

# Destination Western Europe

‘To enter Europe, you must have a valid passport with a photograph of yourself in which you look like you are being booked on charges of soliciting sheep.’

So said humorist Dave Barry in *Dave Barry’s Only Travel Guide You’ll Ever Need*, and he’s right to a point. You do only need a passport, but the photo doesn’t have to look like you’d be jealous of shepherds, really.

Europe is easy; it’s as simple as that. You could wash up on a rocky Mediterranean beach and with little more than a credit card (with a high limit) and an ATM card linked to a healthy account at home, you could 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.

Think back to your first thoughts of Europe. Was it building the Leaning Tower of Pisa out of Lego? Or demanding more French toast? 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 space combined than Kazakhstan, and while that landlocked nation no doubt has many notables, it can’t boast a Plato or da Vinci or a Churchill.

When the authors were asked what amazed them about Western Europe, many said it was the sheer variety of cultures and places and experiences all crammed together in such a tight space. And some have lived in the region for years. The ever-expanding network of fast trains means you can wake up on the Mediterranean, have lunch in Paris and see a show that night in London. You can sup at the buffet of Europe, having a dab of this and a dab of that as it suits your mood.

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

Sure the continent is experiencing a pause in the monumental effort at 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. And those who live in Europe will be familiar with its Old World manners that visitors are always charmed to discover. Its a graciousness that will charm you long after your trip.

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

## WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT WESTERN EUROPE

What better way to get inspired about a region than to garner some expert tips straight from the authors on the road? We’ve compiled a handful of memorable moments, insights, highlights and a few curiosities that have resonated with our Europe frequenters and are guaranteed to get your tastebuds salivating and your brain tingling with possibilities.

## Memorable Eating & Drinking

- Filling myself to the brim in Vienna at Stomach (p61), a small, ramshackle restaurant with a big heart and a wonderful courtyard setting. (Neal Bedford, Austria)
- One of the best meals I've had is a simple, locally produced steak pie and chips in a country pub in the Yorkshire Dales, washed down with a few pints, after a long walk in the hills. (David Else, Britain)
- Smoked fish sandwiches straight off the boats in Stralsund and Wismar, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. (Caroline Sieg, Germany)
- Greek *gyros* (doner kebab) – tasty and unbelievably cheap – around €2. (Craig McLachlan, Greece)
- At La Borsa (p40), in Andorra-la-Vella, drink prices vary according to the night's consumption and are punched up, minute by minute, on its electronic screen. (Miles Roddis, Andorra)
- Standing at the bar at the deliriously atmospheric Antica Bottega del Vino (p757) in Verona, which dates from 1890. (Virginia Maxwell, Italy)
- Our innkeeper gave up on us in Assmannshausen, Germany (see the boxed text, p516) and left us the keys to the bar saying he'd count the empties in the morning. Moonlit barges passed by on the Rhine, we drank a lot and there were a lot of empties in the morning. (Ryan Ver Berkmoes, Germany and the Netherlands)

## Odd Facts about Western Europe

- People think the French wear berets. They don't. (Oliver Berry, France)
- Europeans rarely jaywalk. People will wait at a pedestrian crossing until the light turns green, even if there is no car in sight. (Caroline Sieg, Germany)
- Where else but Belgium has a whole museum devoted to the humble chip? The new Frietmuseum (p126) in Bruges. (Geert Cole, Belgium and Luxembourg)
- Brits will queue for anything – and woe betide anyone who gets out of line. (David Else, Britain)
- The Jorvik Centre (p228) in York, England, has a fossilised human turd on display. It's very popular. (Neil Wilson, Ireland)
- Greeks will go 'po po po po' and wave their hand for both excellent news and horrific news. (Alexis Averbuck, Greece)
- The Swiss have fighting cows. The horns are blunted and they just push each other around until one gets tired and quits. (Nicola Williams, Switzerland and Liechtenstein)

# Getting Started

One of the delights of travel in Western Europe is that you can plan as much or as little as you want. Some people will have a must-see list of sights that will leave them desolate if they miss. Others will go with the flow and let their moods and experiences shape their journey. Neither is the better way to go and many people will combine aspects of both. They'll have a realistic idea of what they can accomplish while still having the freedom to take a detour on a whim.

Planning also helps you figure out how much you'll spend and when is the best time to travel for the sort of trip you want.

## WHEN TO GO

Any time can be the best time to visit Western Europe, depending on what you want to see and do. Summer lasts roughly from June to September and offers the best weather for outdoor pursuits in the northern half of Europe. In the southern half (Mediterranean coast, Iberian Peninsula, southern Italy and Greece), where the summers tend to be hotter, you can extend that period by one or even two months either way, when temperatures may also be more agreeable.

