO and the European Union), offers little of interest for the average traveler. A few hours can suffice here to see the two “must” sights: the Grand’ Place, often (and subjectively) called Europe’s finest square, and the Manneken-Pis, a statue of a small “pee-weeing” boy. Also, the Museum of Old Masters has an excellent collection of Flemish art. Nearby Waterloo is the site of the battlefield where Napoleon met Wellington and his personal “waterloo” in 1815 (20 mins from Brussels by suburban train).

Brugge, with its many canals and untouched-by-time look, is called the “Venice of the North.” Thanks to strict preservation laws, little has changed here since the Middle Ages. As Brugge is a small city, its sights can be viewed in a relaxed day trip; however, try to stay in Brugge as the city is loveliest at night when the canals, bridges and old buildings are floodlit. Be sure to take the canal boats for a unique view of the city — although the best view is to be had by climbing the 366 huff-and-puff steps to the top of the Belfry that dominates the impressive Market Square. And don’t miss the serene setting of the 13th-century convent, the Begijnhof. Along with many museums and churches stuffed with old Flemish masterpieces, you’ll find Michelangelo’s Madonna and Child in the Church of Our Lady. Brugge is also famous for its handmade lace, an easy-to-carry souvenir or gift.

If near Brugge on Ascension Day (40 days after Easter), be sure to see the Procession of the Holy Blood, held on this day since 1303. You’ll experience a grand parade with 1,500 townspeople dressed in Biblical and medieval Crusader costumes gathered to pay homage to the town’s religious relic, the Holy Blood (purportedly a vial of Christ’s blood brought back to Brugge by Crusaders in 1149) — housed today in the Basilica of the Holy Blood.

Gent was the second largest city in northern Europe during the Middle Ages as evidenced by its many old guild houses, churches and Brugge-like neighborhoods. St. Bavo’s Cathedral has the Van Eyck brothers’ famous Adoration of the Mystic Lamb and Rubens’ Conversion of St. Bavo. You’ll also find a thronged shopping area and the Castle of the Counts of Flanders with its grim dungeons and torture instruments. In mid-July the Gent Festival, a citywide street fair, offers numerous parades and free outdoor concerts.

Antwerp, much larger than either Brugge or Gent, has more than enough to keep your interest for a full day if not longer. Antwerp is the world’s leading diamond center — visit the factories, where the gems are cut and polished, and the shops where they are sold. Art lovers will be in heaven in Antwerp. The palatial Rubens House, where the artist lived and worked for 30 years, was built according to his philosophy that it is not important to live long but to live well. Antwerp’s superb Gothic Cathedral is a veritable art museum with lovely stained glass and three famous Rubens’ masterpieces including the Descent from the Cross. The Royal Museum of Fine Arts is considered one of the best Flemish art museums in the world. Even non-art lovers will revel at Middelheim, Europe’s largest statue park, with many famous (and provocative) sculptures.

The Ardennes area in eastern Belgium has forested mountains — a dramatic contrast from the flat “lowlands” in the west. The train line from Brussels to Luxembourg thru the Ardennes is most scenic. This area of Belgium was made famous by the Battle of the Bulge, an important turning point in WWII. Bastogne is the scene of major battlefields and the “Nuts” Museum (referring to the one-word reply made by American General McAuliffe to the German ultimatum to surrender — now part of Belgian folklore).

Luxembourg City, the thousand-year-old capital of the Grand Duchy and for centuries one of the most powerful fortresses in the world, is one of Europe’s most physically striking cities with a deep gorge dramatically bisecting it. The view alone is worth a stop; though don’t miss a ramble thru the Casemates, an intriguing 13-mile network of passageways cut from solid rock, or a drink at one of the busy outdoor cafés on the popular square — Place d’Armes. At nearby Hamm, many Americans visit the U.S. Military Cemetery, where General Patton is buried. The rural parts of the Duchy are very picturesque. The Duchy’s train system is surprisingly dense — take a local train into the countryside to a lovely small town like Clervaux with its dreamy 12th-century castle or Ettelbruck to really get off the beaten path. (Luxembourg City is 40 mins by train from Trier, Germany, 2 hrs from Koblenz and the Rhine. Paris is only 2 hrs away with trains going via Epernay or Reims — cities offering excellent tours thru their many champagne caves.)
FRANCE

For many, “France” is only Paris. But Europe’s largest country is a lot more than just the sights of Paris — its real beauty lies in the bucolic countryside punctuated by crumbling orange-roofed villages lost in time. France, the country, like Paris, is not to be missed.

Trains: The French railways are among the best in Europe with service being frequent, punctual and fast. And none are faster than the TGVs that travel up to 220 mph on routes out of Paris to many places, such as Nice, Bordeaux, Geneva, Brussels and London. If you’re focusing only on France, the France Flexipass is a true bargain, or check out the Eural Select or Global. France & Benelux, France & Germany, France & Italy, France & Spain or the France & Switzerland railpasses for other passes valid in France. These passes also give a discount on the Paris–London Eurostar train. (Call BETS or go to www.budgeteuropetravel.com for details and prices of these passes.)

ILE-DE-FRANCE

Paris: The “mandatory” sights will take two to three days: the Louvre (Mona Lisa, Venus de Milo, etc.), with its eye-catching glass pyramid entrance designed by I. M. Pei; the Eiffel Tower (be sure to go all the way to the top for the view of Paris from 1,000 feet high); Notre Dame Cathedral; the Champs-Elysées and Arc de Triomphe; Montmartre and its crowning glory the Sacré Cœur Basilica.

Try to see more than just the “must” sights: go to some of the smaller museums (Rodin, Picasso); gaze upon the monumental Opera Garnier or Grande Arche de la Défense; stroll at night or view the passing crowd from a sidewalk café in the animated Latin Quarter; watch the sword-swallowers, fire-eaters and mimes in front of the Pompidou Center, housing the National Modern Art Museum; view the city at night by a Seine River boat; people-watch in the Tuileries or Luxembourg gardens; wander thru the Sorbonne; catch an organ concert in Notre Dame or climb up to its roof pathways to go eyeball to eyeball with the gargoyles and stone monsters there; shop the ornate grands magasins (department stores) such as Galeries Lafayette or Au Printemps for Paris fashions or perfume; take bizarre tours thru the Catacombs, Père Lachaise Cemetery or Les Égouts (the sewers). Tu cabaret? If so, try one of the many nightclubs — Paris’ nightlife never ceases. There are a thousand intriguing things to do in Paris!

Don’t miss the Orsay Museum, which offers an eclectic mix of various 19th-century art forms including, without question, the world’s greatest collection of impressionist paintings. Apart from the art, it’s worth the price of admission to see the museum building itself — originally a circa 1900 Beaux-Arts train station with a huge vaulted glass and iron roof. Often overlooked by American tourists, but well worth ferreting out, are Sainte Chapelle, with its fabulous wealth of sparkling stained glass, as well as the trendy Marais neighborhood, with its inviting boutiques, cafés, and the Place des Vosges, perhaps the city’s most elegant square.

Day Trips From Paris: Versailles, with its wonderfully extravagant palace, fountains and sprawling gardens, is a must! Bring a picnic, lay back and enjoy the scene. The day trip to Versailles can be combined with Chartres, which is only 30 minutes farther along the same train line. Chartres’ Cathedral is often called the jewel of all medieval European churches; its pellucid-blue stained glass windows are unrivaled.

Reims (30 mins from Paris) is also noted for its Cathedral, the traditional coronation site of the French kings, and its champagne tours. But the best champagne “caves” and tours are in Epernay, less than a half hour from Reims or just over an hour from Paris by train — both Epernay and Reims can be combined easily into the same day trip. Pick champagne tours carefully (ask at the tourist office) to avoid a dry disappointment at the end — only a few, such as the excellent Moët and Chandon tour in Epernay and the Mumm tour in Reims, give samples of the bubbly. Giverny, 50 miles northwest of Paris (Vernon rail stop), offers the gardens of the famous impressionist Claude Monet which were the inspiration for many of his paintings, including his Water Lily series. Van Gogh devotees will want to buzz out to Auvers-sur-Oise to tramp the Artists Trail and literally see this former farm hamlet thru the eyes of the master (1 hr northwest of Paris by train). Chantilly, with its elegant chateau (housing over 600 paintings) and vast park, is only 30 minutes northeast of Paris by rail.

REGIONAL FRANCE

Normandy’s WWII D-Day beaches are near Bayeux (2 hrs from Paris). Take a minibus tour or rent a bike at the station to get to the U.S. military cemetery and famous beaches with memorials and museums. Arromanches, six miles from Bayeux, has an invasion museum with models of the Allies’ artificial Mulberry Harbor, an extraordinary engineering feat (some of which still

The Chateaux of the Loire

Visit at least one of the famous castles that French nobility built in the Loire Valley to serve as their lavish country retreats and private hunting reserves. The chateau country is only one hour by TGV train from Paris to Tours, making day trips from Paris plausible. Tours, Blois or Amboise make good bases for the area. While trains won’t take you right to the gates of most of the castles, convenient bus service is available. Consider biking from nearby train stations to several of the chateaux, such as the “consensus-bests” — Chambord and Chenonceau. (Note: Bikes or cars can be easily rented at several area train stations.)
can be seen off the beach). Bayeux itself is an age-old town famed for its Cathedral and its Bayeux Tapestry, an 11th-century embroidered linen illustrating William the Conqueror’s Norman Conquest of England in 1066.

Mont St. Michel, an awe-inspiring Gothic Abbey, is the most visited French tourist sight outside Paris (4 hrs from Paris). The Abbey, begun in the 11th century, sits atop a rocky island pinnacle one mile off the coast. In years past Mont St. Michel became a part of the mainland at low tide and at high tide returned to its island state; but due to silt ing up of its bay, Mont St. Michel is only an island on rare occasions today. (Nearest railhead is at Pontorson, 6 miles away; bus or taxi from the station, or rent a bike at the station.)

