



# simple

## WAYS TO SAVE IN EUROPE IN 2019

BY THE EDITORS OF EUROCHEAPO.COM

[www.eurocheapo.com](http://www.eurocheapo.com)

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## Bonjour, Cheapo!

Hi there and welcome, fellow Cheapo! If you're preparing for a European trip and looking for easy ways to save on your travels, you've picked up the right book.

We launched [EuroCheapo.com](https://EuroCheapo.com) in 2001 with the goal of making travel through Europe affordable and memorable. In the years since, our editors have inspected and reviewed thousands of hotels and written more than [2,800 blog posts](#) about ways to save on your trip to Europe.

**But where to start?** Don't panic! We've got you covered, with this handy travel guide that covers how to save on the "big items" of your trip, from accommodations and transportation to using your phone abroad. *Bon voyage*—and happy savings!



## When to Go

Let's start with the basics: When are you going on your trip? A little flexibility here could help you save in a big way.

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If you have the flexibility to choose the timing of your next trip, you're in a lucky spot. Most people don't have this luxury, as the timing of their trips is dictated by academic vacations, holidays or work schedules.

The result, unfortunately, is that most travelers heading to Europe from countries in the northern hemisphere (and that's a lot of people) have very similar vacation schedules. These periods tend to make up the "high season," and include travel in **late spring, summer, early fall, and major holidays** (especially Christmas and Easter).

## **The problem with high season**

It's obvious, but worth considering: Heading over in late June or July makes a lot of sense for many Americans, especially those traveling with children or during their own academic break. However, they're all competing with each other for flights, trains, and hotel rooms, which shoots prices sky high.

And it's not just about money, either. High season also means crowds, lines, and potential disappointments. Restaurants can be more difficult to get into. Museums are often packed. Want to climb Notre Dame's tower? Be prepared to wait... in a very long line.

We need to add a quick defense of traveling during high season, however. As mentioned above, for many, there simply isn't any other option. Many travelers simply have to work with the vacation schedules they've been given. And anyhow, let's face it: The weather is probably going to be glorious. So at least you can work on that tan while you're waiting in line...

However, if you can tweak the timing of your trip a bit, you're in a position to save on everything from flights to hotels.

## **Lean on the shoulder season**

The "shoulder season" is the transition period between the pricy high season and the cold and cheap low season. Generally speaking, this period is in the early spring (late March and early April) and late fall (October and early November).

Traveling through much of Europe during the shoulder season tends to be a delight, with far fewer crowds (the kids are in school, after all), and lower prices for airfare and hotel rooms. Weather is famously fickle and increasingly hard to predict, but late March and early April tend to offer the first smells of spring throughout much of Europe (although you should certainly pack an umbrella), and October and early November remain quite pleasant (although chances are you'll need a hat and gloves at night).

## **Sweet n' Low season**

As for "low season", we love traveling throughout Europe during the late fall, winter and early spring. This is when we usually travel, partly out of necessity, as we need to inspect hotel rooms (which is difficult to do when they're all occupied). Thus, we're quite accustomed to hitting the road as temperatures are dropping.

But even if our travels didn't require empty-ish hotels, we'd still probably choose to take at least occasional trips during the winter months. It's a magical time, when major tourist

destinations, from Amsterdam to Zurich, belong to their residents. It's a far different experience from visiting during the high summer months. Restaurants are filled with locals, museums are relatively quiet (save a group of local students on a tour), and sidewalks bustling with neighbors.

The low season isn't a great time, of course, for sun-seekers and surfers. And skiers will find that the winter is anything but "low season" in the Alps. However, travelers looking to connect with local cultures, spend days wandering in museums, and attend concerts and other prime cultural programming, will love low season travel.

And budget travelers will love the lower costs of airfare, hotel rooms, train tickets, car rentals and many other related travel expenses.

## Some notable exceptions

In covering the basics of seasonality in Europe, we're painting with some broad strokes. There are several notable exceptions to this low/high equation. A few considerations:

- **Late October – Early November:** Students throughout the European Union have an academic break the last week of October and the first week of November. Many of them hit the road on class trips. If you're traveling during this period, you will see them... everywhere.

- **August in Paris:** Right around the first of August, many French workers go on holiday for several weeks, and many families take the opportunity to clear out of their cities and hit the countryside and coast. Residents clear out of Paris, for example, and many (but certainly not all) restaurants and shops close for much of the month. Hotel rates tend to be markedly lower in August, as well, but climb again in September.

- **August in other European cities:** Paris isn't alone. Many European cities see a dramatic dip in tourism (and hotel rates) in August, as travelers opt for sandy beaches over cobblestone streets. Traveling to Venice, Florence and Rome during August will be cheaper than during May, June or September.

- **Outdoor sports have their own seasonality.** Skiing the Alps? That "high season" is February (especially mid-to-late February, when the French have their winter breaks). Head to the same mountain towns in May and June for lovely hikes... and lower prices.

## Watch out for special events

Cities throughout Europe fill their empty hotel rooms during the low season by hosting business conventions, expos, major sports matches, and other special events.



Events to avoid include [Paris' fashion weeks](#) (March, and September/October), [Barcelona Mobile World Congress](#) (February), and Venice's [Biennale](#) and [Carnevale](#) (February/March).

If hotel prices look uncommonly high, do a search for "Special events in [city]" to double check that you're not trying to visit during a peak (and expensive) travel period.



# Building a Sensible Itinerary

When putting your itinerary together, try to remain calm and realistic. If possible, give yourself a minimum of two nights at every stop in order to minimize travel expenses and keep everyone happy.

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The trip planning experience can be exhilarating. You know that you have a set number of days (or weeks!) to travel, and you look at a map with all the lip-smacking excitement of a kid in a candy store. Where do you want to visit? Where *don't* you want to visit?