You won't be the only tourist in Western Europe during the summer months – all of France and Italy, for instance, go on holiday in August. Prices can be high, accommodation fully booked and the sights packed. You'll find much better deals – and far fewer crowds – in the shoulder seasons on either side of summer; in April and May, for instance, flowers are in bloom and the weather can be surprisingly mild, and nice weather can stretch past September into October.

On the other hand, if you're keen on winter sports, resorts in the Alps and the Pyrenees begin operating in late November and move into full swing after the New Year, closing down when the snow begins to melt in March or even April.

The Climate & When to Go sections in individual country chapters explain what to expect and when to expect it. As a rule, spring and autumn tend to be wetter and windier than summer and winter. The temperate maritime climate along the Atlantic is relatively wet all year, with moderate extremes in temperature. The Mediterranean coast is hotter and drier, with most rainfall occurring during the mild winter. The continental climate in eastern Germany and the Alps tends to have much stronger extremes in weather between summer and winter.

When summer and winter are mentioned throughout this book we generally mean high (May to September) and low (October to April) tourist seasons.

You might want to time your trip to coincide with a major local festival or celebration – see the lists in individual country chapters for details. If it's your first trip to Europe, you might want to list the European icons that have inspired your trip and make certain you see them.

## COSTS & MONEY

One of the big questions when travelling is 'how much money will I need?' Luckily, in this day of the euro (€), travellers won't have to fiddle with changing money at every border crossing. However, this doesn't necessarily mean prices are comparable throughout Western Europe. Expect your money to be stretched in noneuro countries such as Switzerland and the UK, and in

See Climate Charts (p1114) for more information.

capital cities. Backpackers eating street meals and sleeping in hostels can expect to pay from about €40 to €50 per day. Midrange travellers eating in cafes and sleeping in hotels should allow a daily budget starting from €120. Travellers opting for full-course restaurant meals and resort-style accommodation should expect to pay from €200 and right on up. Day passes on public transport average €5 in cities. Renting a car costs €25 to €70 per day; see p1131 for more details.

Tips on stretching your money include picking up local magazines and newspapers and looking for coupons and discounts on attractions and dining out (most museums have a 'free' day once a week/month; many restaurants have 'fixed-price menus' that are half the usual price). Search the web for packages; these can be especially good for families, as can family admission rates. Look for discount cards sold by tourist offices.

A combination of credit or cash card and travellers cheques is recommended so that you have something to fall back on if an ATM swallows your card or the banks are closed. Credit cards are widely accepted throughout Western Europe, and you'll find ATMs in all but the tiniest of villages. Always wait until you reach Europe to get local currency as you get better rates once you're there. It's a good idea to always travel with some local currency in cash; the equivalent of, say, US\$200 should usually be enough for most situations.

XE ([www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)) is an up-to-the-second online currency-exchange calculator. Find out the rates for all Western European currencies, and see exactly how much your trip is going to cost you.

## TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

As a visitor, you have a responsibility to the local people and to the environment. When it comes to the environment, the key rules are to preserve natural resources and to leave the countryside as you find it. Those Alpine flowers look much better on the mountainside than squashed in your pocket (and many species are protected anyway).

- Buy one small water bottle and then refill it with tap water for the rest of your trip.
- Wherever you are, littering is irresponsible and offensive. Mountain areas have fragile ecosystems, so stick to prepared paths whenever possible, and always carry your rubbish away with you.
- Do not use detergents or toothpaste (even if they are listed as biodegradable) in or close to any watercourses.
- If you just gotta go when you're somewhere in the European wilderness, bury human waste in holes at least 15cm deep and at least 100m from any watercourse.
- It's always good to know a few handy phrases, such as 'please', 'thank you' and 'where is...?' in the local language – you'll be addressed more cordially and the locals really do appreciate your efforts.
- Recycling is an important issue, especially in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, and you will be encouraged to follow suit. Look for bins with multiple receptacles.
- Traffic congestion on the roads is a major problem, so visitors will do themselves and residents a favour if they forgo driving and use public transport.
- Hire a bike, you'll see more; see p1129.
- Avoid trampling on or picking anything wherever possible – especially if you're hiking.
- Buy local, organic foods from markets. The Italian food organisation Slow Food (p720) is a great model.
- Don't use camera flashes in art galleries.
- Don't touch artworks (including sculptures).

## TRAVEL LITERATURE

Half the fun of going on a trip can be in the preparation. Read a few books to both get in the mood and to anticipate what life is like in the places you're visiting.