Strasbourg, a great stop when going between Paris (2 hrs 15 mins by rail) and nearby Germany, is an oft-overlooked gem set in the Alsace, a region that’s a unique bilingual blend of Germany and France. Explore Strasbourg’s primo Cathedral and the neighboring old quarter, and soak in the old-time atmosphere in Petite France, an area lined by half-timbered houses and laced by lanes, canals and locks. From Strasbourg, easy rail day trips go to Colmar (30 mins), a cute town with a fab historic center, including its especially quaint Tanners Quarter and Little Venice, or to Baden-Baden, Germany (1 hr), one of Europe’s most famous spa towns (see page 10). The Alsace Wine Route, meandering thru an area between Strasbourg and Mulhouse, traverses a sea of vineyards and a string of pretty wine villages, such as Riquewihr and Ribeauvillé.

Lyon is one of Europe’s most underrated cities. Although a bustling modern metropolis, Lyon’s vieille ville (old town) is unique due to its dark maze of covered alleys and isolated courtyards with wrought-iron grills and spiral iron staircases. Lyon is only two hours from Paris by speedy TGV and makes a good stopover on the way to the Riviera.

Avignon is an ideal stop between Paris and the Riviera or Spain, and is a great base from which to tour Provence, one of Europe’s top tourist haunts. (The TGV-Med bullet train makes the trip from Paris to Avignon in under three hours!) Little has changed inside Avignon’s intact walls since medieval times. Be sure to see the famous 14th-century Palace of the Popes, a huge structure built to house several Popes after they had to flee from Italy. Come to Avignon, if you can, during the immensely popular Avignon Festival (last three weeks of July) when the town is alive day and night.

Day Trips From Avignon: Arles, Nimes, St. Rémy and Orange all showcase some of the best-preserved Roman artifacts in Europe. For an unimaginable thrill, walk across the Pont du Gard, a 2000-year-old Roman aqueduct that soars 180 feet above a river valley. Visit Les Baux to see the unusual haunting ruins of an entire medieval citadel town that cap a dramatic outcrop of rock. Châteauneuf-du-Pape, famous for its vineyards, offers tours and free tastings.

Aix-en-Provence, a venerable university town, may have more sidewalk cafés and book shops per capita than any other French town! (These places are within 30 minutes to an hour from Avignon.)

Carcassonne, on the way to Spain from France (1 hr from Toulouse), is often called the world’s most impressive fortified medieval town, with its double defensive walls and 52 towers dating from the 13th century. It looks even better today than it did during the Middle Ages; for beginning in the mid-1800s, it was completely restored to mint-like condition from the remaining rubble.

The French Riviera

Don’t miss the French Riviera (Côte d’Azur) as it has an atmosphere and serene beauty of its own. While most tourists flock to the well-known resorts of Nice, Monte-Carlo or Cannes, much of the Riviera’s charm lies in the isolated coves and beaches that stretch for miles along the Mediterranean coast. If possible, try to avoid the hectic August vacation period.

Trains: Rail service along the Riviera is excellent with two trains an hour hugging the coast from St. Raphaël to the Italian border. These “locals” stop every few miles, making the train a great way to explore even the most isolated reaches along the coast.

Beaches: If you want crowds, head for the sands at Cannes, Antibes, Monte-Carlo or Cannes, much of the Riviera’s charm lies in the isolated coves and beaches that stretch for miles along the Mediterranean coast. If possible, try to avoid the hectic August vacation period.

Nice is the best base city for the area with plentiful accommodations always available, even in August. (If on a budget, stick to Nice as other areas are much more upscale than this more workaday city.) Nice itself merits
Train Excursions into the Maritime Alps

Consider one of the following two train trips to see the lovely mountainous area inland from the coast. These trips can be taken as day trips from Nice or can be used as a slowpoke meandering way of going to Paris, Switzerland or Italy.

The “Ligne Digne” is a superb ride via a tiny train that twists and tunnels thru the rugged Maritime Alps. People who have queasy stomachs, however, may wish to stay away as the ride is washboard rough. Yet this vibrating train will certainly be one of the highlights of your trip that you won’t be able to shake from your mind as it is an incredible voyage thru magnificent countryside and villages lost in time. If on a day trip, we advise aborting midway and adding in a short hike before returning to Nice. Entrevaux and Annot, towns right out of the Middle Ages, are good places to do this. A short walk from either town will lead you to the gushing Var River. If you can survive the whole three hours to Digne, you can transfer there to a bus taking you to St. Auban (a 35-minute ride) to connect with the regular French rail system (with connections to Paris, or to Switzerland via Grenoble and Geneva).

Stop at Digne, a pleasant spa town, if you wish to break your journey. The “Ligne Digne” is a private railway that is 50% off with any railpass valid in France.

Nice to Sospel is a smooth one-hour train ride that takes you thru the mountains to Sospel, a colorful backwater market town very different from the touristy Riviera. (Free with railpasses. If you wish, continue on this scenic line to Cuneo, Italy and then on to Turin. From Nice: Cuneo 3 hrs; Turin 5 hrs; Milan 6.5 hrs.)

Walking the French Riviera

Hiking is great along much of the Riviera. For an easy seaside walk from the Cap-d’Ail train station, take footpaths along the rocky coast to Monaco, a two-mile stroll revealing the natural beauty of the Côte d’Azur. A similar walk can be taken on footpaths from Cap-Martin back to Monaco. Bring picnic supplies and swimming gear. Even in August, you’ll find few people along the paths.

St. Tropez. 30 miles by bus from the St. Raphaël train station, was once an exclusive beach resort of movie stars, artists and the very wealthy. It is quickly becoming a plebian tourist center, much to the disdain of the few remaining jet setters.

The Principality of Monaco offers the Prince’s Palace, acclaimed Oceanographic Museum and superlative Tropical Garden. Rub shoulders with the rich and famous at the enormous yacht marina or at the ornate Monte-Carlo Casino, the queen of all European casinos with its rich rococo interior.

Ventimiglia, where the coastal shuttle train terminates, lets you experience Italy as a day trip. San Remo, a bit farther into Italy, offers a world-famous flower market and the chaotic bustle typical of Italy.

Corsica, three hours by boat from Nice, is an Italian-speaking French island. Its idyllic beaches are less crowded than those on the mainland. All railpasses valid in France give a 50% discount off Corsica’s trains, but no discounts on boats from the mainland (fares start at $50 each way). If going on to Italy from Corsica, catch a boat to Livorno near Pisa.

a whole day for its famous beach, superb shopping, excellent museums and Roman ruins. At night don’t miss the vieille ville (old town) with its tangle of narrow alleys, many outdoor restaurants and sidewalk cafés. Try bouillabaisse (a fish soup) to sample a local culinary specialty. If in Nice in mid-July, you can take in the famous Grande Parade du Jazz, featuring 250 of the world’s greatest jazz musicians. Concerts are held nightly in the Roman Arena overlooking Nice.

St. Paul-de-Vence and Èze, easy day trips from Nice, are two superlative ancient ramparted hilltop villages. Today, both are brimming with artsy boutiques and, unfortunately, hordes of tourists, but rambling up and down their hilly narrow car-free lanes is still a joy.

The Cannes area gushes with wealth. Cannes itself, besides its beaches, marinas filled with colossal yachts, and promenade of expensive boutiques appealing to jet setters, has little of interest for the average tourist.

Grasse, the French perfume capital, offers tours thru its perfumeries. Mougins, once the home of Picasso, is a small hilltop village with tremendous views overlooking the coast. Antibes and Juan-les-Pins offer some of the area’s best sandy beaches. Antibes is also famous for its Picasso Museum; Juan-les-Pins for its upscale nightlife.

The “Little Yellow Train”

A novel way to go between France and Spain is to hop the scenic “Little Yellow Train” (free with railpasses valid in France) going from Perpignan, on the main coastal rail line, to La Tour de Carol, high in the Pyrenees on the Spanish border. Here you’ll switch to the Puigcerdà Line (free with railpasses valid in Spain), which meanders down to Barcelona; or instead opt to go to Toulouse on yet another extremely scenic rail line. For a thrill sit in one of the open-air cars on the toy-like “Little Yellow Train” as it slowly thunders its way thru the mountains of this rugged region. To add another country to your trip, visit Andorra, 38 miles by bus from La Tour de Carol.

Spain is Europe’s #1 tourist destination for Europeans. Many come for the beaches and many for the old-world lifestyle that permeates the country. Nights are especially animated as the cities come to life after the afternoon-long siesta. Streets are crowded with strolling people and musicians; cafés are full well past midnight — a unique Spanish ambience. Paella (a rice dish), sangria and flamenco dancing are three more pleasures of Spanish life. Best of all, the prices in Spain are lower than much of Europe. If possible, avoid travel here in August when many European vacationers descend en masse on the country, trains are most crowded and the weather boiling hot.

Trains: RENFE, the Spanish Railways, has improved train quality greatly in recent years; the hourly AVE trains between Barcelona and Madrid and between Madrid and Seville are superior trains, zipping along at speeds of up to 220 mph. Spain, however, still offers less frequency of service than the rest of Europe — so if planning extensive rail traveling here, allow more time than you expect. The many overnight trains make sense due to the long distances. The Spain, Eurail Select or Global, Spain & Portugal, France & Spain and the Italy & Spain railpasses all give unlimited rail travel in Spain. See www.budgeteurotravels.com for details and prices of all passes valid in Spain.

Spanish-French Border: The tracks in Spain are wider than those in the rest of Europe; but if you’re on a Spanish Talgo train going directly to Madrid or Barcelona, you’ll just cruise past the border as they have adjustable wheels. On the other hand, if you are riding a French train, you’ll have to leave the train at the border and transfer to a Spanish train. Although this is straightforward, it is advisable to have made a seat or sleeper reservation in advance as all trains in Spain (except local ones) require them, and reservation lines at the border can be long. (Reservations can be made as far as 60-90 days in advance at most rail stations in Europe or thru BETS; we advise you to reserve early!)

Catalonia: Barcelona, only two hours from France, is a gem that can be easily included in any Eurail itinerary. For the 1992 Olympics, the city spent billions sprucing up its labyrinth-like, centuries-old Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter), many attractive parks, and amazing collec-

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tion of edifices by Gaudí (an architect who designed buildings as works of modern art). Don’t miss Gaudí’s Parc Güell, an incredible fantasy park, or his wildly unconventional cathedral, Sagrada Família (begun in 1883 and nearing completion only now). Barcelona is lively at night; thousands stroll Las Ramblas, the main boulevard thru the old quarter. Outdoor concerts, street dances and busy sidewalk cafés add to the festive atmosphere.