Imagine that you're putting together an itinerary for a 10-day trip. You could start in [Paris](#), head to [Amsterdam](#), then take a train to [Salzburg](#), [Venice](#) and [Rome](#)? Wait, maybe start in [Madrid](#) instead, then drive up to [Barcelona](#), [Nice](#), [Milan](#), [Munich](#) and then Amsterdam? But hold on. *What about [Prague](#)?!?!*

If you're only traveling for 10 days, either of those options is certain to cost you dearly (in transportation costs alone) and, without question, lead to grumpy and exhausted



travelers. It's normal to be excited and overbook your itinerary. Catch yourself now while you're still in the planning stages.

Many travelers from the US approach their European travel planning with a similar mindset as they would in the US where gas is cheap, the road goes on forever, and there are unlimited roadside attractions with plenty of parking. Why not jump from town to town every day, taking in the landscape, driving through cities and finding fun spots for dinner along the way?

Add to our inherent "road trip" instinct the fact that we get the fewest days of vacation each year of any industrialized country, and the high cost of getting to Europe in the first place, and you've got a situation where American travelers understandably want to pack in as many experiences as possible during their European trips.

Nobody's going to stop you from doing this, of course, and you might have a grand time. However, you'd be missing out on a lot. Many of the cities that you'll be passing through have histories that go back more than a millennium. A region that you could speed through in an hour probably has its own cuisine worth sampling, wine worth tasting, and dessert worth gobbling. It's worth slowing down to experience it.

And slowing down can also lead to real savings. Read on...

## **Consider the cost of gas**

On another practical note: As we'll discuss later in the rental car section, gasoline in Europe is far more expensive than in North America. If you're planning to rent a car and drive like crazy, you're in for a real shock at the pump.

Even with gas prices falling lately, gas costs about three times what it costs in the States. (Check out this [interactive ranking of gas prices](#) around the world.)

## **Slowing down means fewer train tickets**

Zippering from city to city on Europe's high-speed rail network is an experience in itself and highly recommended. You can speed from Florence to Rome in 90 minutes on the high-speed train (and for as little as €20 off-peak if you [book directly in advance!](#)).

However, those seats (and those on [France's TGV](#), [Germany's ICE](#), and [Spain's Renfe](#)) can be expensive in high season. Save on transportation costs by scaling back your

itinerary. Not to mention that if you speed from one city to the next day after day, most of your trip memories will be of train stations and cafe cars.

## **Minimize the one-night stands**

Try this: When building out your itinerary, don't allow yourself any one-night stops. Unless you're really on a mission to get somewhere, give yourself at least two nights in every hotel you book.

Yes, this little tip will force you to slow down and take in your surroundings a bit. But on a more practical note, it will relieve the hassle of *schlepping* your bags from hotel to hotel, packing and unpacking, checking in and checking out. All of that busy work can be a time-waster and add stress to your trip.

## **Use your two-day stops as bases for exploration**

If you do take our advice and give yourself at least two-day stops along your trip, use those stops as bases for exploration. This way you can wake up, not have to pack things up, head off to explore, and feel relaxed that you can come back to your “home base” whenever you please.

You also have the added bonus of exploring territory that your hotel owner will be very familiar with, and will be able to offer all kinds of inside advice for activities not to miss, restaurants to try out, and views to take in.

If you force yourself to overcome the instinct to “go, go, go”, in the end, the trip will be more relaxed and full of surprises.

## **Prefer stop-by-stop? Cut back on travel time.**

We know that the (minimum) two-day stop isn't going to work for everyone and for every trip. Sometimes you're on a mission — you're just trying to get from Venice to Paris by car, an 11-hour drive. Some will be tempted to just do the whole thing in one epic day on the road.

Do a search on [Google maps](#) for the route and you'll see several halfway marks that would be perfect for an overnight. (In this example, we'd recommend either Lyon or

Geneva.) If you're on a mission, we probably won't be able to convince you to spend two nights in either city.

However, we would at least recommend an overnight in one of these towns, or at countless smaller villages along the way. The point is to break that 11-hour trip up into smaller, manageable trips. For this example, we think at least two overnights would be better. Three or four hours of driving every day will still give you time to explore the territory.

## Consider “open jaw” itineraries

We'll discuss this again in the flights chapter, but when you're checking around for flights to Europe for your trip, be sure to check “open jaw” flights that allow you to fly into one city and home from another. Increasingly, these flights cost about the same amount as flights into and out of the same city. “Open jaw” flights can have a big impact on your itinerary, as they can free you to plot your trip in a straight line, avoiding that last-minute requirement to circle back to your city of arrival.

For example, say that you're flying from Chicago to London, then heading by train to Paris, and then down to Nice before heading home. Check flights from Chicago to London, but with a return from Nice to Chicago. There's no need to make the mad dash from Nice all the way back up to London. So many travelers do this, and it can add unnecessary stress and expense to the final days of your trip. (Wouldn't you rather be hanging out on the beach for another day than hustling back to London?)

**One caveat:** These “open jaw” flights work best for travelers moving around Europe by train, one-way flights inside Europe, or traveling by rental car within only one country. Renting a car in one European country and dropping it off in another can be quite expensive, as the company usually tacks on a fee to go fetch the car and bring it back home.

## Your trip itinerary

Now, back to your drawing board (or kitchen table). Try plotting out your destinations, giving consideration to all the stops along the way. Play around with your itinerary and see what it looks like if you trim a couple of stops, and double up the nights on others.



And remember, by building more time into each step of your trip, you're giving yourself more time for surprises and serendipity. You don't need to know what you're going to do on your day off in southern Spain. You'll find something tasty, we promise you!



# Packing Tips

Headed to Europe and not sure what to pack? We're here to help, with a list of things to consider before you even open that carry-on or, heaven forbid, go off to buy a larger suitcase.

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You already know it -- for everyone's sake, you should pack as little as possible, right? It's easier said than done. So let's talk about you and what kind of a traveler you are. This has a lot to do with what you'll be packing.

## Backpacker or budget-conscious traveler?

**Backpackers and super-budget travelers:** If you're a no-frills, backpack-trekking budget traveler, you are, by necessity, going to need to pack lighter, cut back on clothes, and be more flexible with what you bring (and what you leave at home). Our correspondent Alex recently posted a great guide to what no-fuss [budget travelers should pack for a two-week trip in Europe](#).