European travelogue classics include the *Provence* series by Peter Mayle and Frances Mayes' *Under the Tuscan Sun*, but you may well find that half the other people you meet have read these as well. There are plenty of classics that intrepid travellers feel compelled to buy. James Joyce's *Ulysses* comes to mind, although you can have many a fun conversation in Dublin pubs asking people if they have ever finished it. And *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown is part travelogue, part fantasy and part exercise in bad writing.

You can do better. The country chapters in this book all have excellent recommendations. Additionally, here are some titles that can't help but get you starting a countdown for your trip. These titles are recommended by the authors of this book and will make great companions on any trip.

- *The City of Falling Angels* (John Berendt) The man who wrote *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* unearths even more drama in the city of Venice.
- *Bollocks to Alton Towers* (Jason Hazeley et al) A celebration of eccentric Britain and places like Eden Ostrich World and the Cumberland Pencil Museum.
- *Stasiland* (Anna Funder) A fascinating investigation into the secret police of East Germany with chilling accounts of their victims.
- *Walking the Camino* (Tony Kevin) The author follows the age-old pilgrimage trail to Spain's Santiago de Compostela and makes his own discoveries along the way.
- *A Tramp Abroad* (Mark Twain) Much has changed – and much hasn't – since Twain wandered Europe (out of copyright, you can download it as an eBook for free and read it on a mobile device).

### DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

Pack less than you want as you'll buy more along the way. Besides it's Western Europe and you can buy anything here. Make sure that your bag is easy and comfortable to haul about, whether it's a backpack or has a shoulder strap. If you're under 30 and use something with wheels, you've just defined 'daggy' and/or 'dork'. Otherwise, consider the following:

- Sandals or thongs (flip-flops) for when the weather is great
- Raincoat, waterproof jacket or umbrella
- Sewing kit – all that beer and chocolate may lead to burst seams
- Padlock for hostel lockers
- A good pair of earplugs
- Menu phrasebook – so you don't just order boring stuff or get an offal surprise
- Map – so you can show new friends where you come from
- Extra duffel bag to deploy when you buy more than you planned
- Sunglasses – to protect your eyes and to look so, so cool when the going gets hot
- Bottle-opener (how else to open a bottle of Burgundy?)
- Condoms – stay safe, wherever you are
- Smart set of clothes – for that special night out
- Photocopies of the city maps in this book so you can leave it in the room

- *A Late Dinner* (Paul Richardson) This long-term resident of Spain eats his way around the peninsula and explores its infinite regional variety, using prose as lush as the dishes within.
- *Neither Here Nor There: Travels in Europe* (Bill Bryson) The best-selling author retraces his journey as a backpacker 20 years before. Things have changed, his back aches.
- *A Moveable Feast* (Ernest Hemingway) A deeply personal and affectionate account of life as an expat in Paris in the 1920s.
- *Books, Baguettes and Bedbugs* (Jeremy Mercer) A tale of life at the Shakespeare & Co bookshop on Paris's Left Bank. For many this store is their bohemian fantasy; it's the perfect companion to *A Moveable Feast*.
- *McCarthy's Bar* (Peter McCarthy) A truly funny and original writer ventures to the west of Ireland and drinks in every bar bearing his surname.
- *Adrift in Caledonia* (Nick Thorpe) Great for opening your eyes to the possibilities of local exploration in Scotland.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

You'll find no end of experiences and resources on the web. You can research your trip, hunt down bargain air fares, book hotels, check weather conditions or chat with locals and other travellers about the best places to visit. For a list of country-specific websites, see Internet Resources in each country chapter.

**Airline Information** ([www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net)) What budget airlines in Europe fly where, when and for how much.

**Currency Conversions** ([www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)) Exchange rates for every currency.

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) Here you'll find succinct summaries on travelling to most places on earth, postcards from other travellers, and the Thorn Tree bulletin board, where you can ask questions before you go or dispense advice when you get back.

**Michelin** ([www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com)) Punch in where you are, where you're driving to and let Michelin do the rest.

**Tourist Office Directory** ([www.towd.com](http://www.towd.com)) Links to every tourist office everywhere.

**Train Information** ([www.seat61.com](http://www.seat61.com)) Tons of information about getting around Europe by train. Great descriptions of various journeys.

**Travel Planning** ([www.travelpete.com](http://www.travelpete.com)) Big and fun site with travel information for Europe.

## MUST-SEE MOVIES

- *Lisbon Story* (1994) Directed by Wim Wenders, this fascinating quasi-documentary is about a day in the life of a movie soundman wandering the streets, trying to salvage a film that's been abandoned by the director.
- *Amélie* (2001) An utterly charming Parisian fairy tale.
- *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003) Sweet comedy where Berliners pretend the wall never fell.
- *The Icicle Thief* (1989) This farce sends up classic film *The Bicycle Thief* as it skewers modern Italian life in Rome and elsewhere.
- *In Bruges* (2008) Just what this self-important tourist haven needed: a madcap British shoot-'em up.
- *The Lives of Others* (2006) Academy Award-winning film that gives insight to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the power of the Stasi and the costs of betrayal.
- *Mamma Mia* (2008) The smash ABBA musical set on a song-filled Greek island.