**Day Trips From Barcelona:** A one-hour train ride takes you to Montserrat and its spectacular mountain setting. Millions have made pilgrimages here since AD 880 to visit the famous Black Madonna Shrine (a wooden carving attributed to St. Luke) and the Monastery that was founded to house it. The view from Montserrat is perhaps the best reason to come here as on a clear day the panorama stretches from the Pyrenees Mountains to the Balearic Islands off the coast. Sitges, 45 minutes by train from Barcelona, with its super beaches and plentiful clubs, sizzles by day or night. Stop by Girona, 90 minutes from Barcelona, to wander its charming old quarter’s narrow lanes, winding your way up from the river to the Cathedral, at the top of a monumental 90-step staircase.

Figueras, two hours north of Barcelona and only 20 minutes by train from the French border, is famous for its Dalí Museum celebrating the maestro’s surrealist works. Salvador Dalí and other well-known artists, such as Magritte, lived at the nearby art colony, Cadaqués, called the prettiest town of the Costa Brava — the Mediterranean coast between Barcelona and France.

**THE BASQUE COUNTRY**

The mountainous Basque Country (País Vasco) straddles the French-Spanish border in northeastern Spain. The exact origin of the Basque people remains a mystery — they are not Spanish and their language resembles no other European tongue. Pelota (jai alai), a Basque game similar to handball, originated in this area. Each city has a jai alai frontón where you can watch and bet on the players.

San Sebastián, near the French border, is a convenient stop on the Paris–Madrid rail line. Called the Pearl of the Cantabrian Coast, this fashionable Basque resort, set on a captivat- ing seashell-shaped bay, has inviting sandy beaches, many nightspots, and restaurants that are a gastronome’s delight. Its old quarter and shoreline promenades make for inspiring walking venues. A private commuter rail line (not valid with railpasses) links San Sebastián to Bilbao, which has the celebrated Guggenheim Contemporary Art Museum in an out-of-this-world titanium-and-glass structure.

El Escorial, the “Spanish Versailles,” is on the same train line as Ávila. An immense 16th-century palace with 300 rooms and 2,600 windows, it is called the best Renaissance building in Spain. Segovia, like Ávila, has intact town walls but with only 86 towers. It also offers a famous Roman Aqueduct, 40 medieval churches and its Alcázar — a Moorish fairy-tale castle of unusual beauty. Toledo, which sits on a hill overlooking a craggy gorge, is famous for its Cathedral, Synagogue, and its interesting town center resembling an Arab casbah with its warren of tiny alleys. Stop in Aranjuez to tour its grandiose Royal Palace, with its unique Porcelain Room and graceful gardens.

Cáceres, a possible stopover by rail between Madrid (4 hrs) and Lisbon (7 hrs), has a deliciously preserved historic center, an antique marvel demanding to be photographed. Salamanca, a university town three hours from Madrid, is classified as a national historic site due to its citywide untouched look and its Plaza Mayor — considered to be one of the most beautiful squares in the world.

Burgos, on the Paris–Madrid rail line, is one of Spain’s most notable centers of Gothic art and architecture. Its major Gothic Cathedral — Spain’s third largest — is Burgos’ most famous landmark.

León, a bit off the tourist track, has the outstanding Gothic Cathedral with acclaimed stained glass, San Isidoro Basílica’s Royal Pantheon with arresting ceiling frescoes, and the former San Marcos Monastery, now a state-run parador hotel fit for royalty.

**GALICIA**

Galicia is the remote northwestern area of Spain. Although well off the main Euraill

Spanish bullfights (corridas) are held on many Sundays from mid-May to late September. Though these blood baths have lost popularity in recent years, they are still held in most major cities.

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lines, if touring Spain extensively, be sure not to miss Santiago de Compostela, the third most popular Christian pilgrimage town in the world after Rome and Jerusalem. You’ll find the famous Shrine of St. James the Apostle in the 11th-century Cathedral. Besides its centuries-old religious significance, Santiago is a bustling university town that has retained its medieval old quarter virtually intact — in fact, the entire old quarter has been designated a national historic site.

**ANDALUSIA**

Once ruled by the Moors, this region of southern Spain exhibits a strong Arab influence in its architecture. Exploring Andalusia will entail traveling in one of Europe’s hottest climates — in summer the average high is 97°. Seville offers not only many Moorish relics, but also Europe’s third largest Cathedral, whose richly decorated interior includes famous paintings by Murillo and Goya. La Giralda, the symbol of Seville, is a former minaret of a mosque, but is now the Cathedral’s belfry. Climb to the top on its gently sloping ramp for a good view of Seville. Also of special interest are the Alcázar, an exquisite 14th-century royal palace, and the narrow lanes of the Barrio de Santa Cruz, with its intimate café-filled squares. The city also has an energetic night life and a cosmopolitan flare, perhaps due to the thousands of foreigners studying here. Its many flamenco pubs attest to the fact that Seville was the birthplace of flamenco dance and music.

**Jerez de la Frontera** is the home of sherry wine (a British corruption of “Jerez”), sherry tours, and the Royal Riding School with its prancing Andalusian horses.

**Córdoba,** the capital of Moorish Spain, was one of the world’s greatest cities during the tenth century. Its extraordinary Mosque is a vivid reminder of Córdoba’s Moorish heritage even though it was later transformed by the city’s Christian conquerors into a most unique cathedral.

**Ronda** is famous for its Plaza de Toros, Spain’s oldest bullfighting arena. Traditional bullfights are held each September. The setting of the town is striking; a canyon splits the old Moorish section from the new town.

**Granada,** with its old Arab quarter and Alhambra, one of the world’s finest Moorish palaces with intricate marble carvings and mosaics, is a “must” if in Andalusia.

The Costa del Sol is a string of modern beach resorts on Spain’s southern Mediterranean coast. Torremolinos and Fuengirola are just two of the beach towns that attract tremendous numbers of foreigners to fill their endless line of high-rise hotels — it’s hard to find anything Spanish about this region.

**Algeciras** is the gateway to Morocco, with ferries to Tangier (2 hrs; $60 round trip).

The Costa Blanca makes a convenient and pleasant stopover between Andalusia and Barcelona. Alicante is a good bet with its beautiful beaches and impressive Castillo de Santa Barbara, a castle perched on a hilltop overlooking the Mediterranean.

The rest of the coast is full of high-rise beach resorts catering to the annual tourist invasion.

**PORTUGAL**

Portugal, vying with Greece for being Europe’s cheapest country, is well worth the detour off the main Eurail routes as it has a unique charm and lifestyle far different from the rest of Europe or even neighboring Spain.

**Trains:** Because Portugal is remote from Europe proper, Eurail Global and Eurail Select railpasses are a good value to get you there and back, and are valid in Portugal, as are the Portugal and the Spain & Portugal railpasses. (Call BETS or go to our website, www.budgeteuropetravel.com, for details and prices of these passes.)

**Lisbon,** with its antique charm, is one of Europe’s nicest cities. Don’t miss the colorful Alfama section with its maze of narrow twisting corridors and turn-of-the-century trolloys; the great views from the hilltop St. George’s Castle; the intricately sculpted Jerónimos Monastery; the intriguing National Coach Museum, one of the world’s finest collections of carriages; and the Baixa area with its hundreds of restaurants and sidewalk cafés. Easy day trips from Lisbon are to Sintra and its fairy-tale palaces; the beach resorts of Cascais and Estoril; and magical Óbidos with its castle and whitewashed houses encircled by ancient walls.

**Évora** is a dream city right out of medieval times — its charming grid of tiny walled lanes are still paved with timeworn stones (2 hrs by train from Lisbon). Its São Francisco Church includes the bizarre Capela dos Ossos, a chapel lined with the bones and skulls of 5,000 departed souls. Évora is a good stopover if heading to the Algarve in southern Portugal.

The Algarve, one of Europe’s most famous beach areas, is filled with foreigners on package holidays. Train service from Lisbon to Faro or Lagos, two of the most popular resort towns, is good. For less-touristed beaches, try the area near Sagres and the stretch between the fishing villages of Olhão and Tavira. If going on to Spain, a bus from Faro to Seville is the easiest option. As there is a rail gap at the border, going by rail involves switching to a ferry or bus to cross the Guadiana River and then changing to a second bus for the 40-mile ride to Huelva in Spain to connect with trains to Seville.

Nazaré, on the Atlantic, is worth a stop to see a centuries-old fishing village (rail to Vila- lado, then bus 4 miles). It’s easy to day-trip by bus from Nazaré to the nearby famous monasteries at Alcobaca and Batalha.

Tomar is notable for the 12th-century fortified Convento de Cristo dominating the town and once the Portuguese headquarters of the Knights Templars (2 hrs north by rail from Lisbon). The neighboring pilgrimage town of Fátima is a short bus ride away.

**Porto,** with its dramatically breathtaking setting on the Douro River, oozes old-world ambience in its old quarter, whose many buildings are decorated with vibrant azulejo tiles. Must-do stops are the port-wine tours; the 12th-century Cathedral and its azulejo-rich Cloisters; the São Francisco Church, with a show-stopping exuberant golden interior; and the Bolsa Palace’s Arabian Hall, sporting an intricate Arab-inspired decor. Easy day trips are to Guimarães, called the Cradle of Portugal, to tour the Dos Duques Palace and climb the Castle Tower; to the cathedral city Braga and the nearby pilgrimage stop, the Bom Jesus do Monte; to the seaside resort Viano do Castelo, which, along with a fine historic center, has the Santa Luzia Basilica, yet another pilgrimage spot; to Coimbra to check out its Old Cathedral and Old University; and a boat or train ride up the vineyard-clad Douro River Valley. From Porto you can go on to Santiago in northwest Spain (5.5 hrs).

**GREAT BRITAIN**

Britain is one of the most enjoyable countries to visit by train. Service is fast and frequent and reaches into nearly every corner of this historic land. Unfortunately, rail prices have soared in the past few years, making a BritRail Pass a valuable ticket even if you are planning to take only a few rail journeys. (Call BETS or see www.budgeteuropetravel.com for details on the All-Brit, England, Scotland, London Plus and Britain & Ireland railpasses.)