**Budget-savvy "comfort" travelers:** While we're true Cheapos, we enjoy a bit more comfort when traveling. We usually steer clear of most hostels (except if they have good private rooms), and we enjoy a fresh shirt every day of our journey. (We always plan to stop and do laundry when we run out.)

We're willing to check a bag, if it means that we'll be more comfortable, and we'll happily make room for important toiletries. But, and this is important, we want to be smart about packing to make sure we don't add extra charges, unmerited weight or unnecessary hassles to our trip.

With this distinction in mind, we're writing the following advice mostly for the latter — budget-minded travelers looking for smart packing advice for a comfortable trip.

## **Check one bag, max**

These days, most transatlantic airlines allow one checked bag for free, but have introduced ridiculous fees for checking a second, third or overweight bag. For flights from the US to Europe, these fees can be as high as \$200 per bag. One way. (Ouch.)

Check out this updated list of [baggage fees for US to Europe airlines](#) in this post from our blog. Some key points:

- Most major airlines (including all “legacy” carriers”) allow one checked bag (to 50 lbs/23 kgs) for free on flights from the US to Europe. A second checked bag, however, can get very expensive. (That second bag can cost you up to \$200... each way!)
- The new “budget carriers” from the US to Europe (like [Norwegian Air](#) and [Wow! Air](#)) charge to check even one bag. However, they quite often also provide substantial savings on ticket prices.

## **Pack lightly: You'll be hauling that suitcase around**

Imagine your suitcase packed neatly with everything you think that you need to bring with you on this trip. Got it? Now, imagine yourself at the airport upon arrival (and possibly no sleep). Imagine rolling along the city streets, up and down stairs. Imagine taking trains (let's see, where shall we stow this?), or packing it into the back of a small European car.

Your suitcase is going to be your travel companion on this trip. Packing lightly can relieve stress (and exhaustion).



## Pack. Breathe. Repack.

We're chronic over-packers. Our impulse is still to bring along everything in our closet. But at least we're aware of this and know to catch it before we take off for the airport. Here's how we handle it:

First, place all of your "wishlist" clothes on the bed, making sure that you have enough essentials to get through a week of traveling. Then place all the items that you plan to check as neatly as possible into your suitcase. Include your toiletries, adapters, and other items to check. Zip it all up (if possible), lift it (if possible), and then stand back and take a hard look at it.

Without exception, that suitcase will be too heavy. It's probably already bulging. Consider the weeks ahead, the flights, the trains, the stairs. Consider your sanity! It's time to re-open it and start the purge. Try to be realistic. Be realistic about this:

- **Shoes.** How many pairs do you really need? Give yourself two — one for dressy occasions, and one for long days of walking.
- **Underwear and socks.** Make sure you have enough for one week, at which point you can do a load of laundry. Others take fewer because they wash in their hotel sinks.
- **Jeans and pants.** Go for three pair max. Yes, this means wearing the same jeans over and over. But your traveling companions will be doing the same, and nobody will notice anyhow. And toss aside that uncomfortable pair that you've been meaning to wear more often. There's no room to pack anything that you're not going to realistically wear.
- **Shirts and sweaters.** Give yourself a week's worth of shirts, and a couple of thin sweaters. Big, bulky sweaters are suitcase-busters. Go for lightweight fabrics that allow for layering.
- **Coats and jackets.** One bulky overcoat can quickly max out your suitcase. Try to simplify your wardrobe: Take one coat, if possible, that's versatile enough to work for sightseeing, trips in trains, and a restaurant situation. It's a good idea to pack some sort of light rain-resistant jacket, as well. And don't forget an umbrella.

## Let's talk toiletries

Given limits and regulations on bringing toiletries, fluids and gels with you onto a plane, most Europe-bound Transatlantic passengers will be packing some toiletries in their

checked luggage. But watch out, because it's easy to overdo it here. Take items that you require on a daily basis, and don't forget to pack your medications.

If possible, buy travel-size portions or empty containers that you can fill up with your favorite products. Or squeeze your shampoo into a refillable travel-size container. And just like that, you've avoided the need to bring along a bulky bottle of shampoo.

**Sanity check:** Above all, remember that Europe is packed with drug stores, supermarkets, pharmacies and cosmetic shops. If you run out of soap or hair tonic, it's quite a bit of fun to go shopping with the locals. You'll probably even find a new favorite product!

## Other items

Some other, occasionally overlooked, items that should be packed into either your luggage or carry-on include:

- **Plugs and chargers:** Line up every electrical gadget that you're bringing along: phone, camera, laptop, shaver, etc. Don't forget to pack their cords, plugs, and battery chargers. We like to put all of our random chargers into a large Ziploc bag.
- **Adapters:** North American travelers to Europe will need an **adapter** in order to plug their electronics into western European outlets. Note that these are adapters (which physically make it possible to plug into the outlet), not "**converters**" (which convert the electricity from 220 volts to 110 volts). Most modern electronics (like smartphones, cameras and laptops) have converters built into them (check to make sure the item says that it can handle 110/220). Adapters are small and inexpensive and can be purchased from electronics stores. We usually travel with three or four, just to make sure we're covered. We don't usually bring a converter with us -- unless we're traveling with an old fashioned hair dryer (this is a joke!).
- **European currency from previous trips:** Have any money sitting around the house from previous European trips? Be sure to bring it! It's so easy to forget this -- keep it in a handy spot for your next trip.
- **Guidebooks:** Call us old fashioned, but we can't imagine *not* bringing along a guidebook. Yes, you obviously should do research online before you go and during the trip (like, say, on [EuroCheapo!](#)), but there's no substitution for whipping out a guide as you trek across a country or even just across a town. Yes, apps and social media can offer guidance, but they can also be very hard to read in the sun, require electricity, and can break.

- **Passport:** Enough said. Triple check. Make sure that it's valid at least six months following your return date. Please check it again.

