



# Mediterranean Europe



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➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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# › Mediterranean Europe





## Top Experiences ›





## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Duncan Garwood

**Coordinating author; Italy** British-born Duncan moved to Italy in 1997 and now lives near Rome with his Italian wife and two bilingual kids. He has travelled extensively in his adopted homeland and worked on about 30 Lonely Planet books, including *Italy, Rome, Sardinia* and *Italy's Best Trips*, as well as the past six editions of this guide. His first experience of the Mediter-

anean came on a kayaking holiday to France, but it was while island-hopping around the Aegean that he really fell for the region and its passionate way of life.

Read more about Duncan at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/duncargarwood](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/duncargarwood)



### Alexis Averback

**Greece** Alexis Averback lives on Hydra, takes regular reverse R&R in Athens (she wrote *Pocket Athens*), and makes any excuse she can to travel the isolated back roads of her adopted land. She is committed to dispelling the stereotype that Greece is simply a string of sandy beaches. A travel writer for two decades, Alexis has lived in Antarctica for a year, crossed the Pacific by sailboat and written books on her journeys through Asia and the Americas. She's also a painter –

visit [www.alexisaverback.com](http://www.alexisaverback.com).



### James Bainbridge

**Turkey** Media assignments and extra-curricular wanderings have taken James to most of Turkey's far-flung regions, from Aegean islands to the eastern steppe via Cappadocia's surreal rock formations. He has coordinated three editions of Lonely Planet's *Turkey* guide, and deepened his local knowledge by living in Istanbul and grappling with suffixes during a Turkish-language course. For articles on Turkey, and a link to a blog with advice about travel writing, visit James's

website at [www.jamesbainbridge.net](http://www.jamesbainbridge.net).

Read more about James at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/james\\_bains](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/james_bains)



### Mark Baker

**Slovenia** Based permanently in Prague, Mark has lived, worked and enjoyed the splendours of central Europe for more than 20 years, first as a journalist for The Economist Group and then for Bloomberg News and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. In addition to this book, Mark is coauthor of Lonely Planet's *Prague & the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Romania & Bulgaria*.

## OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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### **Peter Dragicevich**

**Montenegro** After a dozen years working for newspapers and magazines in both his native New Zealand and Australia, Peter ditched the desk and hit the road. While it was family ties that first drew him to the Balkans, it's the history, natural beauty and the intriguing people that keep bringing him back. He wrote Lonely Planet's first guide to the newly independent Montenegro and has contributed to literally dozens of other Lonely Planet titles, including four successive editions of this book.



### **Mark Elliott**

**Bosnia & Hercegovina** British-born travel writer Mark Elliott was only 11 when his family first dragged him to Sarajevo and stood him in the now-defunct concrete footsteps of Gavrilo Princip. Fortunately no Austro-Hungarian emperors were passing at the time. He has since visited virtually every corner of Bosnia and Hercegovina, supping fine Hercegovinian wines with master vintners, talking philosophy with Serb monks and Sufi mystics, and drinking more Bosnian coffee

than any healthy stomach should be subjected to.



### **Anthony Ham**

**Spain** In 2001, Anthony fell in love with Madrid on his first visit to the city. Less than a year later, he arrived on a one-way ticket, with not a word of Spanish and not knowing a single person. Having recently passed the 10-year mark in Madrid, he still adores his adopted city. Anthony also writes about and photographs Spain, Scandinavia, Africa and the Middle East for newspapers and magazines around the world.



### **Tom Masters**

**Albania** Tom is a British writer and photographer whose work has taken him to some of the strangest and most challenging countries on earth. Having lived in Russia, travelled to all corners of eastern Europe in the decade that he's been working on the *Eastern Europe* guide and currently residing in East Berlin, he has a good understanding of what makes the former communist world tick. You can find more of Tom's work at [www.tommasters.net](http://www.tommasters.net).