Note: The order of the following thumbnail sketches can be used as a rail-loop itinerary around Britain starting from London.

**Oxford,** the city of “dreaming spires,” has over 600 buildings of architectural and historical interest within a square mile. Walk thru the 39 colleges of the University — Magdalen College, with its 15th-century buildings, is considered the most beautiful. Blenheim Palace, home to the Dukes of Marlborough, eight miles away in Woodstock (frequent buses), is a must for those interested in seeing how the royals live. Winston Churchill was
Cambridge, more peaceful than Oxford and with a bit more grandeur, is the epitome of a university town. The highlight of any visit is King’s College Chapel, an exquisite structure of stone and glass. Most of the University’s quadrangles, chapels and gardens are open to the public — don’t miss Trinity College. Punting or rowing on the River Cam as it meanders thru the University’s grounds is a popular tourist sport. (1 hr from London.)

Lincoln is a small beautiful city dominated by one of England’s finest cathedrals. Walk up the steep cobbled streets to the triple-tiered 12th-century Cathedral. Across the way are extensive remains of the Castle, one of William the Conqueror’s. (2 hrs from London.)

York, an important city from Roman times, still has over three miles of its city walls intact. Built on Roman foundations with medieval gates, you can walk atop the walls for a different view of the city. York has many historic buildings with its crowning glory being York Minster, which contains some of Europe’s finest stained-glass windows including the largest medieval window — over 2,000 square feet. Walk down the Shambles, a cobbledstone street with half-timbered houses lurching upwards at precarious angles. If you enjoy trains, visit the National Railway Museum; and, if shopping is your bag, York rivals any city in Europe. (2 hrs from London.)

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh is a physically impressive-looking city with its Castle perched high atop an extinct volcano. Walk the famed Royal Mile — the old section of the city that stretches out and down the hill from the Castle to the Palace of Holyrood, the Queen’s official Scottish residence. If possible, visit during the Edinburgh Festival (mid-August thru early September). Besides classical pursuits, such as opera, orchestra and ballet, there is the Military Tattoo, a myriad of military bands in full regalia with their bagpipes and drums, plus the famous Fringe Festival, which is made up of hundreds of small dance and theater companies presenting a wide diversity of music, dance, mime, comedy and more — all at cheap prices. And the friendly pubs are packed with revelers each night. Easy day hops can be made to Stirling to roam its mighty crag-top Castle; and to St. Andrews (rail stop: Leuchars), to pay homage to the Old Course and walk among the ruins of the Castle and the Cathedral, all along a stunning rugged coast.

Inverness is considered the jumping-off point for the Highlands, and with just that in mind, hundreds of hikers “jump off” the train here each day. But in reality there is not much here besides Loch Ness and its plethora of “Nessie” stories. While Inverness itself is a nice city, Fort William, a small jewel on the shore of Loch Linnhe, makes a much better base for hiking in the Highlands. Ben Nevis (4,406 ft), Britain’s highest peak, is an easy climb, and there are excellent walks thru the Glen Nevis valley.

BACK TO ENGLAND

Windermere is the hub city (though often overcrowded) for the magnificent Lake District. Though many tourists, with the exception of a quick ride on one of the lake boats, never get far from the city’s dozens of boutiques, it is quite easy to enjoy the splendid scenery of the surrounding countryside in relative isolation as there are many trails lacing England’s premier nature area. (2 hrs from Glasgow; 3 1/2 hrs from London.)

Blackpool is a Coney-Island-type resort catering to the British working class. With its Golden Mile of beaches, amusement arcades, fish-and-chip shops and, of course, pubs, this is a city dedicated to nothing but fun — there is no pretense about history or culture here. Blackpool is most famous for its “Illuminations”; in September and...
Hadrian's Wall: An Untouristed Splendor

Marking the most northern frontier of the Roman Empire, this 14-foot-high wall built by the Emperor Hadrian in AD 122 ran for 73 miles across northern England partitioning it from barbaric Scotland. Today, you can walk along several surviving stretches much as the Roman soldiers did almost 2,000 years ago. While somewhat isolated, it’s also devoid of the hordes of tourists that so often smother even the most beautiful of places. There are busés to the wall from Hexham station, on the line from Newcastle to Carlisle. (Hexham itself is a quaint village with an interesting abbey containing a fine Anglo-Saxon crypt.) If you enjoy walking, there is a scenic three-mile uphill walk to the wall from Bardon Mill station, a few stops past Hexham coming from Newcastle. The remains of a Roman fort and village, Vindolanda, are along this walk. There are several Roman forts along the wall with the best being Chesters Fort (Cilurnum) at Chollerford about five miles from Hexham. (Hexham is about 1 hr from Carlisle or Newcastle.)

October, 375,000 bulbs light up the promenade each night in a kaleidoscope of shapes and colors. (1 1/2 hrs from Liverpool.)

Chester is one of the prettiest cities in England, yet it’s largely unknown to foreign tourists. Chester was established by the Romans in AD 79, and Roman ruins still remain including an amphitheater and a two-mile stretch of wall upon which you can walk. There is a fine cathedral, but the highlight of Chester is the double-arched shopping streets, first built in the 13th century, known as The Rows. The shops housed within these unique two-tiered walks are among the best in Britain. (2 1/2 hrs from London; 1/2 hr from Liverpool.)

A Rail Journey in Wales

Starting at Chester, take the train along the scenic north coast to Llandudno, Wales’ largest resort city. From here take the Conwy Valley Line that makes its way up a river valley and thru Snowdonia National Park to Betws-y-Coed. This small mountain resort makes a good stopover. There are several beautiful walks in the area. Next continue on to the slate-mining town of Blaenau Ffestiniog where you transfer to the steam-powered Ffestiniog Railway. This narrow-gauge line descends thru a mountain valley to Porthmadog. Here you change to the Cardigan Bay Line. Britain’s most scenic seacoast line, continuing on to Birmingham via Shrewsbury. (About 7 hrs total rail time.) Near Birmingham, visit Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Warwick is a quaint town worth visiting for its impressive 13th-century Castle, one of the few medieval castles that remains a residence (the Earl of Warwick’s). Many of its most magnificent rooms are open to the public. The half-timbered buildings lining the city’s narrow-streets, including the superlative 14th-century Lord Leycester’s Hospital, quickly spur your imagination to picture English town life 500 years ago. (1 1/2 hrs from Birmingham; 2 1/2 hrs from London.)

Stratford-upon-Avon, while an impressive town, is unfortunately over-touristed. But if you are a Shakespeare buff, you may be willing to endure the tour-bus hordes; there are plenty of Shakespeare memorabilia, including his birthplace, a 16th-century half-timbered house. At the Royal Shakespeare Theater, the Bard’s plays are performed from November thru September, but advance reservations are usually required — there are a few “returns” available for each performance for those willing to spend a few hours in line. (1/2 hr from Warwick.)

Bath, England’s most elegant town, has been famed for centuries for its hot springs. The Romans founded a spa here, building a complex of baths around the springs. Today, much of their early engineering is preserved in the Roman Baths Museum. Not knowing about the Roman baths, the English built a Georgian Pump Room in the 17th century on the same site. Here the hot spring water is still pumped for drinking. The splendor of Bath is in its riches of Georgian architecture — walk around the city to see the Royal Crescent, The Circus (a circle of houses), and Pulteney Bridge, lined with shops on either side. Also of note are the Abbey Church and the Museum of Costume, which displays dress from the 17th century to the present. (1 1/4 hrs from London; 1 hr from Birmingham.)

Salisbury is noted for its early English Gothic Cathedral. The spire, the tallest in England (404 ft), was added as an afterthought in 1334, and ever since the church has been slowly sinking under its massive weight. One of the four original copies of the Magna Carta is housed in the Cathedral’s Chapter House. Two miles north of the Cathedral is the original site of the town, known as Old Sarum, which today is an archaeological treasure trove containing remains from the Iron Age to the Norman period. A few miles farther on is Stonehenge (a short bus ride away). While this double circle of huge stones is one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world, it fails to impress many people when seen firsthand. One needs to imagine the Bronze Age people who built Stonehenge, 3,500 to 4,000 years ago. For these people who worshipped the Sun and Moon as gods, Stonehenge probably served as an astronomical calendar to pinpoint celestial events of religious importance like the summer solstice. It was also a most sacred place of worship, which included ritual human sacrifices especially on a day such as the solstice. (1 1/2 hrs from London.)

Penzance, a seaside village on the tip of the Cornwall Peninsula, makes a good base for exploring the gorgeous Cornish countryside including Land’s End, the most western point of the English mainland. Along the coast there are many wonderfully isolated and wild beach coves to explore; and don’t miss St. Michael’s Mount (3 miles from Penzance), a smaller but far less touristy version of the Benedictine abbey of Mont St. Michel in Normandy, France. You reach the island via causeway or ferry (at high tide). (4 hrs from London; 3 hrs from Bath.)

Winchester is a small lovely town that still retains the flavor of its 2,000-year-old past. The capital of pre-Norman England, the city contains many historic buildings, the most magnificent being the 11th-century Cathedral. Jane Austen is buried here. A table purposed to be the legendary Round Table of King Arthur is displayed in the 13th-century Great Hall atop Castle Hill. (1 1/2 hrs from London; 1 1/2 hr from Salisbury.)

Isle of Wight is ideal for people looking for something different. This small island (4 miles from the mainland) has a myriad of public footpaths, some of which take you to the tops of high bluffs overlooking the sea. Take a ferry from Portsmouth on the mainland to Ryde and then ride a 1920’s London subway car to Shanklin — a good hub village with a beautiful beach, many thatched-roof cottages, and a spectacular gorge running down from the clifftop to the sea. (2 hrs from London.)

Brighton, a seaside resort only an hour away from London, is notable for its Georgian and Victorian architecture, including its exotic Royal Pavilion. But, unfortunately, the “boardwalk” area along the beach displays numerous signs of decay as many Britons today prefer to vacation in sunny Spain, although the beach is still crowded on a rare warm day.