## About that laptop

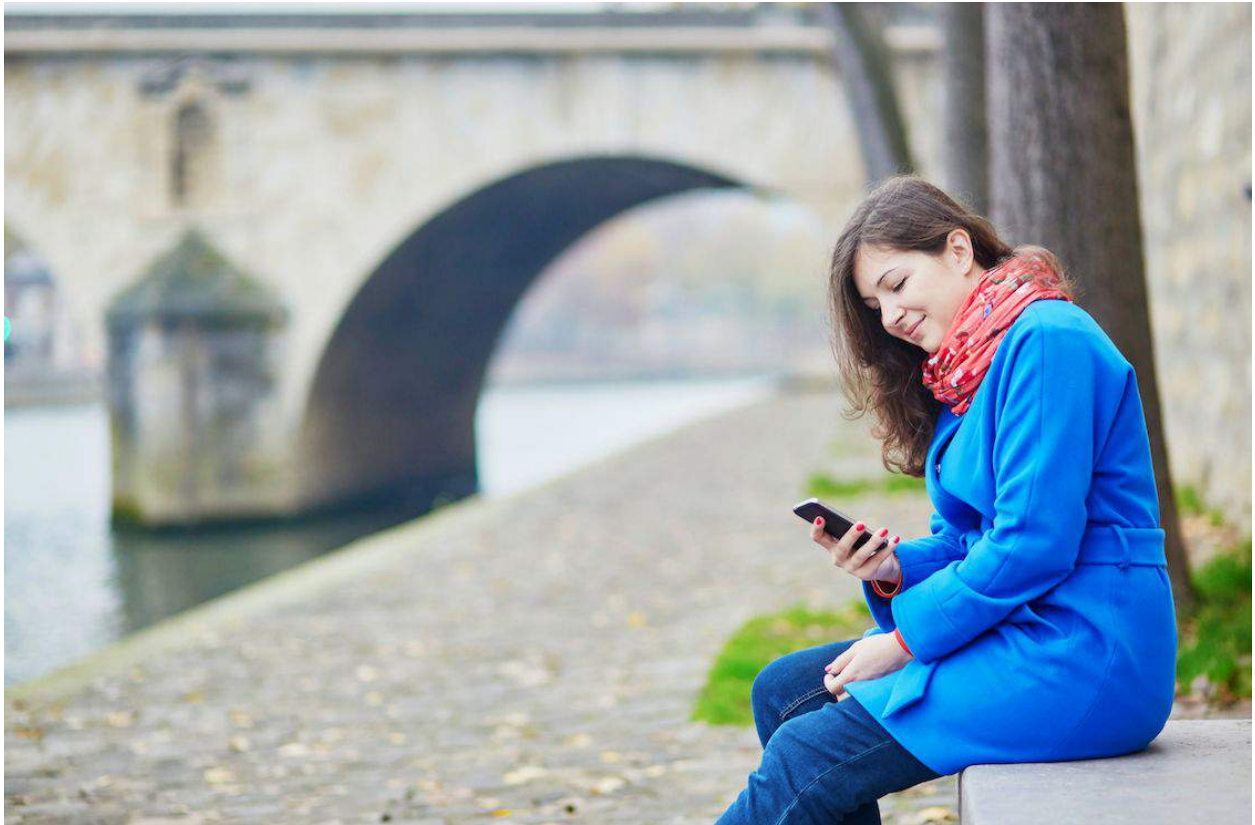
Laptops are heavy. Are you really sure that you need to bring it along? Unless you're on a work trip, chances are you could do most of your computing on your (much, much lighter) smartphone.

When you pack your laptop, you're not just bringing it along, but also the power cord (and adapter), and the padded protection necessary for transport. It might not be particularly heavy by itself, but it'll add significantly to your ever-expanding luggage load. Plus, let's face it: It's going to remind you of work. *Leave it at home!*

## Give yourself room for your souvenirs

Another classic mistake travelers make is to arrive in Europe with their suitcase already bursting at the seams, allowing them no room to bring home souvenirs and gifts. Trust us, you're going to need a little extra space for some tasty bottles of wine, novelty aprons, and chocolates. Sure, you could buy another suitcase to hold your purchases, but this is a costly solution.





## Using Your Phone and Staying in Touch

Read through this quick tutorial and, we promise, you'll be well positioned to make the right decisions about your phone needs for your upcoming trip.

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How many times a day do you grab your phone? Most of us do it far too often—but who can blame us? It's how we chat, text, check our emails, and find a nearby restaurant. These days when you're traveling, you'll be tempted to do the same. If you're not careful, these impulsive phone sessions could cost you dearly.

However, there is some good news. With a little pre-planning, it's possible to use your phone while traveling abroad for a variety of purposes (calling, texting, emailing) without getting stuck with a huge bill when you return.

## **Don't just “wing it” (if you're going to use your phone)**

A few words for travelers who feel like hiding their head in the sand and saying, “I don't want to think about this. I'll just try to limit my phone use in Europe and we'll see what I get charged when I get home.” *Don't do this.*

First of all, you might find that your phone doesn't work at all. Some American carriers simply don't work in Europe, and thus you won't be able to make calls or text (although you would be able to use the Wi-Fi). Other carriers require the phone to be enabled for international calling, texting and data. While others are set up to allow international use by default.

Chances are, however, that you'll be able to use your phone. But crucially, you need to know how much your usage is going to cost you.

## **Understand the international phone plans**

Conveniently, US phone carriers offer special international plans to cover just this situation. They offer plans that you will “add on” to your existing plan, and which should cover the duration of your trip. In most cases, you can call your carrier to add the plan to your account, although most will let you add these online if you prefer.

Each carrier's international plan is different, and you should obviously call or visit your carrier's website for more information on the plans available to you.

If you use your phone extensively without a special international plan, you will probably wind up paying dearly for it. On the other hand, if you have very limited phone needs (maybe you'll make a couple of calls, but you won't send text messages or check your email), you might find out that none of the special international plans make sense for you.

It's worth spending 15 minutes to assess your phone needs and understand what your charges will be before you hit the ground in another country. Let's continue!