### CONDUCT IN EUROPE

Although dress standards are fairly informal in northern Europe, your clothes may well have some bearing on how you're treated in southern Europe.

Dress casually, but keep your clothes clean, and ensure sufficient body cover (eg cover shoulders and wear trousers or a knee-length dress) if your sightseeing includes churches, monasteries, synagogues or mosques.

Some nightclubs and fancy restaurants may refuse entry to people wearing jeans or sneakers (trainers).

While nude bathing is usually restricted to certain beaches, topless bathing is very common in many parts of Europe. Nevertheless, women shouldn't immediately drop top. The basic rule is that if nobody else seems to be doing it, then you shouldn't either.

You'll soon notice that Europeans are heavily into shaking hands and even kissing when they greet one another. Don't worry about the latter with those you don't know well, but get into the habit of shaking hands with virtually everyone you meet. In many parts of Europe it's also customary to greet the proprietor when entering a shop, cafe or a quiet bar, and also to say goodbye when you leave.

Use common courtesy. It's very easy to be another 'ugly [insert your nationality here]' by talking louder than everyone else, taking flash photos where not allowed, talking loudly on a mobile phone in quiet places, putting your dirty shoes on train seats, proclaiming you're a Philistine with comments like 'I don't see what's so special about...' etc.

- *National Lampoon's European Vacation* (1985) So bad it's almost good.
- *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) Excellent but forgotten James Bond caper with Blofeld hiding out in the Alps above Interlaken, Switzerland.
- *The Red Balloon* (1956) A wonderful New Wave-cinema view of Paris in the 1950s.
- *Roman Holiday* (1953) Director William Wyler sends Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn on a fun-filled romp.
- *The Third Man* (1949) Just try to get the theme song from this Orson Welles classic, shot and set in postwar Vienna, out of your head.
- *Trainspotting* (1996) Scrappy Scottish heroin junkie eventually chooses life. Great soundtrack and gritty London scenes.
- *Turks Fruit* (1973) Directed by Paul Verhoeven, this is one of the Netherlands' most famous flicks. A Bohemian sculptor learns about life in Amsterdam and elsewhere.
- *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008) Women on a Spanish holiday, a sexy painter, his ex-lover and Woody Allen. Nuff said.

# Events Calendar

There is always something happening some place in Western Europe. In this calendar you'll find some of our favourite festivals and events that may provide just the excuse you need for your trip. Many more are listed in the Festivals & Events section of the Directory in each country chapter.

## JANUARY

### HOGMANAY

Enormous, raucous Edinburgh street party to see in the New Year (p277) in Scotland.

## FEBRUARY/MARCH

### CARNAVAL

Pre-Lent is celebrated with greater vigour in Maastricht, the Netherlands, than anywhere else in Northern Europe (p888).

### CARNEVALE

In the period before Ash Wednesday, Venice, Italy, goes mad for masks and much more (p765).

### KARNEVAL/FASCHING

In Germany the pre-Lent season is celebrated along the Rhine, in the Black Forest and in Munich (p551).

## MARCH

### ST PATRICK'S DAY

Parades and celebrations are held on March 17 in Irish towns big and small (p708).

## MARCH/APRIL

### SEMANA SANTA

Parades of penitents and holy icons in Spain, notably in Seville (p1023), during Easter week.

### SETTIMANA SANTA

Italy celebrates Holy Week with processions and passion plays (p825).

### GREEK EASTER

The most important festival in the Greek Orthodox calendar (p642).

## APRIL

### FERIA DE ABRIL

A week-long party held in Seville, Spain, in late April (p1023) – a counterbalance to the religious peak of Easter.

### KONINGINNEDAG (QUEEN'S DAY)

Nationwide celebration in the Netherlands on 30 April, especially in Amsterdam, which stages a huge party (p890).

## MAY

### CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

The famous, not-so-famous and the merely top-less converge for a year's worth of movies in little more than one week in Cannes, France (p403).

### BRUSSELS JAZZ MARATHON

Around-the-clock jazz performances hit Brussels, Belgium, during the second-last weekend in May (p134).

### VIENNA FESTIVAL (WIENER FESTWOCHE)

Wide-ranging program of arts held in Vienna from mid-May to mid-June (p59).

## JUNE

### FESTA DE SANTO ANTÓNIO

In Portugal there's feasting, drinking and dancing in Lisbon's Alfama in honour of St Anthony (p905).