Canterbury, the seat of the Anglican Church, is dominated by its magnificent Gothic Cathedral with some of the best stained glass in existence. Dating from 1067, the Cathedral has been an important pilgrimage destination since Thomas Becket was murdered in the Cathedral in 1170. The town has narrow lanes crowded with half-timbered houses — making this a fun city for people who like to amble about dreaming of what medieval life was like. For added flavor, a 13th-century wall atop Roman foundations surrounds part of the city. Perhaps the one drawback is the screaming children that...
Britain’s finest palace; Windsor Castle, in the cute Thames town of Windsor; “flowerful” Kew Gardens; Greenwich and its super Royal Observatory, Old Royal Naval College, Queen’s House, National Maritime Museum, and Cutty Sark clipper ship.

IRELAND

A visit to the Emerald Isle, in many ways, is like stepping back in time. This is especially true in the west of Ireland where traditional ways still endure — it is common to see horse-drawn carts on the roads, to smell acrid blue smoke as it rises from the chimneys of peat-burning stoves, and to hear Gaelic still being spoken in the shops and pubs. Many Irish cities still have a 19th-century “Dickensian” feeling to them. Though visiting Ireland is certainly a rewarding experience, it requires careful planning and much time as it’s far removed from the main European tourist tracks.

Trains: The Irish rail system is not as extensive as other Eurail countries, and the frequency of service is often only once or twice per day. The main rail lines, which radiate spoke-like out of Dublin, are not well cross-connected, but local buses fill in the gaps. With a bit of planning, rail travel is still a good way to see Ireland. The Ireland Flexipass, Eurail Global and Eurail Select (with Ireland added) provide rail travel in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. These railpasses also give 30% off on the ferry from Rosslare to France (sailings about every other day to either Cherbourg or Roscoff from February thru December; $115 one way without Eurail). The British & Ireland Flexipass gives rail travel in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain. (Call BETS or see www.budgeteuropetravel.com for details.) As the isolated West Coast of Ireland is the desired destination of most, you need to allow a minimum of one week to see Ireland. One possible itinerary for seeing Ireland is worthy of a day stop to see this hilly port city. The city center, set between two branches of the River Lee, has a romantic feel to it. For a great view of the city, climb to St. Ann’s Church, renowned for its lyrical bells. Plenty of pubs give vitality to Cork nights — most have entertainment which runs the gamut from rock to traditional Irish folk music.

Blarney, five miles northwest of Cork, is home to the ruin of Blarney Castle and its famous Blarney Stone. The stone is said to give you a “silver tongue” loquaciousness, but only after precariously dangling backwards over the castle walls and pressing your lips up against it!

Killarney is the hub city for County Kerry where mountains, quaint villages and seascapes combine to create a setting of magical beauty. There is little in Killarney itself — instead rent a bike and explore the countryside. The Gap of Dunloe (about ten miles west of Killarney), a picturesque mountain gorge produced by the last Ice Age, makes for an interesting destination. Also, from Killarney many begin the 100-mile circular route of the Iveragh Peninsula called the Ring of Kerry. Buses ply the route of this luscious, mountain-sided seacoast — unfortunately, it’s often shrouded in a rainy mist.

Tralee and the Dingle Peninsula, a bit further to the north of Killarney, is the heart of the Gaelic-speaking region. Tralee at the end of the rail line is the gateway to the peninsula. From here bus to Dingle, a small fishing village with over 50 pubs, which

But there is much more to London than its museums — allow a day for just exploring at will. Visit any of London’s great parks, like Green Park, St. James’s Park, Kensington Gardens, Regent’s Park, or Hyde Park, where on Sundays at Speakers’ Corner anyone can take to a soapbox and pontificate to critical crowds. If shopping is your bag, shop Oxford Street, London’s busiest shopping drag; or Knightsbridge, an area with spiffy shops, such as Harrods, one of the world’s most elegant department stores; or colorful street markets like Camden Lock (weekends), Portobello Road (Saturdays; antiques) and Petticoat Lane (Sunday mornings). First-rate theater is plentiful; nab half-price tickets for many plays, except smash hits, in Leicester Square at the “official” Society of London Theatre “tkt” Ticket Booth (Mon-Sat 10am-7pm; Sun 11am-4pm for matinees only; by the Hampshire Hotel; www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk).

On London’s outskirts are Henry VIII’s dazzling Hampton Court Palace, called
makes a good base for exploring the peninsula. Make sure you walk along the spectacular coastline or rent a bike and ride to the end of the peninsula (about ten miles from Dingle) where the Atlantic waves crash against the Irish coast. Also in the vicinity, there are many archaeological remains left behind by early-Christian monks.

**Limerick**, a transportation hub, can serve as a convenient base for seeing the West Country if your time is short — there are bus day trips from here to the surrounding sights at Galway, the Dingle Peninsula and the Ring of Kerry. Shannon Airport is nearby.

**Dublin** should not be your reason for coming to Ireland; while it’s the Irish capital, it has little of the splendor usually associated with capital cities. But it makes a good departing point for ferrying to Britain and eventually the Continent. Dublin is an easy city to see on foot: start with the most gracious part of Dublin — Trinity College and the area around St. Stephen’s Green. There are many fine churches with Christ Church Cathedral and St. Patrick’s Cathedral being the most famous. The Guinness Brewery, a highlight of any trip to Dublin, not only offers tours but free stout (during pub hours only). Dublin is best known for its night entertainment; there is excellent theater, plenty of dancing spots, plus the “singing” pubs where Irish folk music is on center stage.

## POLAND

Poland can easily be added on to a Eurail extravaganza. And with its gut of interesting historic towns, many of which are still rarely visited by tourists, Poland can make an intriguing adventure.

**Trains:** The Polish State Railways offers one of the densest rail networks, with frequent service to most Polish cities. Passes valid for travel in Poland are the Polish Flexipass; the regional **European East Flexipass**, which gives unlimited rail travel in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic; and the **Poland & Germany Flexipass**. (Call or go to **www-budgeteurope-travel.com** for prices.)

**Warsaw**, the capital city, though reduced to rubble in WWII, has a miraculously restored old quarter with the painstakingly rebuilt Royal Castle, Old Town Market Square, and St. John’s Cathedral, all surrounded as they were centuries ago by the Barbican, the rebuilt town ramparts. **Lazienki Park** is home to the Palace on the Water and the Chopin Monument. The Baroque Wilanów Palace, the Versailles of Poland, is as popular and as crowded as its French counterpart.

**Kraków** (3 hrs south of Warsaw), Poland’s medieval capital, should be the prime focus of any trip to Poland. Must sights are their cobbled old quarter, with its spacious **Main Market Square**, immense **Cloth Hall**, 58 churches including the Gothic St. Mary’s Church; **Wawel Hill** crowned with the **Royal Castle** and the monumental **Wawel Cathedral**; and **Kazimierz**, one of Europe’s most vibrant Jewish quarters prior to WWII, where you can visit the **Old Synagogue**, today a museum of Jewish culture.

A must day trip from Kraków is to the notorious **Auschwitz Concentration Camp** (near Oswiecim; 2 hrs). Also worth a visit is the **Wieliczka Salt Mine** (30 mins), where Polish miners over the centuries have carved thousands of salt sculptures including the expansive **Blessed St. Kinga’s Chapel** that is lit by salt-crystal chandeliers.

**Czeschowa** (4 hrs southwest of Warsaw) is world renowned for its **Jasna Góra Monastery** housing the venerated religious icon, the **Black Madonna**.

**Malbork Castle** (40 mins southeast of Gdansk), the headquarters of the Teutonic Knights, was destroyed in WWII, but has been faithfully rebuilt to its original grandeur. For a more in-depth Polish experience, consider stopping off at any of the following, all of which have historic old town centers:

- **Gdansk** (3 1/2 hrs northwest of Warsaw on the Baltic Sea), **Poznan** (3 hrs west of Warsaw), **Torun** (3 hrs northwest of Warsaw), **Lublin** (2 1/2 hrs southeast of Warsaw) and **Zamosc** (3 hrs southeast of Lublin).

The **Great Mazurian Lake District** (3 hrs north of Warsaw) is a haven for nature lovers, as are the **Tatra Mountains**, which straddle the border of Poland and Slovakia, with peaks ranging up to 8,000 feet high. **Zakopane** (3 hrs south of Kraków), with a turn-of-the-century rustic look, is Poland’s winter capital and the hub for the Polish Tatras.

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**Czech Republic**

The Czech Republic, nestled between Germany and Austria in the heart of Europe, is today one of Europe’s most popular tourist destinations.

**Trains:** The rail system is excellent and for those traveling here, “czec’h the **Czech Flexipass**, which gives unlimited rail travel in the Czech Republic; or consider the regional **European East Flexipass**, which gives unlimited rail travel in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Austria. (See **www-budgeteurope-travel.com** for details of all passes valid in the Czech Republic.)

**Prague** is without a doubt one of Europe’s most beautiful cities; amazingly, in view of Europe’s destructive war history, Prague has suffered very little damage over the centuries and is an architectural spectacle to behold. There are many must sights, but most are clustered in two areas, near the **Prague Castle** and the **Old Town Square**.

One can spend most of a day exploring the castle complex, still the official residence of the president, and the squares that surround the castle. Foremost is the Gothic **St. Vitus Cathedral**. Under construction for over 600 years, its stained-glass windows are among the loveliest ever crafted. “Good King” Wenceslas is buried in the cathedral. Close to the cathedral is the **Old Royal Palace**, a late-Gothic masterpiece. Make sure that you find **Golden Lane** at the far end of the castle hill complex. This narrow street, named for alchemists who supposedly worked here changing lead into gold, consists of tiny little shops and houses built right into the fortress walls. Kafka wrote for a time at number 22.

The centerpiece of the remarkable Old Town Square, lined with patrician houses, is the **Old Town Hall**. On the hour, a crowd gathers to watch the clock in the tower where the Skeleton of Death rings out the hours.

**Charles Bridge**, which connects the Old Town with the Lesser Town, is a wonderful place to take a stroll. Day and night, street musicians, artists and other unique acts display their talents from one end of the pedestrian stone bridge to the other. You can see the famous red roofs of Prague from the top of the tower at the end of the bridge on the Lesser Town side.