## **Assess your own phone needs**

Now we need to figure out what you'll be using your phone for while traveling. This will determine if you should get a special international plan from your carrier or just wing it without a plan. How will you be using your phone? Here are some options:

- **Making and receiving phone calls:** If you plan to use your phone to place or receive calls, you should consider a phone plan. If your phone is enabled for international calling, you'd be able to make and receive calls without a plan, but those calls will be more expensive without a plan than with a plan.

- **Texting:** Sending and receiving text messages comes in handy when traveling, and it's far less expensive than placing phone calls. If your phone is activated for international use, the texts you send will be less expensive with a plan than if you "go commando" without a plan.

- **Email, Internet web browsing, and apps:** Using your phone to send and receive emails, browse the web, and use apps while on the road is certainly convenient, but it also uses a lot of data. You should definitely use a phone plan if this is your plan.

For much more on this topic, check out [this series of articles in our blog](#).

Now you'll need to visit your carrier's website or call customer service to find out their latest international plans and if they work for you.

However, there is one more cheapo option available to you: Buying an unlocked phone at home, and then purchasing a SIM card abroad.

## **SIM Card: The cheapest option for your smartphone**

Rather than purchasing a package from your carrier before leaving, you can also buy a SIM card package in Europe. Once you pop it into an unlocked phone, you'll have your own European phone number!

Note that you have two choices: You could buy an unlocked phone at home before your trip (at Best Buy or on Amazon, for example), and then buy a SIM card in Europe for it -- and thus traveling with two phones. Or, if your smartphone is already unlocked, you could simply swap out your home SIM card for a new European card when you get there (however, you won't have access to your US cell phone number).

This is, in fact, how we travel with our phones, as it's actually a quite simple and much more cost-effective way of using our iPhone while traveling outside the States. The biggest difference? With a SIM card, you can use the phone freely for calls, emailing and even browsing the Web, and never even get close to exhausting your plan. All that fretting over data use — gone.

## How do SIM cards work?

There are a long list of carriers and SIM options in each country, but generally speaking, this will be your plan: Once you arrive in Europe, head to a newsstand or phone carrier store (like Orange in France), and ask for a SIM card for travelers. Options will vary, but often the SIM card will cost very little (most likely under 20 euros). This little card will need to be inserted into your phone. (Check with your phone manual for instructions. Sometimes they'll even help you install it in the shop.) Once installed, you will have a phone number.

You will then need to buy credits from the cashier to “top it off” and use the phone. Ask the cashier -- there will likely be many choices. Do you want only calls and text messages, or also Internet? For how many days? They will explain the options to you, but we'd recommend just buying a credit for 5 or 10 euros to get started. Regardless, it will be a better deal than what your home phone carrier offers!

**More information:** Read much more about this in [our guide to SIM Cards in Europe](#) and the best cards in [France](#), [Spain](#), and [Germany](#).

## Remain calm and remember Wi-Fi

And now, for some good news: You can use your phone abroad to make calls, surf the web, and even use your favorite apps for free. Just stick to free Wi-Fi networks and keep your cellular data switched “OFF”.

Free Wi-Fi is going to be your best friend when trying to stay connected abroad without using expensive data. It's increasingly easy to find free Wi-Fi in most European hotels, restaurants (McDonald's and Starbucks, along with many local establishments throughout Europe), train stations, libraries, stores... even parks!

Once you connect your phone to a Wi-Fi network, you can surf away on your browser and load up your apps. And we're not just talking about Facebook, Twitter and Instagram—you can also fire up telephone apps, such as Skype, to place calls for free (if calling another Skype user) or pennies a minute (if calling a telephone number).

**A word about texting and Wi-Fi:** Yes, you can also send text messages on your smartphone through a Wi-Fi network. On the iPhone, for example, you can use iMessage. However, these messages can only be sent and received when you're connected to a Wi-Fi network and are thus a bit different from standard text messages (which zip through the air in real time via your phone carrier). Our solution is to turn off

the iMessage feature while traveling and only send regular text messages. We want to be able to send and receive these text messages in real time.

In practice, we tend to bring along one unlocked phone just for European SIM cards, and then switch the data on our home cell phone to “off”. Others keep their home phone set to “airplane” the entire time. And others, of course, just wing it...





## Saving on banks, ATMs, and credit cards

Should you get euros in advance? Exchange money at the airport? Use the same credit card for everything? A little advance planning here can help you save a lot of cash.

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Let's talk about saving money on money. It might not strike you as the most exciting topic, but it pays off handsomely to consider how you'll be banking, getting cash, and spending your money abroad.

### Using ATM machines in Europe

Most of us are accustomed to withdrawing cash from ATM machines back home: You waltz up to the machine, insert your card, type in your PIN (personal identification number), ask the machine for cash from your checking or savings account, withdraw your cash, take a receipt, and leave.

We strongly recommend that you use ATM machine throughout your trip to withdraw cash. Currency exchange counters, traveler's checks, buying euros before you go — they're all hassles and expensive. Throughout Europe, the process for using an ATM will be the same as it is back home, with one notable addition: You'll probably switch the screen to English as soon as you insert your card.

## **No PIN? Get it now.**

If you are not accustomed to using an Automatic Teller Machine, get used to it now before leaving for Europe. If you have a checking account with a bank, chances are that you already have an ATM card (and if you have an ATM card, you have a PIN number associated with it).

If you don't have a card (or have forgotten your PIN), take care of this now. Your bank will be able to get a card or PIN code sent to you immediately. You will need this to withdraw cash while traveling.

## **Some tips for using ATM machines in Europe**

### **Use official bank ATMs**

When we're looking around for an ATM while traveling, we stick to those connected to actual banks. Just as you might avoid a sketchy looking roadside ATM back home (how much are they going to charge me, and who's going to steal my card number?), it's best to stick to ATMs that are associated with large, international banks. If it looks shady, keep moving.

### **If an ATM doesn't work, don't panic**

Although an American ATM card will work at most ATM machines you use in Western Europe, there are times when your card simply won't work. This could be caused by a number of factors: Perhaps that particular bank doesn't accept international cards, or perhaps there was a problem connecting to your home bank.

