EUROPE

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Simon Richmond, Alexis Averbuck, Mark Baker, Oliver Berry, Abigail Blasi, Cristian Bonetto, Kerry Christiani, Fionn Davenport, Sally Davies, Peter Dragicevich, Steve Fallon, Emilie Filou, Duncan Garwood, Bridget Gleeson, Paula Hardy, Damian Harper, Anna Kaminski, Catherine Le Nevez, Virginia Maxwell, Craig McLachlan, Josephine Quintero, Kevin Raub, Andrea Schulte-Peevers, Regis St Louis, Nicola Williams, Neil Wilson

Welcome to Europe

There simply is no way to tour Europe and not be awestruck by its scenic beauty, epic history and dazzling arts scene. It also offers delicious culinary diversity and the best nightlife in the world.

Europe's wealth of attractions is its biggest single draw: Florence's Renaissance art, Venice's graceful canals, Paris' Napoleonic splendour, and the multi-layered historical and cultural canvas of London. Less obvious but no less impressive attractions include the ongoing project of Gaudí's La Sagrada Família, in Barcelona, and Iceland's quaint capital Reykjavík with its wonderful cafe and bar scene.

There's a huge diversity of natural scenery: rugged Scottish Highlands with glens and lochs; the flower fields and hilltop villages of Provence; and the Adriatic coastline speckled with thousands of islands. Mountain lovers should head to the Alps: they march across central Europe taking in France, Switzerland, Austria and northern Italy.

London, Berlin and Paris all offer top-class entertainment, especially theatre, live music and clubbing. Those hankering for something cosier can add Dublin's pubs or Vienna's cafes to their itinerary. Continue to party on the continent's streets at a multiplicity of festivals and celebrations.

A European tour is also a chance to indulge in a culinary adventure to beat all others. Go to the source and sample haggis in Scotland and pizza in Rome. But who'd have thought that Amsterdam would be a place to enjoy Indonesian *rijsttafel* (rice table)? That's Europe for you: constantly surprising.

> *Europe's wealth of attractions is its biggest single draw*

Charles Bridge (p535) and the Vltava River, Prague
ROMAN BORODAEV / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

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Left: Cycling past the Reichstag (p492), Berlin;
Top right: Houses in Lisbon (p330); Bottom right: A Tuscan village (p444)

Plan Your Trip
Europe's Top 21

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London, Britain

Truly one of the world's greatest cities

London is mercurial and endlessly fascinating; you could spend a lifetime getting to know it, then realise it's gone and changed again. Stretching back from the mighty River Thames, its lush parks and historic districts are crammed with extraordinary sights: royal palaces, towering cathedrals and remarkable museums and galleries. Add the pick of the world's theatres, restaurants, sports venues and shops, and you'll be very reluctant to leave. Right: Great Court, British Museum (p58)

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YONGYUT KUMSRI / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Berlin, Germany

Catch the ever-changing zeitgeist

More than 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, it's hard to believe that this most cosmopolitan of cities once marked the frontier of the Cold War. But reminders of Berlin's divided past still remain: whether you're passing the Brandenburg Gate, gazing at graffiti at the East Side Gallery or soaking up the history at Checkpoint Charlie, it's an essential part of understanding what makes Germany's capital tick. *Drei Mädchen und ein Knabe* (Three Girls and a Boy) by artist Wilfried Fitzenreiter near the Berliner Dom (p503)

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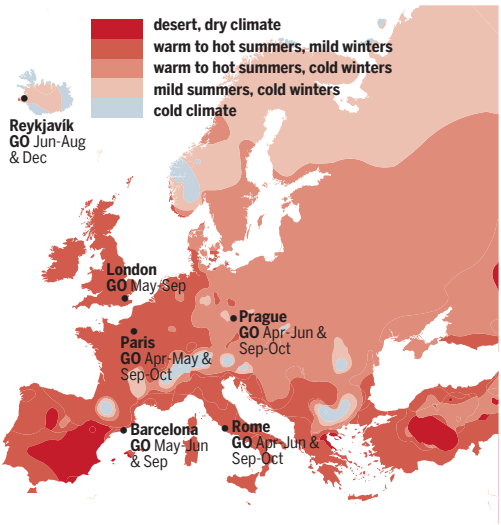
Plan Your Trip
Need to Know

When to Go?



High Season (Jun–Aug)

- Everybody comes to Europe and all of Europe hits the road.
- Hotel prices and temperatures are their highest.

Shoulder (Apr–May & Sep–Oct)

- Crowds and prices drop, except in Italy where it's still busy.
- Temperatures are comfortable but it can be hot in southern Europe.
- Overall these are the best months to travel in Europe.

Low Season (Nov–Mar)

- Outside ski resorts, hotels drop their prices or close down.
- The weather can be cold and days short, especially in northern Europe.

Currency

Euro (€), Pound (£), Swiss franc (Sfr), Danish krone (Dkr), Hungarian Forint (Ft), Icelandic króna (kr), Czech crown (Koruna česká; Kč), Croatian Kuna (KN)

Language

English, French, German, Italian, Spanish

Visas

EU citizens don't need visas for other EU countries. Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and Americans don't need visas for visits of less than 90 days.

Money

ATMs are common; credit and debit cards are widely accepted.

Mobile Phones

Europe uses the GSM 900 network. If you're coming from outside Europe it's worth buying a prepaid local SIM.

Time

Britain, Ireland and Portugal (GMT), Central Europe (GMT plus one hour), Greece, Turkey and Eastern Europe (GMT plus two hours).