**Karlov Vary (Karlsbad)**, near the German border, was one of Europe’s grand 19th-century spa towns. You can still try to cure your ailments at the modern thermal pools open to the public.

**Ceske Budejovice**, 90 miles south of Prague, makes a good base from which to explore much of southern Bohemia, such as **Cesky Krumlov**, a small jewel with an impressive castle and a wonderful old quarter, and **Tabor**, which also has an interesting historic town center with a castle.

**Brno**, the capital of Moravia, is worth a look for its well-preserved old town district.
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- Our rail experts can tell you in a few minutes the best rail route for the places you wish to visit.
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- We can explain the pros and cons of rail tickets and railpasses.
- We can tell you all about Europe’s most scenic train rides, and how to fit them into your itinerary.
- We can tell you about train reservations:
  - When they are required.
  - Which trains are hard to reserve and should be booked as early as possible.
  - How and where to make them in Europe.
  - About sleeper reservations on night trains.
- We can answer a host of other rail questions such as when to get to the station; how to find your train; what to do with your luggage; how seats differ in first and second class; what sleeper trains are like.

Call BETS!
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Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm (Eastern)

Making Seat Reservations
When you buy your railpass or point-to-point tickets from BETS, we can make your rail reservations at the same time. You avoid the hassles of lines, the time lost, the language difficulties faced abroad, and, most importantly, you know far in advance that your travel plans are guaranteed. Alternatively, if you need to keep your plans flexible, reservations can be made in Europe at a rail station, subject to availability of course. When making reservations at the last minute, you should have a backup plan in case your desired train is sold out.

Note: BETS will always try to get your party prized window seats and all grouped together.

Overnight Trains
As there are not a great number of beds on any given overnight sleeper train, reservations should be made as soon as possible, especially on popular routes such as the trains from Paris to Italy and Spain. Most night trains carry double compartments and triple and/or quad compartments plus couchettes (6 person compartments). Some night trains also provide reclining seats. Reservations can be made up to 60 days ahead, but on many international night trains, berths can be reserved 90 days out.

Rails or Ticket Prices? Go to www.budgeteuropetravel.com!

rail reservations tips
A railpass or open point-to-point ticket purchased here in the US covers the rail fare on most European trains, but does not guarantee a seat. And though most European trains do NOT require that you have seat reservations, nor is there usually a problem finding an available seat when you hop aboard, you do have the option on many trains to make seat reservations, guaranteeing, for example, a window seat or seats together for your group on a specific train for a specified date and time.

Local/Regional Trains
Across all of Europe, local or regional trains are usually not reservable. At peak travel times try to board early to get a seat especially in second class, but you will be allowed to board even if you have to stand.

Intercity Trains
Seat reservations can be made on all intercity trains; however, on many intercity trains, a seat reservation is not formally required. That means that if you have a railpass, you can just board the train and sit any unreserved seat. And if the train is full, you may have to sit apart from your traveling partner or in the worst case scenario even stand until a seat opens up, but you will be able to get on the train. A big advantage of a first-class railpass is that finding a seat is usually not a problem except at very peak travel times. On long train rides, you should probably make a seat reservation just to ensure that you’re not surprised to find a very crowded train when you hop aboard, especially if you are traveling with others and wish to sit together.

In many countries, you must reserve all intercity or international trains. Getting on one of these trains without the required seat reservation will result in being charged a fee several times the cost of a normal reservation if there are seats available; if not, you may be asked to leave the train at the next stop. If ever needing to board a reserved-only train without a reservation, always ask, as politely as possible, the conductor before getting on the train. He/she will know if there are available seats and be able to tell you what the charge will be.

Austria
Seats may be reserved on all intercity trains, but they are not required. Reservations required on trains to Italy.

Belgium
Seat reservations are not available on domestic intercity routes. Thalys trains to Amsterdam, Cologne and Paris require the payment of a passholder reservation fee; higher in first-class, as an obligatory meal is served at your seat. If not wishing the meal, first-class railpass holders can save money by sitting in second class. ICE trains to and from Germany also require reservations.

Britain
Reservations are not required, but possible on most intercity trains; reservations are normally free of charge when made in Britain. Eurostar trains to Brussels and Paris must be reserved and should be done as early as possible as passholder seats are limited (can be done as much as nine months in advance); a special passholder fare applies.

Czech Republic
Reservations are available on most intercity trains. International trains to Poland require reservations. On routes to Germany and Austria, reservations are advised; however, between Prague and Vienna, reservations are required on SuperCity (SC), though not on the EuroCity (EC) trains.

Denmark
Reservations are available on domestic intercity trains and strongly recommended at peak times. EuroCity trains to Hamburg, Germany and X2000 trains to Sweden require reservations.

Finland
Reservations are available on all intercity trains and first-class reservations usually include the cost of a light meal/snack.

France
Reservations are required on all TGV services and on most international trains. For non-TGV intercity trains, reservations are mandatory on some routes and only advised on others. Only by checking the timetables, can you know if a seat reservation is required.

French Rail slots a limited number of passholder seats on each train, and it can be very hard to reserve seats at peak times on popular routes (especially the Paris-Nice route) even when trying several weeks in advance, let alone at the last minute. Reservations for French trains can be made 90 days before the train’s departure date, and we strongly advise you to make them as early as possible if you need to be on a certain train.

Germany
Reservations are available for all intercity or intercity express (ICE) trains. In first-class usually finding unreserved seats is not a problem, but for long trips or at peak travel times (i.e. morning and afternoon commuting periods), reservations are advised. Railpasses cover all supplements for ICE trains, except for a handful on ICE Sprinters that a tourist probably would never encounter (they run usually very early in the morning only between Frankfurt-Munich/Berlin/Hamburg).

Hungary
Reservations are required on most domestic intercity trains. On trains to Vienna or
Prague, reservations are available; trains to Romania require reservations.

**Italy**

Reservations are required on most intercity trains. *EuroCity* (EC), *Cisalpino* (CIS) and all international trains into or out of Italy mandate seat reservations. On older *InterCity* (IC) trains, reservations are not formally required, but strongly advised because seats are not marked “reserved” and you may be evicted from your seat by someone holding a reservation for that seat.

For the high-speed *Euroliner* (ES) trains a reservation is required and it comes at a higher price as it includes a supplement for the privilege of riding this deluxe train and for some extra on-board services (beverage, newspaper). *Eurostar* runs on many routes, but can usually be avoided on most routes if you wish to save money; however, on the routes between Milan-Florence-Rome and Venice-Florence-Rome, they are often the only practical choice. Once you get past the extra cost, you will enjoy riding these very comfortable trains.

**Norway**

Reservations are strongly recommended on the intercity routes between Oslo-Bergen, Oslo-Stavanger, Oslo-Trondheim and Trondheim-Bodo. Reservations are available on trains to Gotheburg and Stockholm in Sweden.

**Poland**

Reservations are required on most international and on many domestic intercity trains.

**Sweden**

Reservations are required on all intercity *X2000* trains and first-class often includes the price of a meal/snack served at your seat. On other reservable trains, reserved seats are not labeled — you may be asked to move when someone boards holding a reservation for your seat. Trains to Oslo can also be reserved.

**Spain**

All intercity trains must be reserved. On premier trains, such as the *AVE*, a meal/snack, appropriate to the time of day, is included in the cost of a first-class (preferente) seat reservation. Reservations in second class are cheaper as no meal is served and people with first-class passes can sit in second class if they don’t wish the meal. When making a reservation in Spain always ask what the fee is before buying — if it is over $20, probably you are also paying for a meal.

**Switzerland**

Domestic intercity trains do not require reservations and because of the high frequency of service, it is usually not a problem to get a seat except at peak commuter times. Reservations are available on international trains to Austria and Germany and required on *TGV* trains to France and all trains to Italy.

Panoramic observation cars, available on many scenic rail routes, often mandate seat reservations, but even if optional, you should reserve if hoping to get a window seat. Observation cars can be reserved 90 days out.

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**NEED ITINERARY HELP? Call BETS and Talk to the Rail Experts!**

When you call BETS, you will talk to an expert. *NOT* a “temp” who doesn’t even know where Europe is! The BETS team have been railpassing in Europe annually for years. And that is why we will find you to be your best resource when planning your trip...because we have actually done it ourselves! And we are happy to share our experiences with one and all! So just call! Most firms will only give you limited advice before you buy and almost none after you buy, but we’ll give you our best advice before and after you buy your pass from us! Why not buy from the experts? We’ve ridden just about every kind of train from milk-run locals to premier 200-mile-per-hour *TGVs* to overnight sleeper trains. We have ridden the scenic trains, such as the Bernina, Glacier, Panoramic and Bergen “expresses”... enjoyed fabulous cruises on the Swiss lakes and the Rhine...hiked in the Alps and along the Cinque Terre...you name it, we’ve probably done it!

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**Timetables on the Web**

Looking for rail, boat and bus schedules? Here are a few handy websites that provide the lowdown:

- [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de) • The BETS staffers’ favorite, and most used, website is provided by the German Railways, giving schedules for your specific travel dates for trains in any European country. Gives you train numbers, travel times, intermediate stops and reservation requirements. It even has a mapping function so that you can see the route of your train. As there is a schedule change in December and June of each year, you might not find a schedule for a date in September if searching in March; in this case, use a fake date prior to June for the same day of the week, and the schedule that pops up will serve for planning purposes as it will usually be identical or close to the actual schedule for your September travel date.

- [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) • Provides rail schedules for England, Scotland and Wales.

- [www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie) • Get rail schedules for Ireland.

- [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie) • Provides schedules for bus service in Ireland.

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**Tips for Reserving in Europe**

At the reservation window in the train station, show the clerk your *railpass* and, if you don’t speak the language, a note with the following info:

- **departure and arrival cities** using the spelling off the Eurail map (i.e. Milano → Roma)
- **travel date** using European format (i.e. 30/12 or 30 Dec)
- **departure time** using the 24-hour clock (i.e. 1300 for 1 pm)
- **number of passengers**
- **travel class** (1 Cl. or 2 Cl. as indicated on railpass)
- **seat info** (i.e. window or aisle; sometimes you can ask for forward-facing seats)

Before leaving, check everything over for correctness! Note: Reservations *made in Europe* often must be self-validated in machines on the platform before boarding your train!