When this happens, don't panic. Simply try another bank's ATM. And if this doesn't work, call your home bank. Many major banks have international customer service phone numbers listed on the back of the card.

### **Make copies**

Be safe and smart when traveling: Make photocopies of your important travel documents, including your ATM and credit cards, and keep these in a safe place during your trip. Be sure to copy both sides of your cards, as the customer service numbers for use while traveling are located on the back side. (Other items worth copying include your passports, and flight, hotel and car reservations.)

### **Don't let the ATM “convert to US dollars” for you**

Some ATMs will offer to convert your ATM amount from euros to US dollars for you. This is almost never a good idea – although it can be hard to tell when you're squinting down at the ATM screen on the streets of Athens. (Unless you happen to also know the trading US dollar / euro exchange rate.)

Generally speaking, if they're asking you something about converting currency, just say no. This is a chance for the foreign bank to make a little extra cash off of you by offering a less-than-stellar exchange rate. In most cases, the exchange rate that your bank is going to give you will be better (even with their fee included!).

## **Call your bank before you take off**

Before hitting the road, call your bank and credit card companies to tell them your travel dates and country itinerary. This is important for them to know, as foreign charges and ATM withdrawals may signal an internal “red-flag” and could result in your account being frozen. That's really not something you want to deal with from, say, the cobblestoned streets of Florence. With the advent of “chip” cards, it's less important than the old days, but it still can't hurt to let them know.

But wait—don't hang up! Now that you've got them on the phone, it's time for you to ask them a few questions. Here are some key questions for your bank:

### **1. How much do they charge for an ATM withdrawal abroad?**

This is an important question to ask your bank, and the answer is sometimes complicated. However, it gets at the very heart of how much you're going to be charged to use foreign ATMs to withdraw euros.

Chances are, your bank is going to charge you something for this service. This charge will vary widely among banks, however **many banks charge \$1.50 to \$5 per withdrawal** AND some add a **foreign transaction fee of 1-3%**. However, some banks will only charge a flat fee and others may only charge a percentage.

Note that even if your bank normally charges fees to withdraw money abroad, certain elite-level customers might qualify for no-fee withdrawals and transactions. If this is your case, lucky you!

## **2. Does your bank have any branches or partnerships in the country you're visiting?**

Also, ask about whether or not your bank has branches in the countries you're visiting. Citibank and HSBC, for example, operate many branches in large cities throughout Europe. If so, ask if withdrawals from these branch ATMs are fee-free. They might be – although, again, these benefits might be reserved for customers that have a certain status at the bank.

Similarly, ask your bank if they have any special partnerships with banks in the countries you'll be visiting.

## **3. Adjust your withdrawal habits.**

Once you determine how much you're going to be charged to withdraw cash abroad, you might have to tweak your normal withdrawal habits.

- If your bank levies a flat fee for each transaction, it makes obvious financial sense to make fewer (although larger) trips to the ATM.
- If you're traveling in a country where you have access to a no-fee ATM (through a participating bank or a branch of your home bank), you could be more comfortable withdrawing smaller amounts.
- If you have multiple checking accounts, compare these charges carefully before you go. One might be a much better deal.
- Compare these charges to your debit and credit card foreign transaction fees. If your credit card is fee-free, your best bet is to pay with plastic as much as possible.

## **Using debit cards abroad**

Just as ATM fees vary widely, debit card charges are all over the place. For the most part, however, your bank will assess a foreign transaction fee, and most hover around

3%. In some cases, it's slightly less. And, again, some elite customers will qualify for no foreign transaction charges at all.

We've also heard of banks charging both a foreign transaction percentage AND a flat-fee for debit charges.

## **Using credit cards abroad**

Now that you've had a blast on the phone with your bank, it's time to call the credit cards! Again, you need to tell that about your trip in order to avoid your card getting blocked. But it's also smart to find out how much you're going to get charged for using your card. Here are some questions for your credit card:

### **1. Does your credit card charge a foreign transaction fee?**

For most credit cards, the answer will be yes. It's often around 3%, but, like everything else, it varies from card to card. Notably, the Capital One credit card does not charge any foreign transaction fees for purchases abroad, which has made it quite popular with travelers.

Also, if you have multiple credit cards, chances are they'll charge differently. Use the one with the lowest charges (or no charges!).

### **2. Does your credit card charge a flat fee per transaction?**

While it's more common for credit cards to charge a percentage, some charge a flat amount per transaction. If this is the case for you, be sure to limit the number of transactions you make — using your card for large purchases, while paying cash for the small stuff.

### **3. What does your credit card charge for cash advances?**

Most cards will charge a percentage of the cash advance, plus any other fees that your card would normally charge for an advance. Some banks also set a minimum cash advance fee. Know your credit card's policy before you make that withdrawal!

### **4. Don't let the vendor convert to US dollars!**

As mentioned above (in the ATM section), when making a purchase with a credit or debit card in Europe, you will sometimes be offered the choice to be charged in euros or to be charged in US dollars. Stick to the euros, as this seemingly friendly "conversion" will almost always result in a lousier-than-normal exchange rate for you.



## **When spending cash, stick to the local currency**

At the risk of sounding obvious, one last note: When spending cash abroad, don't pay in US dollars unless it's an emergency. Some vendors will be happy to convert your dollars into euros on the fly... almost always to your disadvantage. Always pay in the local currency.

## **Currency counters? Travelers checks?**

Just say no to currency exchange services and travelers checks. They're really no longer needed, given the ubiquity of ATM machines and vendors accepting credit and debit cards (both of which offer much better foreign exchange rates than exchange counters or travelers checks).

## **Final money tips**

Once you're home, remember to hold onto your old euros. You'll need them for your next trip! Put them in a safe -- and obvious -- place.



## Saving on European hotels

While we've seen some big changes, good and bad, over the years (hello, free Wi-Fi!), there are certain bits of “Cheapo advice” for hotels in Europe that remain the same today as in 2001.

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Whether you're planning to travel for two days or 20 days, where you stay can have a major impact on both your budget and your trip experience. We've spent the better part of two decades hunting down the best hotel values in Europe's priciest cities. Here are some tips for booking the right hotels for your trip.