### **Virginia Maxwell**

**Italy** Though based in far-off Australia, Virginia is a regular visitor to Italy, lured by the country's history, art, architecture, food and wine. She is the coordinating author of Lonely Planet's *Florence & Tuscany*, has covered almost every corner of the country for multiple editions of *Western Europe*, and has also worked as coordinating author of *Sicily*. When pressed, she nominates Rome and Florence as her favourite Italian destinations.



### **Craig McLachlan**

**Greece** Craig has covered the Greek Islands for the last five editions of Lonely Planet's Europe guidebooks. He runs an outdoor activity company in Queenstown, New Zealand in the southern-hemisphere summer, then heads north for another summer, writing for Lonely Planet and leading tours all over the world, including Greece. A 'free-lance anything', he has an MBA from the University of Hawaii and leads other lives as a pilot, karate instructor and Japanese interpreter. Check out [www.craigmclachlan.com](http://www.craigmclachlan.com).



### **Anja Mutić**

**Croatia** It's been more than two decades since Anja left her native Croatia. The journey took her to several countries before she made New York City her base 13 years ago. But the roots are calling and she's been returning to Croatia frequently for work and play. She's happy that Croatia's beauties are appreciated worldwide but secretly longs for the time when you could head to Hvar and hear the sound of crickets instead of blasting music. Anja is online at [www.everthenomad.com](http://www.everthenomad.com).



### **Regis St Louis**

**Portugal** Regis' long-time admiration for wine, rugged coastlines and soulful music made him easy prey for Portugal – a country he has travelled extensively over the past decade. Fine memories from his most recent trip include chatting with shepherds in the mountains near Manteigas, hearing avant-garde fado in Lisbon and feasting on delectable *percebes* (goose barnacles) in The Algarve. Regis is the coordinating author of the last three editions of Lonely Planet's

*Portugal*, and he has written numerous articles about the Iberian Peninsula.



### **Nicola Williams**

**France** British writer and editorial consultant Nicola Williams has lived in France and written about it for more than a decade. From her hillside home on Lake Geneva's southern shore, it is an easy hop to the French Alps (call her a ski fiend), Paris (art buff) and southern France (foodie). She has worked on numerous Lonely Planet titles, including *France*, *Discover France*, *Paris*, *Provence & the Côte d'Azur* and *The Loire*. She blogs at [tripalong.wordpress.com](http://tripalong.wordpress.com) and tweets @Tripalong.

Read more about Nicola at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/nicolawilliams](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/nicolawilliams)



# itineraries

*Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.*



## Two Weeks City Highlights

With only two weeks to travel, the challenge is to see as much as possible while doing justice to each place you visit. This whirlwind tour concentrates on four of the region's most seductive cities.

Start with three days in the French capital, **Paris**. Check out the big sights – the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, the Louvre – and lap up the lifestyle in buzzing Montmartre and the Marais. Armed with your newly acquired savoir-faire, head south to **Madrid**, Spain's passionate capital. Admire the vast art collection at the Museo del Prado and pop into the king's royal palace, before an evening bar-hopping from one tapas joint to the next. After a couple of days, fly over to **Venice**, Italy's haunting and impossibly beautiful canal city. Here you'll have fun losing yourself in the atmospheric lanes and postcard-perfect piazzas, perhaps taking a gondola down the Grand Canal. From Venice, push on to the Eternal City. They say a lifetime's not enough for **Rome**, but three days should give you just enough time for the big sights – the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel.



## One Month A Coastal Jaunt

Passing through the French Riviera, several Unesco-listed national parks and a number of full-blooded Mediterranean ports, this three-country route takes in some of the region's finest coastal scenery.

Start in **Marseille**, France's edgy, multi-ethnic Mediterranean port. A far cry from the postcard-pretty landscape that characterises much of the surrounding Provence region, it's a gritty, atmospheric city with some great sights and wonderful restaurants where you can sample a bowl of bouillabaisse. From Marseille, follow the coast eastwards along the fabled French Riviera. Top up your tan at **St-Tropez** and catch a film at **Cannes** as you wend your way along the coast to **Nice**, the Côte d'Azur's busy, cosmopolitan capital. From Nice, take a train to **Genoa**, where you can wander the same salty streets that once inspired local boy Christopher Columbus and eyeball sharks at Europe's second-largest aquarium. For more sea thrills take a day or two to explore the **Cinque Terre**, one of Italy's most spectacular stretches of coastline.