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**www.glacierexpress.ch** • Gives schedules for the Glacier Express train between St. Moritz, Chur and Zermatt in Switzerland.

**www.rhb.ch** • Gives schedules for the Bernina Express train between Chur, St. Moritz in Switzerland and Tirano in Italy.

**www.goldenpass.ch** • Get schedules for the Golden Pass train between Luzern, Interlaken and Montreux in Switzerland.

**www.jungfraubahnhof.ch** • Get schedules and details for the train that goes from Interlaken via Wengen or Grindelwald to the top of the Jungfrau glacier in Switzerland.

**www.k-d.com** • Get schedules for the KD boats on the Rhine and Mosel rivers.

**www.deutsche-touring.com** • Gives schedules and fares for the Romantic Road bus in Germany.

**www.ddsg-blue-danube.at** • The DDSG company provides schedules and fares for the Danube riverboats in Austria.

**www.norwayinanutshell.com** • Get rail, bus and ferry schedules for the “Norway in a Nutshell” loop.

**www.vesuviana.it** • Gives schedules for the regional *Circumvesuviana* trains in Italy that connect Naples to Pompeii and Naples to Sorrento on the Amali Peninsula.

**www.irishferries.com** • The Irish Ferries company gives schedules and fares for their France-Ireland ferries.

**www.hml.it** • The Hellenic Mediterranean Line provides schedules and fares for their Italy-Greece ferries.

**www.bluestarferries.com** • The Blue Star Ferries company gives schedules and fares for their Greece-Ireland ferries.

**www.superfast.com** • The Superfast Ferries company provides schedules and fares for their Italy-Greece ferries and other routes.

**www.stenaline.com** • The Stena Line gives schedules and fares for their Britain-Ireland, intra-Scandinavian and other ferries.

**www.tallinksilja.com** • The Tallink Silja Line provides schedules and fares for their Sweden-Finland ferries and other routes.

**www.transmediterranea.net** • *Transmediterranea* gives schedules and fares for their ferries to Morocco, Mallorca and Ibiza.

**www.calmac.co.uk** • The Caledonian MacBrayne company provides schedules and fares for their ferries to the Scottish islands.
TRAVEL TIPS

LUGGAGE CONCERNS
• Regardless of the length of your trip, we highly recommend that you limit yourself to only a single piece of medium-sized luggage and that it comes fitted with a good set of wheels. The wheels are the key — well-designed packs roll effortlessly along even over bumpy cobblestones. The best ones that we have found for travel are the style that flight attendants and pilots use, rather than a duffle bag on wheels or a large suitcase on wheels. At train stations, porters or luggage trolleys are seldom available; and as many trains are a quarter of a mile in length, having a smoothly rolling bag is more of a necessity rather than a convenience.
• The size of your travel bag should be as small as possible, as you’ll have to carry it! When comparison shopping, don’t try to buy the largest bag available, even if it is the same size as a smaller one. It’s a mistake to think you’re getting “more for your money” — stay at or under 4,800 cubic inches. If you can’t fit your belongings in a bag of that size with room to spare, you’re taking too much! Anyone who has been to Europe invariably will say that they over-packed and would take a lot less the next time!
• Invest in baggage with several outside pockets to help organize your load, and make sure it’s made by a reputable manufacturer offering a Lifetime Guarantee — and you really can’t go wrong!
• Along with your travel gear, take a small day bag. Even the lightest of luggage gets heavy when trudging around a city. When you arrive in a city, put your baggage into a train station locker or luggage checkroom, and take what you need for the day or night in your small daypack — then you’ll hardly have to carry your baggage around at all. And these lockers and luggage checkrooms are as safe as your hotel or hostel room.

PACKING POINTERS
• Packing light and smart are your #1 goals! Strive to be as self-contained and practical as possible, for you will be carrying your “home” in your bag and you will have to lug and lift it. Bring only those belongings that you are certain to use often — NEVER bring anything that will be rarely used. Anything that you forget, or find you need, can be purchased easily in Europe (though you should bring an extra supply of prescription medication, any out-of-the-ordinary shampoo or soap, extra eyeglasses or contacts, etc.). Aim to pack your bag three-fourths full in order to leave room for expansion — unquestionably, you’ll be buying souvenirs and gifts. Remember, most travelers, as they become accustomed to their new transient way of life, tend to do things differently abroad than at home and get by with a lot less!
• Take dark-colored, wrinkle-resistant clothes as they won’t show the rigors of travel so quickly. Experts say that cotton-polyester blends hold up the best.
• Since laundries are less common and more expensive in Europe, you may find yourself occasionally washing a few things by hand — remember this when choosing what to bring.
• It’s OK to splurge and bring more of the smaller, lightweight items, such as socks, underwear and shirts; but cut back on the larger, heavier items, such as trousers, sweat shirts, polartec and sweaters. Bring a total of three pairs of trousers (or two trousers and one skirt) and two sweaters or sweat shirts.
• For versatility, make sure that you can mix and match all clothing. Bring clothing that can be worn casually as well as “out on the town.” Once again, don’t bring anything that will be seldom used.
• Layering is the best approach to the climate in northern Europe where summers are cool (highs often only in the 60s and lows in the 50s), the weather is subject to quick changes and there is a fair amount of rain. Wear several light layers — shirt, sweater, raincoat — then you can easily adjust to any temperature!
• A lightweight raincoat, a rain hat (or hood) and/or a small umbrella are essential if you are touring northern Europe with its marine-type climate and plentiful rain.
• Two pairs of COMFORTABLE shoes are a must as most travelers do lots of walking. Many people find waterproofed dark-colored walking or athletic shoes ideal; sandals are nice as your second pair of shoes if touring southern Europe. DON’T bring shoes that are not extremely comfy as they will never see the light of day! Hiking boots are unnecessary unless you’re planning “serious” hiking; otherwise they’re too bulky and heavy.
• As most folks buy souvenirs clothing when abroad, pack lighter now by leaving at home types of clothes you’re likely to buy!
• Miscellaneous essentials: pocket knife with a corkscrew and can opener; small flashlight; zip-lock bags in which to store your “spillables”; first aid kit; needle and thread; enough prescription or cold-care medicine to last for your whole trip; spare eyeglasses or contacts; a small supply of toiletries like soap, shampoo, razors, etc. (all of which can be easily replenished in Europe). Optional items: camera; alarm clock; clothes line and small bottle of detergent; a towel and washcloth; small water bottle; shower thongs.
• A map of the area you are visiting is useful when planning your itinerary. As guidebooks are heavy, take only one or two, or consider copying (or tearing out) just the sections that are needed. If you’re not multilingual, a phrase book will come in handy.

USING ELECTRICITY ABROAD
Though you may be traveling to the far corners of the world, you can still take along some of the comforts of home, such as a hair dryer, and use them! Just bring a converter or a transformer and an adapter plug set!

Because most of the world operates on 220-volt alternating current (220V AC) and your appliances are designed to operate on the US 110V AC, it is necessary to convert the foreign electricity to 110V AC! Failure to do so will result in one seriously damaged appliance, one very disgruntled traveler and a possible electrical fire.
• Converters/Transmitters: You’ll need a converter or a transformer that will cut in half the number of volts flowing to your appliance. Converters do the job for simple electric appliances, such as hair dryers and steam irons. Transformers are used with more complex electronic equipment, such as computers, stereos, battery chargers, etc. Though simple electric appliances can be used with either a transformer or converter, complex electronic equipment must ONLY be used with a transformer. Transformers are capable of continuous use, but converters should be used only for short periods.
Convertisers and transformers are designed to work over a specific wattage range, and should NOT be used by an appliance whose rated wattage does not fall within the specified range. Check carefully the voltage and wattage information which comes with your appliance, and use only the type of converter or transformer designed to work with the wattage of your appliance, or risk destroying your appliance!
• Adapter Plugs: As electric wall outlets around the world differ in shape, arrangement and number of holes, you’ll need adapter plugs to plug your converter or transformer and appliance into the wall. Just check the wall outlet, snap the proper plug onto the correct converter or transformer, plug your appliance into the converter or transformer — and you’re all set! Remember, adapter plugs do NOT convert voltage.
• Dual-voltage appliances are designed to work on either 110V AC or 220V AC; no need for an additional converter or transformer. They are, however, equipped with US-type plugs, so you must have the proper adapter plugs to use them abroad.
• Always check the type of current (AC or DC) and voltage (110V or 220V) of a foreign outlet before plugging in!

Questions? Call BETS
We have actually ridden Europe’s trains, such as the Glacier Express!

Railpass or Ticket Prices? Go to www.budgeteuropetravel.com
TRAVEL TIPS

- Always carry a small amount of cash in either US dollars or another major currency in case you need to exchange only a little bit of money. If you find that your funds are running low just before you’re ready to leave a country, you may opt to exchange a small sum of cash instead of a single $20 traveler’s check so as to avoid the $3-6 check transaction fee that some countries charge.
- Charge cards such as Visa, American Express and MasterCard are widely accepted in Europe, but not at smaller or budget stores, restaurants or hotels! The exchange rates used by the credit card companies are usually among the best, but check with your card company as some add foreign exchange fees. Cash advances are also easy to get — but beware that these transactions are subject to predatory interest rates from the moment you receive the cash.

The Euro

A single currency, the euro, is now being used in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. All other countries still use their own unique currenies.

