

welcome to Western Europe

Charm, fascination, pleasure, wonderment – just a few of the emotions you’ll feel in Europe, the continent with the most of everything travellers want.

Perfect First Big Trip

You haven’t been anywhere until you’ve been to Europe – and this means the countries at its core: Western Europe. There is no other place on Earth with so many different nations so close together, with so much history connecting them all – touring this patchwork quilt of tiny dots has enthralled travellers for generations.

Europe is easy; it’s as simple as that. It’s the perfect reason to get your passport, book your flight and go. Paris, Rome and London are just the start. You could wash up on a rocky Mediterranean beach with little more than a credit card and some cash and enjoy yourself quite nicely. Yes, it can be expensive, but probably not much more than you’re used to paying at home. And home was never like this.

Perfect First Dream

Think back to your first thoughts of Europe. Was it building the Leaning Tower of Pisa out of Lego blocks? Or wondering why the best toast was called French? Or quaffing a Heineken behind the neighbour’s shed? But try to remember all the impressions and thoughts you had about Europe before you ever set foot on the continent... Good luck!

For a place that’s not very big, the range and breadth of Europe’s impact is extraordinary. The Western European countries covered in this book occupy less than one-third the space of the US or Australia and yet have still managed to produce Plato, da Vinci and Churchill.

Nowhere else has Europe’s variety of cultures, places and experiences all crammed together in such a tight space. Fast trains mean you can wake up on the Mediterranean coast, have lunch in Paris and see a show that night in London. Have a dab of this and a dab of that as it suits your mood.

Perfect Every Time

Whether this is your fifth trip to Western Europe or a first-time dream come true – or even if you live there – surprises await. Feel the chill on your spine when you see that iconic work of art. Find yourself standing right on the spot where *that* happened. Or catch yourself on a beach or on a glacier, at a cafe or in a club thinking, ‘These people really know how to live.’

Sure, the continent is experiencing challenges to the monumental effort of coexistence called the EU. But compared to the events of the 20th century, the Western Europe of today couldn’t be more peaceful and prosperous, with old-world manners that visitors are always charmed to discover – and which will charm you long after your trip.

So grab that passport. Go. Enjoy. Love every minute.

26 TOP EXPERIENCES



Eiffel Tower, Paris

1 Seven million people visit the Eiffel Tower (p315) annually, but few disagree that each visit is unique. From an evening ascent amid twinkling lights to lunch in the company of a staggering city panorama, there are 101 ways to 'do' it. Pedal beneath it, skip the lift and hike up, buy a crêpe from a stand or a key ring from the street, snap yourself in front of it, visit at night or even – our favourite – experience the lucky chance to see all 324m of it glow in a different colour for a light show on a special occasion.