The road now leads to **Rome**, as all eventually do. Take in the big headline sights before continuing south to manic, in-your-face **Naples**. This sprawling city is not to everyone's taste but amid the chaos it harbours some truly amazing works of art, many taken from the nearby ruins of **Pompeii**. Continuing on, you'll come to the **Amalfi Coast**, a dreamy stretch of shimmering seascapes and plunging cliffs. From the Mediterranean coast, cross over to the Adriatic port of **Bari**, where you can catch a ferry for Croatia. While you wait to set sail, pass the time by investigating the lanes and Norman churches in Bari's labyrinthine Old Town. Over in Croatia, the first stop is **Dubrovnik**, the undisputed star of the Dalmatian coast. Once you've marvelled at the city's marble streets and baroque buildings, jump on a boat for some island hopping. Nearby, peaceful **Mljet Island** is a seductive mix of forests, vineyards and small villages, while further north **Hvar Island** boasts sunshine, beaches and a vibrant nightlife. From Hvar, it's a short ferry ride to **Split**, Croatia's second-largest city and home to the Unesco-listed Diocletian's Palace, one of Eastern Europe's greatest Roman monuments.



## One Month A Balkan Odyssey

Mountainous and covered in great swaths of forest, Slovenia and the Balkan countries present the tougher, more rugged side of the Mediterranean. This 1045km Eastern European odyssey leads through stunning mountain landscapes and beautiful towns as it snakes southwards from Slovenia to Albania.

To get you in the mood start with a few days in **Ljubljana**, Slovenia's cultured capital, enjoying the cafe life and exploring the city's landmark castle. Once done, head northwest to the lakeside town of **Bled**. A gorgeous spot in its own right, Bled makes a great base for hiking in the surrounding Julian Alps. From Bled double back to Ljubljana to pick up a bus to the Croatian capital, **Zagreb**. Hang around for a coffee or two in the Upper Town before pushing on to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and **Bihać**, a pretty staging post on the road to Sarajevo. Before reaching the Bosnian capital, take time to stop off at **Jajce**, famous for its catacombs, citadel and waterfall, and **Travnik**, home to some impressive castle ruins. After a few days enjoying **Sarajevo's** charming Turkish quarter and hip East-West vibe, continue south to **Mostar** and its scene-stealing bridge. Known as the Stari Most, this is one of BiH's most iconic sights, along with the divers who hurl themselves from it during the July diving competition.

From Mostar it's a straightforward bus journey to **Herceg Novi**, whose attractive walled town sits on Montenegro's coast at the mouth of the Bay of Kotor. A spectacular road winds its way along the bay to the magnificent medieval town of **Kotor**, wedged between dark mountains at the head of southern Europe's deepest fjord. The route here turns inland, through the thrilling Lovćen National Park, and on to Montenegro's former capital **Cetinje**. Continuing eastwards brings you to **Podgorica**, the nation's low-key modern capital. About 65km from Podgorica on the southeastern tip of Lake Shkodra, ancient **Shkodra** provides a good introduction to Albania as well as a convenient base for exploring the remote mountains around Theth. The last stretch of the tour leads south to the capital **Tirana**, once a model of drab Soviet-style urban blandness, now a crazy, colourful, buzzing city.



### Three Weeks Greek Island Hopping

With their beautiful beaches, ancient ruins and endless pleasures, the Greek Islands have been seducing travellers for millennia. Ferry services are reduced in winter, so this is a trip best undertaken in summer.