- Bank ATMs (automated teller machines) are all over Europe. Many are affiliated with the Cirrus and Plus networks that we use at home, allowing you to withdraw funds from a European bank ATM in that country’s currency while your checking account at home is debited in dollars. A fee per transaction is charged, but the exchange is carried out at the “interbank rate” — the best rate possible. Cirrus and Plus now cover most of Europe, but, as there are still a few gaps, contact your local bank for ATM locations abroad. At most bank ATMs, you can also use your Visa or MasterCard to obtain foreign currency; but, beware, Visa and MasterCard treat these transactions as cash advances and charge interest from the execution date.
- Foreign currency traveler’s checks are not necessary for the average traveler visiting several countries. It’s best to exchange dollar traveler’s checks and/or use bank ATMs to get cash in the local currency.
- Don’t exchange dollars for foreign currency or foreign currency traveler’s checks before leaving home! This is one of the best money-saving tips we can give you. American banks we’ve checked, especially those at American airports, pay lower exchange rates compared to rates in Europe and will tack on an additional service charge that could otherwise be avoided. In Europe, however, the airport banks or airport bank ATMs pay higher rates and WILL ALWAYS BE OPEN when your flight lands — you’ll be dollars ahead by changing there.
- How often should you change money? Because in most countries you are charged a transaction fee each time you change money, the best rule of thumb is to change money as few times as possible per currency so as to minimize the expense of transaction fees and maximize your return! Of course, you must consider the number of days using the currency and the amount of cash you wish to carry. Your best bet is to project your costs for your stay (daily cost multiplied by number of days using that specific currency) and change money only once or twice per currency if staying a short time. Your goal is to cover your expenses without running out of money or having much leftover foreign currency to recover.

In Europe, use banks or bank ATMs whenever possible to get cash in the local currency. The exchange rates offered and transaction fees charged at banks are optimal when compared to other non-bank money-exchange agencies in airports, train stations and other tourist areas. As nearly every bank changes money, you may wish to compare exchange rates and fees between banks to locate the best deal — but for the average traveler, exchanging relatively small amounts of money, the cash saved may be negligible.

- Avoid private non-bank money-exchange agencies! Outside of banking hours in most large cities, you can usually find non-bank agencies open if you’re in a bind, but the exchange rates offered are generally lower and transaction fees charged higher. Although they may be OK in a pinch, be sure to compare rates — many of these advertise “deceptively” high rates without mentioning their hefty transaction charges.
- Wiring funds abroad can be easily done; but since the fees are steep, don’t rely on this method unless you are totally out of funds. American Express and Western Union both offer such services.

Protect Your Valuables

A moneybelt or neck pouch is essential to protect yourself against loss or theft of your valuables — be smart, don’t be sorry — always wear one! Carry your passport, traveler’s checks, cash, railpass, charge cards, etc., well concealed and under your clothing in a moneybelt or neck pouch AT ALL TIMES, even if you’re just going down the hallway to the toilet or shower. For maximum protection, wear it hidden on the front of your body so that if necessary you can keep your eyes on it or fold your arms across it. Though pickpockets and other thefts are not a major problem everywhere, always exercise caution, especially in crowded places — such as subways, train stations, street markets and other heavily trafficked areas. Remember, it is a hassle to have to replace your passport and traveler’s checks — so try to avoid it by not being an easy target! (See page C-13 to choose your moneybelt or neck pouch.)

Theft-Proof Travel

In most of the tales of thievery we’ve heard, carelessness contributed to the theft. Besides wearing a moneybelt or neck pouch, there are a few other theft prevention measures to practice. No matter what type of day bag you choose, it should never be worn out of your view, especially in very crowded surroundings — don’t make a pickpocket’s day easy! When in a bustling hubbub, move your daypack to the side or front of your body and firmly grasp it under your arm. You’ll prevent a would-be thief from easily removing a valuable item out of your pack unbeknownst to you. Never store valuable items in outer pockets or near pocket openings of your day bag; instead “bury” such items at the bottom of your bag. Travelers should always avoid carrying purses or purse-like bags or fanny/waist packs as thieves will assume they contain cash, and may roughly snatch them.

When traveling by train, always keep your luggage nearby within view and away from the aisle. Otherwise, this will discourage the casual walk-by theft. If you plan to sleep on the train, you might wish to use your baggage as a pillow!
US CUSTOMS
Your Personal Exemption

Each person who has been out of the US for at least 48 hours can bring back items totaling up to $800 without paying any duty (subject to limitations on alcohol, cigarettes and cigars); this exemption can be used only once every 30 days. If the value of your goods exceeds that, you’ll pay a flat 3% duty on the next $1,000 worth of merchandise. Duty on articles over this $1,800 amount varies for different goods. Families may combine their personal exemptions. Thus, a family of four may bring back $3,200 in goods without paying duty, even if the articles were all acquired by a single family member. (Children are permitted the same exemptions as adults, except for alcoholic beverages.)

When purchasing any expensive item, be sure to keep the receipt to show Customs, if asked. Warning! Don’t try to “fool” Customs officials with fake receipts or by wearing your “excess goods.” Undeclared items that should have been declared can be confiscated, and you’ll be liable for a penalty equal to the value of the item. And if you understate the value of an article, you’ll have to pay the duty, and a penalty may be due.

For more information on how excess amounts or very expensive items are taxed, consult the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States, available at most public libraries, or contact any US Customs office. For a copy of Know Before You Go, which gives more details, contact the US Customs Service at 202-354-1000, or you can visit their web site (www.customs.gov).

A Few Restricted Articles

Alcohol • People 21 and over can bring in free of duty one liter (33.8 fl. oz.) of alcohol. You are subject to paying duty on any excess. Many states, however, restrict the amount of alcohol you can import. States may also collect a booze tax on all alcohol brought back. Customs enforces the policy of the state where you enter the US.

Tobacco • Duty-free limit: 100 cigars and 200 cigarettes. Cigarettes, however, may be subject to a tax imposed by the state and local authorities of where you enter the US.

Plants, Fruits and Vegetables • Most seeds, bulbs, plants, fruits and vegetables are strictly prohibited from entry unless they are certified as being pest-free (they must have USDA approval) or you have an import permit — all such items must be declared to Customs. For more information, contact the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) by phone at 301-734-8645, 877-770-5990 or 866-723-4827, or go to their web site at www.aphis.usda.gov/travel.

AIRPORTS THAT HAVE RAIL LINKS TO THE CITY CENTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIRPORT</th>
<th>DISTANCE TO CENTER</th>
<th>TRAIN FREQUENCY</th>
<th>TRAVEL TIME</th>
<th>DESTINATION STATION IN CITY CENTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam-Schiphol</td>
<td>11 miles</td>
<td>Every 10 mins</td>
<td>20 mins</td>
<td>Central Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona-El Prat</td>
<td>9 miles</td>
<td>Every 30 mins</td>
<td>20 mins</td>
<td>Sants Station &amp; Franca Station</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berlin-Schönefeld</td>
<td>15 miles</td>
<td>Every 30 mins</td>
<td>27 mins</td>
<td>Hauptbahnhof (Main Station)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels-Zaventem</td>
<td>8 miles</td>
<td>Every 20 mins</td>
<td>25 mins</td>
<td>Midi/Zuid, Central &amp; Nord Stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budapest-Ferihegy</td>
<td>11 miles</td>
<td>Every 10-30 mins</td>
<td>25 mins</td>
<td>Nyugati Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen-Kastrup</td>
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<td>Every 10 mins</td>
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<td>Frankfurt</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Every 15 mins</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
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<td>Every 15 mins</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
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<td>Every 10 mins</td>
<td>35 mins</td>
<td>St. Pancras Station (at airport, shuttle bus to rail station)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6 miles</td>
<td>Every 10 mins</td>
<td>13 mins</td>
<td>Hauptbahnhof (Main Station)</td>
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</table>
Some Scenic Trains Across Europe

- Perpignan to La Tour de Carol and then on to Toulouse: Mountain vistas in the Pyrenees in southwestern France
- Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh and Mallaig to Fort William: Lochs, glens and mountains in Scotland’s Highlands
- Oslo to Bergen and Myrdal to Flåm: Fabulous mountain and fjord scenery in Norway
- Koblenz to Mainz: Impressive views of the Rhine River Valley in Germany
- Freiburg to Donaueschingen: Enjoyable ride thru the Black Forest of Germany
- Munich to Garmisch-Partenkirchen: Great ride over the Bavarian and Tyrolean Alps between Germany, Austria and Italy
- Salzburg to Villach: Gorgeous route via the Tyrolean Alps between Austria and Venice, Italy
- Domodossola to Locarno: Majestic Centovalli (“100 Valleys”) route thru the Italian-Swiss Alps
- Tirano to St. Moritz or Chur: The famed Bernina Express route between Italy and Switzerland via the Bernina Pass

Temperatures and Rainfall Chart

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<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
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<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
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<td>46/34</td>
<td>54/41</td>
<td>63/48</td>
<td>70/57</td>
<td>77/63</td>
<td>82/66</td>
<td>82/66</td>
<td>77/61</td>
<td>64/52</td>
<td>54/43</td>
<td>46/36</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>32/23</td>
<td>37/27</td>
<td>45/30</td>
<td>57/39</td>
<td>64/46</td>
<td>72/54</td>
<td>75/57</td>
<td>73/55</td>
<td>66/50</td>
<td>55/41</td>
<td>43/34</td>
<td>34/27</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>28/23</td>
<td>39/30</td>
<td>46/36</td>
<td>57/43</td>
<td>66/50</td>
<td>72/57</td>
<td>73/61</td>
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<td>43/39</td>
<td>36/30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zürich</td>
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<td>43/28</td>
<td>52/34</td>
<td>64/41</td>
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<td>45/36</td>
<td>37/28</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The first figure is the maximum daily temperature in degrees Fahrenheit; the second is the minimum. Annual rainfall is in inches.

Temperature and Rainfall Chart

There are dozens of scenic rail lines across Europe, but we have chosen these, in no particular order, because they are among the most scenic and can easily fit into many of the most common rail itineraries.

- St. Moritz or Chur to Zermatt: The ultra-famous Glacier Express route across southern Switzerland
- Brig to Thun: This scenic route is easy to fit into your trip as it is on the main rail line thru the Alps between Italy, the Interlaken area in Switzerland and Germany
- Interlaken Area: Every mountain train in the area, such as to Grindelwald, Mürren or Wengen, and especially the Jungfrau Railway, to the top of a glacier, are astounding rides
- Luzern to Interlaken to Montreux: The Golden Pass route leaves the Lake Luzern area, climbs over the Brünig Pass to Interlaken, and then zigzags thru more lake and mountain country to Montreux on Lake Geneva
- Martigny to Chamonix: This awesome route snakes up and over a steep mountain pass from Switzerland to Chamonix, France at the base of Mt. Blanc
- Gmunden to Stainach-Indnong: Scenic route thru the “Sound of Music” Salzkammergut region in Austria