

# 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, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Germany, Spain) and spice it up with a dash of something classical (Italy, Greece, Turkey), while those who have covered the essentials might try lesser-explored desti-

nations (the Balkans, Scandinavia, Portugal or Poland, for example). Those wanting to explore Europe's extremes can head to challenging Russia, fabulous Albania or surprising Romania – there's literally no end to the options.

## Endless Variety

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



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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) Amsterdam's Canal Belt (p791), the Netherlands  
(below) Geirangerfjorden (p971), Norway



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of one of the Seven Wonders of the World in Turkey, and the majesty of a second Venice in Russia's former capital, St Petersburg.

You'll also find glorious scenery (try the Scottish Highlands, the Swiss Alps or Norway's 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 and 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 which you know little beyond lazy clichés will become familiar friends, both 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...