The obvious starting point is **Athens**, home to some of Europe's most iconic monuments. From nearby **Piraeus**, jump on a ferry for **Mykonos**, one of Greece's top island destinations. A hedonistic hot spot, it boasts action-packed beaches and a pretty whitewashed town. Before leaving, take time for a day trip to **Delos**, mythical birthplace of the god Apollo. From Mykonos, sail to **Naxos**, the largest and greenest of the Cyclades islands. Much more than a beach stop, its enticing main town and striking interior make it well worth exploring. From Naxos it's a quick ferry ride to laid-back **Paros** and the popular beaches of **Antiparos**. **Santorini** is one of the Aegean's most impressive islands, its volcanic cliffs sheering up from the blue sea. Greece's most southerly island, **Crete** makes a fitting finale. Just southwest of the main city **Iraklio** is **Knossos**, the ancient capital of Minoan Crete where the mythical Minotaur supposedly lived.

### Two Weeks Turkish Delights

Bridging the gap between East and West, Turkey is a compelling cauldron of culture and style.

The place to start is **Istanbul**, one of the world's great cities, whose highlights include the Topkapı Palace, Aya Sofya and Blue Mosque. Further round the Aegean coast, **Çanakkale** is a popular base for visiting **Gallipoli**, scene of vicious WWI fighting, and the legendary town of **Troy**. Following the coast, you arrive at **Bergama**, celebrated for the ruins of ancient Pergamum, once a powerful Middle Eastern kingdom. More classical treasures await at **Ephesus** (Efes), Turkey's answer to Pompeii, near **Selçuk**, home to the scarce remains of the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. From Selçuk, push on to **Patara** and its magnificent 20km-long beach. Spend a day or two hanging out in a tree house in **Olympos** before heading on to **Antalya**, with its historic Ottoman district and ancient Roman harbour. At this point head inland to **Konya**, the birthplace of the whirling dervishes, which boasts some fine Seljuk architecture. Further northeast, the eerie, rocky landscape around **Göreme** is one of Turkey's most incredible sights.



## Five Weeks Madrid to Marseille

Taking in Spain, Portugal and France, this Franco-Iberian tour works either as a stand-alone itinerary or as half of a longer pan-Mediterranean trip.

Get off to a thumping start in Spain's capital **Madrid** before a day trip to **Toledo**, home of one of Spain's greatest Gothic cathedrals. Train down to Andalucía, stopping by **Córdoba** and **Granada** to admire stunning Islamic architecture, and **Seville** for its famous, full-blooded lifestyle. Head over to Portugal for stopovers in capital **Lisbon** and in **Porto**, where you can try the local tippie, port. Next, bus over to the cathedral city of **Burgos** en route to **Bilbao**, home of the extraordinary Museo Guggenheim. East of Bilbao, the seafront city of **San Sebastián** is considered Spain's culinary capital. Suitably sated, continue on to **Barcelona** for a look at the city's unique Modernista architecture. Continue northwards to **Nîmes**, a vibrant French city that houses some fine Roman ruins. To the east, **Avignon** provides an elegant introduction to Provence, France's showcase region renowned for its beautiful landscapes. As you head to the gripping Mediterranean port of **Marseille**, take a day to enjoy the bohemian chic of **Aix-en-Provence**, birthplace of artist Paul Cézanne.

## Three Weeks Artistic Glories

Depending on how much time you have, this whistle-stop tour of Italy and Greece can either be undertaken as a trip in its own right or as a continuation of the Madrid to Marseille itinerary.

Kick off in **Florence**, the birthplace of the Renaissance and one of Italy's great art cities. After a few days ogling priceless treasures, drag yourself away for a quick stopover at **Pisa**, home to the world-famous Leaning Tower, en route to **Rome**, where you can marvel at headline sights such as the Colosseum, Pantheon and Michelangelo-frescoed Sistine Chapel. From Rome, pick up a train to the Adriatic port of **Bari** and a ferry for Patra. Once docked, head straight for **Olympia**, venue of the first Olympic Games in 776 BC. Continue to **Mystras**, famed for its Byzantine palaces and monasteries, before heading to **Nauplio**, a charming seaside town with Venetian-style houses and a striking hilltop fortress. Next, push on to mythical **Mycenae** and the ruins of **Ancient Corinth**. Across the water, **Athens** is a chaotic mix of the ancient and the modern. Not to be missed, the Parthenon dominates the cityscape from its position over the Acropolis, and the National Archaeological Museum houses the country's most important ancient artefacts.

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