### FESTA DE SÃO JOÃO

Elaborate processions, music, feasting and the whacking of one another with plastic hammers in Porto, Portugal (p926).

### LUXEMBOURG NATIONAL DAY

Fireworks and an all-night party in Luxembourg City on 22 June (p849).

### GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

Giant, open-air extravaganza of music and New Age high jinks held on a farm in England (p207).



**JULY****IL PALIO**

Italy's Siena stages a magnificent bareback horse race on 2 July and 16 August (p825).

**MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL**

Big-name rock and jazz acts hit town for this famous Swiss festival (p1069).

**SANFERMINES (AKA 'RUNNING OF THE BULLS')**

Huge male bovines and people who want to be close to them invade Pamplona, Spain (see the boxed text, p999).

**B-PARADE**

A huge techno street parade in Berlin, Germany, held at the start of July (p445).

**BASTILLE DAY**

Fireworks, balls, processions and more for France's national day, 14 July (p418).

**DE GENTSE FEESTEN**

Belgium's Ghent is transformed into a 10-day party of music and theatre (p134).

**AUGUST****SALZBURG FESTIVAL**

Austria's most renowned classical music festival (p78) brings international talent to Salzburg.

**STREET PARADE**

In Switzerland, Zürich lets its hair down with an enormous techno parade (p1090).

**NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL**

Massive multicultural street fair in London, England (p174).

**EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL**

Three weeks of innovative drama, comedy, dance, music and more from around the globe, held in Edinburgh, Scotland (p258).

**SEPTEMBER****VENICE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

The Mostra del Cinema di Venezia is a huge indie film fest in Italy (p765).

**OKTOBERFEST**

Germany's legendary beer-swilling party starts mid-September in Munich (p481).

**FESTES DE LA MERCÈ**

Head to Spain for Barcelona's annual revelry, held around 24 September (p983).

**NOVEMBER****GUY FAWKES NIGHT**

Bonfires and fireworks erupt across Britain on 5 November (p277).

**DECEMBER****CHRISTMAS MARKETS**

*Christkindlmarks* are held across Germany and Austria. The most famous are in Nuremberg and Vienna but every town has one. Drink mulled wine and find that special (or kitsch) present (see the boxed text, p491).

**NATALE**

Italian churches set up intricate cribs or *presepi* (nativity scenes) in the lead-up to celebrating Christmas (p825).

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

### ULTIMATE EUROPE

Have limited time but want to see a bit of everything? Start in **Dublin** (p657), sampling the vibrant pubs and traditional Irish craic. From Ireland, take a ferry to **Liverpool** (p240) or fly to **London** (p151) for some great theatre. From London, take the Eurostar train to **Paris** (p293).

Head north from Paris to **Antwerp** (p116) for amazing beer, and then further north to **Amsterdam** (p858), not forgetting to ride a canal boat. Go east, stopping for a Rhine cruise, and spend a few days exploring (and surviving) the nightlife in **Berlin** (p435). Next, **Vienna** (p50) beckons with classical-music riches. Step west to **Zürich** (p1087) and the Alps for awe-inspiring ski slopes and vistas.

Head to the canals of **Venice** (p759) and through **Florence** (p775) to historic **Rome** (p721). Train it to **Bari** (p805) and take a ferry to **Athens** (p565), then explore island beaches such as stunning **Santorini** (p602). Off to the south of France then and Mediterranean towns such as **Nice** (p397). Continue to **Barcelona** (p975), before heading to the Moorish towns of southern Spain such as **Granada** (p1028). End your trip in laid-back **Lisbon** (p900); enjoy a glass of local port wine to celebrate completing your grand journey!

**This 8000km-plus Grand Tour takes you to every corner of Western Europe and provides a cascade of experiences that could keep you blogging for months. You could do it in one month – barely – but if you want to fully savour Western Europe, take two.**



## MEDITERRANEAN JOURNEY

### Two Months/Gibraltar to Genoa

Start in southern Spain with some British flavour in **Gibraltar** (p1038), where you can view the only wild primates in Europe. Make your way up the eastern coast past the Moorish town of **Málaga** (p1032) and on to **Valencia** (p1005), then hop aboard a ferry to the **Balearic Islands** (p1012).

Back on the mainland, **Barcelona** (p975) is filled with the architecture of Gaudí. From here, head into France's Provence region, where in **Marseille** (p389) you can see the fortress that was inspiration for the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*. On to the **Côte d'Azur** (p397), and the playground for the rich and famous, **St-Tropez** (p405). A quick stop in the capital of the French Riviera, **Nice** (p397), makes a good jumping-off point for other hot spots such as **Cannes** (p403).

