

welcome to Europe



Where To Begin?

Overwhelming it can be, confusing for sure – just perusing a map of the crowded Old World will reveal cities, mountain ranges, seas and even countries you may never have even heard of. But the good news is that whatever you decide to do here, you'll leave blown away by the sights, sounds, tastes and other sensations you'll experience: there simply is no way to tour Europe and not be awestruck.

First timers might try a sprinkling of the classics (Britain, France, Germany, Spain) and spice it up with a dash of something classical (Italy, Greece, Turkey), while those who have covered the essentials can try lesser-explored destinations (the Balkans,

Scandinavia, Portugal or Poland). For the truly original the sky is the limit – Iceland, Albania, Moldova and Belarus all see few travellers, while for the true eccentric, microstates Andorra, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg might beckon.

Endless Variety

Europe's almost unmanageable wealth of attractions is its biggest single draw. Among its astonishing cultural heritage you'll find everything from the birthplace of democracy in Athens (p563), the Renaissance art of Florence (p733), the graceful canals of Venice (p718) and the Napoleonic splendour of Paris (p400) to less obvious attractions such as the Moorish palaces of



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Europe is a patchwork of more than 40 compulsively individualistic countries and is a dazzling and spectacular place to explore. Jump in almost anywhere and join the party.

(left) Aerial view of Bruges (p125), Belgium
(below) Skiing at St Anton am Arlberg. (p90) Austria



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Andalucía (p1173), the remains of one of the Seven Wonders of the World in Turkey (p1275) and the majesty of a second Venice in St Petersburg (p1053).

You'll also find glorious scenery (try the Scottish Highlands, volcanic Iceland, the Swiss Alps or Norwegian fjords), world-leading architecture, art, design, fashion and music (see London, Berlin, Paris, Antwerp and Copenhagen) and some of the best nightlife in the world (as well as London, Berlin and Paris, don't miss Moscow, Belgrade, Budapest or Madrid).

Smashing Stereotypes

A trip around Europe's patchwork of nations will inevitably make you rethink

what you thought you knew about the place. As with any form of travel, surprises await: nationalities about whom you know little beyond lazy clichés will become humanised, complex and contradictory; you will feel the chill on your spine when you see that iconic work of art in the flesh or find yourself standing right where *that* happened. You will at least once find yourself on a beach, up a mountain, at a cafe or in a club thinking 'these people know how to live'.

Yes, Europe has and offers it all. So don't delay – get planning your own European odyssey as soon as you can. With so many extraordinary destinations offering incredible things to see and do, your only problem will be where to begin...