### **Don't panic – you can afford to stay (almost) anywhere.**

High-season rates in particularly expensive destinations (London, Venice, Zurich) can cause great anxiety and all-out panic. Remain calm and remember that when doing hotel searches on most websites (although not on [EuroCheapo](#), naturally!), they usually

rank the hotel results to show you what they want you to book first. (Often showing the hotels that are paying them the highest commission at the top of the list.)

So don't just stare at those first results and quickly assume that the city's going to be too expensive for you to visit. It might take a little digging and further research (using tips in this chapter and throughout [EuroCheapo](#)), but chances are you'll be able to find a great little hotel, B&B, or hostel in town for your budget.

## **Don't overlook the location**

On the other extreme, we often hear from travelers who do a hotel search, and then book the cheapest hotel they can find, only to realize it's located far outside the center (or even in a neighboring town!), and isn't easily accessible to areas they want to visit. This can cause an undue expenditure of both time and money, not to mention often a crummy hotel experience. Fortunately, this can be avoided with advance planning. Consider paying just a bit more for something more central or closer to public transportation.

## **Be flexible with your travel schedule**

If you plan to visit nearby destinations during your trip, flexibility with your itinerary can help save money. For example, if you're visiting neighboring Brussels and Bruges, you'll quickly find that hotel rates in Brussels are lower on the weekends (because there are fewer business travelers), but higher in Bruges on weekends (when they have more tourists). Thus, why not visit Bruges from Wednesday to Friday and Brussels on Saturday and Sunday? Play around with your itinerary and you can find hotel savings.

## **Consider the amenities you really need**

When is the last time you had a truly delicious breakfast at a hotel? While they do exist, if it isn't included in your room rate, we'd recommend skipping it altogether and starting your day at the cute café down the street. It'll be cheaper.

Also, think about the room amenities that you really need to enjoy your visit. Do you need air conditioning in Vienna in early June? Do you need a bathtub or is a shower just fine -- or are you even okay with a shared bath? The difference between a one-star and a three-star hotel might be more noticeable in your wallet than in your room.

## Don't forget about hostels

Consider booking a private room in a youth hostel to save money. Most hostels offer both private and dorm-style rooms, and many have gone to great lengths to shed their image as a lair exclusively for round-the-world backpackers (not that there's anything at all wrong with RTW backpacking, of course).

## More stars do not always make a better hotel

You can be certain that a four-star hotel offers elevators, room service, private baths, cable TV, Internet, air conditioning and so forth. But it doesn't say anything about the room décor, the hotel's location or the helpfulness of the staff. A four-star hotel may actually be far less charming than a two-star hotel. ([Read our overview](#) of star ratings in Europe.)

We've visited many hotels that are stuck, for reasons outside their control, with a low star rating. A two-star hotel located in a historic neighborhood in Paris, for example, will probably have restrictions placed upon its ability to do renovations. This might make adding an elevator impossible, which would prevent the hotel from achieving three-star status, no matter how lovely the rooms or how cordial the management.

Also, note that one-star hotels will often offer things for free (like Internet access) that four-star hotels tend to charge for. It's counterintuitive, but often true, so read the details when booking!

Most of our favorite hotels on EuroCheapo are two- and three-star family-run hotels. See [our recommendations here](#) or [search all hotels in Europe here](#).

## Be clear when making your hotel reservation

What exactly are you looking for in a room? Do you prefer one on a high floor overlooking the street? Do you like lower floors with windows opening to the courtyard? Do you want a room with a balcony? Do you need a bathtub instead of a shower?

Mention these preferences when reserving (but keep in mind that you're requesting them, not demanding them). Your requests will almost always be considered.

## **Show up to your hotel early**

Although rooms are usually assigned in advance, there's often a bit of juggling that goes on during the check-in process. Maybe another guest checked in and had an issue with the room. (For example, perhaps two friends had been given a double instead of a twin room. It happens all the time.) Check-in is never flawless, and problems surface. People switch rooms. Get to the hotel as early as possible to minimize your chances of falling into the last place of a chain reaction.

## **Early? Don't necessarily take the only room available.**

Your flight arrives early in the morning and you get to the hotel before check-in begins. You're tired and want to rest up. The room you were originally assigned hasn't yet been cleaned, but there is one room available that you could move into now.

Beware of that free room! Ask if it's the same size and about any other preferences you may have. It could very well be the dreaded "worst room in the hotel" (or it could be perfectly fine). You might be better off leaving your luggage and coming back later to a better room, even if you are a bit tired.

## **Come back early enough to inspect your hotel room**

Say you've arrived early, checked in, left your luggage in a luggage room, and hit the town. Now what? We'd recommend, if possible, returning to the hotel early in the afternoon to move into your room. (This isn't just about making sure your room is adequate. It's also about leaving your possessions in a luggage room that's shared by countless others.)

## **If the room isn't satisfactory — act quickly**

Upon entering the room, look around. Does it work? Be fair. Remember that most European hotel rooms (and especially bathrooms) are small. However, if the room absolutely doesn't work for you and you get the impression that a better room may be available, act quickly.

Very important: Do not open your luggage, flop onto the bed, or (especially) use the bathroom. If, for some reason, you want to change rooms, you'll need to act quickly, without disrupting anything. In many small hotels, after all, the cleaning staff leaves



during the afternoon. In the case of a “sold out” hotel, you will only be able to swap rooms if you haven’t touched anything.

## **If asking for another room, be courteous and convincing**

This is rather obvious, but if you return right away to the reception and ask to switch rooms, be as courteous as possible. The receptionist, after all, has all the power in this situation.

Explain why you’d like to switch rooms. Had you requested something else when reserving? Are you afraid of bathtubs and need a shower? Do you prefer a quieter room on the courtyard? Offer some sort of explanation—and smile.

## **Regardless of the outcome, thank the receptionist**

Perhaps the receptionist will bump some things around and offer you another room in the house. Or, perhaps he’ll sigh and apologize, and you’ll be stuck with your room. Either way, you’ll be seeing that person for the rest of your stay, so be nice and thank him for his effort.