Take a ferry to **Corsica** (p409) and experience the traditional lifestyle of quiet fishing villages. Hit the snowy peaks at **Calvi** (p410) and the groves of **Les Calanques** (p412), before hopping down to **Sardinia** (p816). From here, take a long ferry ride or a quick flight to **Sicily** (p807) to visit colossal Greek temples and the famous volcano, **Mt Etna** (p814).

Catch a ferry to **Naples** (p792) on the Italian mainland and take a trip to **Pompeii** (p799). Move east to **Brindisi** (p806) for a ferry to Greece, landing in **Patra** (p580). Head to **Athens** (p565) to wonder at ancient treasures before getting a plane or ferry to islands such as **Crete** (p605) and **Mykonos** (p595). Retrace your steps to Italy. Head north to **Rome** (p721), taking time to wander amid its ruins and piazzas. Continue through Tuscany, stopping at **Pisa** (p784) to see the famous 'leaning tower'. Finish up along the Ligurian coast in the port city of **Genoa** (p747) via the coastal towns of the **Cinque Terre** (p749), where you can stroll along the Via dell'Amore.

Blue skies, azure waters and white beaches are among the colours you'll see on this approximately 4000km-long sun-drenched journey around the Mediterranean. Ancient ruins, vine-covered hillsides, delectable food, scorching all-night clubs and lots of tan lines await.



# ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

## EUROPE'S HIDDEN GEMS

One to Two Months/Donegal to Brittany

The far north of Ireland is rugged and uncrowded; base yourself in **Donegal** (p695), then head to the often misunderstood yet very welcoming Northern Ireland – **Belfast** (p696) in particular. Traverse the single-track roads of the Isle of Mull (p270), with its bogs and its brogue. Next head south to the gritty yet charming town of **Newcastle-upon-Tyne** (p233) in England and catch the ferry to the Netherlands. **Rotterdam** (p876) combines edgy modern architecture with rocking charm. Go east to Germany where the former East German cities of **Dresden** (p454) and **Leipzig** (p460) are creating a new future from their historic pasts. Linger in the hikeable **Harz Mountains** (p534) before you go far south to the temperate Swiss town of **Lugano** (p1098). Traverse Italy and the hidden gem of **Mantua** (p756) followed by beautiful Umbria and towns such as **Perugia** (p789). In the south, take time to wander frenetic **Naples** (p792) and the ruin-filled **Amalfi Coast** (p802) before pressing on to **Sicily** (p807) and its ancient and colourful culture.

Fly or ferry to Greece and enjoy some of the less-visited islands such as **Naxos** (p599) or **Lesvos** (p631). Return to Italy and the spiffed-up town of **Turin** (p750). Crossing to France, **Carcassonne** (p385) has a rich medieval past and great food. Head across the Iberian Peninsula to the Basque city of **Bilbao** (p997) and the pilgrimage shrine of **Santiago de Compostela** (p1003). Finally, return to France and the rural beauty of **Brittany** (p333).

Get your advanced degree in Europe by detouring off the beaten path and you'll savour places that truly embody the character of their countries. Don't expect them to be touristfree – but do expect to be surprised and charmed on this 6000km trip.



## TAILORED TRIPS

### TIMELESS EUROPE

Watching Europe from the window of a train, letting the sea roll past from the rail of a ferry. That's the way generations of travellers have explored the continent, and you can too. You might even grab a kiss on a misty station platform or share a hug on deck as the land slips away behind you. Start in **London** (p151), take the train to **Harwich** (p280) for a ferry crossing to **Hoek van Holland** (p893). From here trains connect to fabled, gabled **Amsterdam** (p858). Take a fast train to **Cologne** (p523) and then mellow out on a **river cruise** (p516) down the alluring Rhine River. Alight at **Mainz** (p517), connect by train through **Basel** (p1093) to **Interlaken** (p1082) for the slow-moving trains and trams that wend through glaciers of the Alps. Next take a train past rugged scenery to connect with stylish **Milan** (p752), where a fast Italian Eurostar train zips to **Florence** (p775), the heart of the Slow Food Movement. Reserve a sleeping compartment and snuggle up tight on the night train to **Paris** (p293), feeling the romance in the rhythm of the rails.



