

# Checklist for Travel in Europe

Compiled by Gillian “Lou” Cooper, an OU 2014 graduate who backpacked three months on her own through Europe.

## 1. Plan your route

Choose the countries and cities you want to visit and come up with an approximate amount of time to spend in each.

## 2. Purchase your flight

There’s really no way of getting around the fact that international flights are pricey. However, there are some sites dedicated to offering cheaper tickets for students. The best way is to compare across the board through multiple booking sites, yet I have always found the cheapest international tickets through *Studentuniverse.com*.

## 3. Plan transportation between cities

There are three primary ways to travel between countries: plane, train, or bus. Air travel is the quickest option and budget airlines such as *EasyJet* and *RyanAir* offer incredibly low fares. However, the price of baggage fees often equals the airfare, and there are also more restrictions as far as when you must arrive pre-flight.

Trains are more expensive but also the most comfortable option. *Eurail* offers passes for travel among three countries, four, five, or more. If you plan on sticking to only a few countries, this may be the best option.

Bus is the cheapest option and the one I utilized consistently through the company *Eurolines*. Trips can be lengthy and personal space is tight, but this is the best option for an extreme budget and for someone traveling between many countries. Plus, another benefit is no luggage fees!

## 4. Plan accommodations: send requests, check into hostels

Hostels are the cheapest organized accommodation offered. Private rooms are available. Dormitory-style is most common. Dorms may have as few as four or as many as 20 beds and may be gender specific. In high season, beds should be booked at least one day in advance. I booked all of my hostels through *Hostelworld*, which offers a free app for Iphone and Android. In my experience, every hostel specially recommended by the site was excellent.

Another accommodation option is *Couchsurfing*. *Couchsurfing.com* is a website that allows surfers to send requests to hosts within a certain city. Some hosts have limits to the number of nights you may spend with them. Hosts and surfers

are rated and given referrals from other hosts and surfers; thus you may have a certain assurance that they are okay to stay with. I will caution that surfing does take a lot of open-mindedness, flexibility, and a certain degree of low-maintenance. However, surfing was the defining factor of my trip and the way that I met my closest friends in Europe.

#### **5. Guidebook Scanning**

Figure out what things you want to see and do. Set some bucket list goals for each city and create a loose plan. My preferred guidebooks are *Let's Go* and *Lonely Planet*.

#### **6. Details: cellphones, money, identification.**

**Cell Phones:** Regarding cell phones, there are two options. The pricier of the two is to purchase an international plan for your current phone (check that your phone has international capabilities). The second option is to buy a cheap unlocked phone in Europe and simply load minutes onto it and switch SIM cards in each country. There are myriad cell phone stores in each city where SIMs can be purchased.

**Money:** Mastercard and Visa are widely accepted, but Travelex cards are also available which offer loadable and more secure options. ATMs are numerous, although cash should be withdrawn in amounts of around 100 euro or more to make the most of withdrawal fees.

**Forms of ID:** Take a photocopy of your passport along with you, and also have access to digital copies of various forms of ID such as your passport, driver's license, and birth certificate. Also make sure someone back home has access to these in case of an emergency.

#### **7. Remain open-minded and be ready to deviate from all plans.**