### WORLD HERITAGE WONDERS

Western Europe's Unesco World Heritage sites often evoke an audible gasp from awestruck travellers. In Ireland, marvel at **Brú na Bóinne** (p669), neolithic tombs that predate Egypt's pyramids by more than six centuries. Step lightly over the geometric patterns of the **Giant's Causeway** (p703) in Northern Ireland. See how far the Roman Empire stretched in Britain at **Hadrian's Wall** (p237). Spend a day at the magnificent 13th-century **Cathédrale Notre Dame de Chartres** (p323) in Chartres, France, and admire one of the world's largest ensembles of medieval stained glass. Climb 366 steps for the breathtaking view from Bruges' famous **belfry** (p124)

or check out the Netherlands' Kinderdijk region in summer to see all 19 **windmills** (p877) twirl simultaneously. Roam the ramparts in Switzerland's beautiful castle city, **Bellinzona** (p1097), or spend an afternoon wandering through the Old Town's **fortifications** (p842) in Luxembourg City. In Germany explore the **Roman ruins** (p514) in Trier. In Italy don't miss **Pompeii** (p799) and its eternally stoned partiers. Stroll through lavish gardens and the 1440-room Habsburg palace, **Schloss Schönbrunn** (p55) near Vienna. In Greece the ancient city of **Delphi** (p587) is a must-see. Finally, gape at the towering aqueducts in **Segovia** (p968) and **Tomar** (p922).



# The Authors



## RYAN VER BERKMOES

**Coordinating Author, Germany,  
The Netherlands**

Ryan Ver Berkmoes once lived in Germany, during which time he edited a magazine until he got the chance for a new career: with Lonely Planet. One of his first jobs was working on the Germany chapter of the fourth edition of this very book. Later he worked on the first edition of Lonely Planet's *The Netherlands*, a country where they pronounce his name better than he can. These days he lives in Portland, Oregon. Learn more at [ryanverberkmoes.com](http://ryanverberkmoes.com). Ryan also wrote *Europe Defined*, *Destination Western Europe*, *Getting Started*, *Events Calendar*, *Itineraries*, *Regional Directory* and *Transport* in *Western Europe* chapters.



## ALEXIS AVERBUCK

**Greece**

Alexis Averbuck lives in Hydra, Greece 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 California native and 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. Each trip inspires new work, both written and visual – see her paintings at [www.alexisaverbuck.com](http://www.alexisaverbuck.com).



## NEAL BEDFORD

**Austria**

In his heart Neal will always be a New Zealander, but after living in Austria for the past decade he must finally admit that an ever-increasing part of him now calls this land of mountains, valleys and rivers home. From his base in Vienna he has travelled the length and breadth of Austria on a number of occasions, searching for the boldest Feuerwehrfest, the biggest summer solstice bonfire, and the best local Brauerei. He is constantly amazed at the country's beauty, and at how grumpy the Viennese can be.

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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### OLIVER BERRY

France

Oliver graduated with a degree in English from University College London and spent the next few years seeing what the rest of the world had to offer (quite a lot as it turned out). He now lives and works in Cornwall as a writer and photographer. His travels for Lonely Planet have carried him everywhere from the snowy mountains of Canada to the sunny beaches of the Cook Islands, but he always finds the best adventures have a French flavour. He has worked on several editions of Lonely Planet's *France*, and can often be found wandering around the more remote corners of L'Hexagone.



### GEERT COLE

Belgium, Luxembourg

According to a local saying, Belgians are born with a brick in their stomach. Not Geert. An avid traveller since his late teens, Geert left Belgium behind and combed continents for years before finally realising that only one nation on earth is founded on beer, chocolate and chips. It's good to be back home! But discovering that one does indeed have a small brick in one's stomach can be hard to digest. Luckily, that's when Leanne entered the scene. Geert enticed Leanne with all the great things in life that Belgians accept as everyday. In return, Leanne offered Geert life on-the-road with Lonely Planet, and Australian wallabies. Perfect really, and it's all now shared with two young daughters.



### DAVID ELSE

Britain

As a backpacker, David has travelled widely in Europe, Africa, India and beyond. As a professional writer, David has authored more than 20 guidebooks, including Lonely Planet's *Great Britain*. His knowledge of Britain comes from a lifetime of travel around the country – a passion dating from university years, when heading for the hills was always more attractive than visiting the library. Originally from London, David slowly trekked northwards, via Bristol, Wales and Derbyshire, to live in Yorkshire for several years. He's currently based in the south Cotswolds, and escapes to Bath or Scotland as often as possible.



### DUNCAN GARWOOD

Italy

Following work experience in a newspaper office in Slough (watch the opening credits of *The Office* and you'll get the picture) and three years as a corporate journalist, Duncan moved to Bari in 1997. Since then he's travelled up and down Italy various times on behalf of Lonely Planet, contributing to several Italian guides, including *Rome* and *Naples & the Amalfi Coast*. When he's not travelling, he enjoys doing nothing very much on the beach, playing footy with his young Italian-speaking kids and cooking platefuls of pasta. He currently lives in a small town just south of Rome.



## LEANNE LOGAN

**Belgium, Luxembourg**

Leanne's first taste of Belgium was a cone of mayonnaise-smothered *frites* (chips) which, at the age of 12, she was told to eat using a tiny wooden fork without getting her fingers dirty. Some ask. Many years later she left her job as a journalist in Australia to try that again. En route around Belgium and Luxembourg for Lonely Planet, she not only mastered the dexterous art of devouring chips (alas, plastic forks now) but also found an appetite for beer, chocolate and a Flemish man. Nearly 20 years on and a dozen times around both countries, Leanne now introduces her half-Flemish daughters to the fine things Belgium and Luxembourg have to offer – including finger-licking *frites*.



## VIRGINIA MAXWELL

**Italy**

After working for many years as a publishing manager at Lonely Planet's Melbourne headquarters, Virginia decided that she'd be happier writing guidebooks rather than commissioning them. Since making this decision she's written or contributed to Lonely Planet books about nine countries, eight of which are on the Mediterranean. Virginia has covered Rome and ventured to the north of Italy for Lonely Planet's *Italy*.



## CRAIG MCLACHLAN

**Greece**

A Kiwi with a bad case of wanderlust, Craig enjoys nothing more than visiting the Greek Isles to down Mythos beer, retsina and to consume countless gyros. He regularly leads hiking tours to Greece and has even taken a group of Japanese doctors to Kos to see where Hippocrates came from. Describing himself as a 'freelance anything', Craig runs an outdoor activity company in Queenstown, New Zealand in the southern hemisphere summer, then heads north for the winter. Other jobs have included author, pilot, hiking guide, interpreter and karate instructor. Check out his website at [www.craigmclachlan.com](http://www.craigmclachlan.com).



## MILES RODDIS

**Andorra**

Living in Valencia, on Spain's Mediterranean coast, Miles loses count of the times he's nipped up to Andorra for a skiing weekend or a summertime camping and walking break – though never, ever to shop. He has contributed to more than 30 Lonely Planet titles, including guides, both general and walking, about Spain and France, Andorra's immediate neighbours.





## CAROLINE SIEG

Germany

Half-American and half-Swiss, Caroline Sieg has spent most of her life moving back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean, with lengthy stops in Zürich, Miami and New York City. When not cycling around Berlin's Tiergarten or Hamburg's waterways in an effort to work off a daily dose of *Kaffee und Kuchen*, Caroline can be found commissioning guidebooks in Lonely Planet's London office.



## DAMIEN SIMONIS

Spain

The spark was lit on a short trip over the Pyrenees to Barcelona during a summer jaunt in southern France. It was Damien's first taste of Spain and he found something irresistible about the place – the way the people moved, talked and enjoyed themselves. Damien came back years later, living in medieval Toledo, frenetic Madrid and, finally, settling in Barcelona. He has ranged across the country, from the Picos de Europa to the Sierra Nevada, from Córdoba to Cáceres, and slurped cider in Asturias and gin in the Balearic Islands. Apart from Spain, Damien wrote *Barcelona, Madrid, Mallorca, the Canary Islands* and the now-defunct *Catalunya & the Costa Brava* for Lonely Planet.



## REGIS ST LOUIS

Portugal

A lover of wine, rugged coastlines and a bit of *bacalhau* (dried cod), Regis was destined for a romance with Portugal when he first began exploring the country some years back. Favourite memories include delving into the bohemian side of Porto, sampling fine vintages from wineries along the Douro and visiting remote corners of the north. Regis was the coordinating author of *Portugal*, and he has covered numerous other destinations for Lonely Planet. His travel essays have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among other publications. He lives in New York City.



## NICOLA WILLIAMS

Liechtenstein, Switzerland

Ever since Nicola moved to a village on the southern side of Lake Geneva, she has never quite been able to shake off that uncanny feeling that she is on holiday – a garden tumbling down towards that same glittering lake and Switzerland's Jura mountains beyond is her wake-up call. Nicola has lived and worked in France since 1997, and when not flitting to Geneva, skiing or dipping into the Swiss countryside, she can be found writing at her desk. Previous Lonely Planet titles include *France, Provence & the Côte d'Azur*, *Languedoc-Roussillon* and *Tuscany & Umbria*.



## NEIL WILSON

### Ireland

Neil's first round-the-world backpacking trip was way back in 1983, but despite living in Scotland he never made it to neighbouring Ireland till 1990 with a visit to Kinsale and the south coast. Trips to Northern Ireland followed in 1994, and his interest in the history and politics of the place intensified a few years later when he found out that most of his mum's ancestors were from Ulster. Neil is a full-time travel writer based in Edinburgh, Scotland, and has written more than 40 guidebooks for half a dozen publishers, including working on the last three editions of Lonely Planet's *Ireland*.

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