## **Stuck? Offer to switch the next day**

If you’re stuck in your room and staying for multiple nights, ask if it might be possible to switch rooms the next day. This often works, although it requires that you re-pack your bags after your first night. (Often the cleaning staff will move your luggage to the new room for you. Thank them with a tip upon departure.)

## **Our favorite hotels in Europe**

For budget hotel recommendations, check out these reviews of hotels in [Amsterdam](#), [Barcelona](#), [Dublin](#), [Florence](#), [Lisbon](#), [London](#), [Paris](#), [Rome](#), [Venice](#) -- or [search throughout Europe](#).



## Tips for finding cheap airfare to Europe

For most of us traveling from North America, the flight to Europe is our biggest budget obstacle.

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While it can be easy to find great bargains on hotels, it takes a bit of effort and research to uncover cheap flights across the Atlantic.

There are airfare flash sales that come and go, but those are hard to nab if you don't act quickly. However, before you give up hope on finding a good price for your next flight, try some of the tips below. Before long, you'll be "humble bragging" on Facebook about the incredibly low airfare you just scored for your European vacation. Good luck!

### **Example flight**

For the tips that follow, we'll use a sample itinerary. We'll say that we're based in Chicago and want to visit London, Amsterdam, and Paris. We're looking for a flight from Chicago to [London](#). After spending a few days in London, we plan to take the train to Amsterdam (via Lille) and wind up in [Paris](#). Then we'll head back to London to fly home to Chicago.

So how can we save on this flight?

## Set up an airfare alert

If you know the exact route that you want to fly, you should set up airfare alerts to be notified of flight deals immediately. Websites like [Kayak.com](#) and [Airfarewatchdog.com](#) will email you when they notice a deal on the route that you're planning to fly. And you should [sign up for newsletters](#) with your preferred airlines, to grab sales as soon as they're offered.

In our example, we can go to these websites and create a flight alert for Chicago to London. But wait...

## Don't forget about "open jaw" flights

As we mentioned in our chapter on Itineraries, many travelers don't realize that flights into one city and home from another are often just about the same price as flights into and out of the same city. Furthermore, you can save lots of money on transportation (trains, buses, ferries, etc), as you won't need to circle back to your city of arrival. This tip can not only save you money but allows you to save time, so you can see more of Europe.

In our example, instead of a round-trip to London, fly into London and home from Paris. It's a good idea to also research the round-trip fares from London (after all, you might snag a cheap deal), but we would certainly focus on flights from Chicago to London, and then Paris home to Chicago.

Even if that flight turned out to be a bit more expensive, chances are it would be less expensive than paying for a trip on the Eurostar (or a flight!) back from Paris to London (and probably an extra overnight in London, too).

**Note:** Open jaw tickets are best for travelers who are getting around by train or intra-Europe flights. If you're renting a car and visiting multiple countries, however,

“open jaw” may not work for you, as it can be very expensive to pick up a car in one country and leave it in another.

## **Be flexible with your dates**

Flexibility is a budget traveler’s best friend (in so, so many ways!). In terms of snagging a good deal on flights, if you can bump your travel dates around a bit, you may end up saving a lot on airfare.

If you have the possibility, try pushing the trip back a week or up a week to see if you can find a deal on airfare. You might be surprised—there might be something happening (a big convention, sporting event, Madonna concert...) in one of your cities that is throwing off your airfare search results.

In our example, say that we find that our flight seems strangely expensive. In fact, the hotel prices also seem quite high—but only for Paris for our dates. This could indicate that Paris is booked up with some special event (such as a giant conference or one of the annual Fashion Weeks). If you have some flexibility, push your trip dates around and see if airfare drops. Hunt for a deal—you might just find it.

## **Avoid weekends if possible**

Flights tend to be fuller and more expensive on the weekend. If you’re able to travel midweek, chances are you’ll be able to snag a better deal. Play around with your dates — you’ll probably see cheaper airfare on Tuesday and Wednesday.

## **Be flexible with your destinations or itinerary**

Conversely, you can play around with your destinations. Is there another airport nearby that you haven’t included in your search? Could you add another leg to your trip that includes a less expensive airport to fly into? Can you juggle your itinerary a bit to avoid a momentarily expensive city?

Back to our example: If Paris is booked up (and flights expensive) because of the fashion show, perhaps we could invert the trip, landing in Paris (the week before the fashion show), visiting Amsterdam and then departing from London. This would allow us to avoid not only more expensive flight costs, but higher hotel rates, as well.

You should also double-check and make sure that you're including **all area airports** in your search. In our example, don't just search for Heathrow (LHR) and Charles de Gaulle (CDG). Make sure to search for the city code, "LON" and "PAR", to see all area airports. A lot of European cities, even smaller ones, have secondary airports that might be new to you and that might offer a bargain.

A final option is to **"hub it."** For example, say you find an incredible flight deal from Chicago to Dublin on [Aer Lingus](#). It might be worth booking the flight to Dublin and then searching Europe's budget airlines (like [Ryanair](#) and [easyJet](#)) to get a fare from Dublin to London.

## **If at all possible, avoid the peak travel season**

We know, for many travelers, the timing of the trip has been established long in advance (often dictated by academic schedules, holidays, or growling bosses). However, if you do have a bit more flexibility and are looking for ways to save, consider pushing your trip away from peak summer months and global holidays, and into "shoulder season" or even low season.

For spring travel, instead of June, try early May or late April. Looking for a fall visit to Europe? Push your plans back from September to October to save a bit more. If you're able to travel to Europe in the early spring or late fall, you will almost certainly be rewarded with lower airfares, shorter lines at top attractions, and lower hotel rates.

## **When should you book?**

According to a study by the [airline experts at Kayak.com](#), booking six months in advance for European flights is the optimal time. That said, if you see a great deal eight months out, don't hesitate to book it!

## **Don't forget about "budget" international airlines**

In the past few years, a number of new budget-conscious airlines have started flying between North America and Europe. These airlines have made it possible to snag a one-way ticket for jaw-dropping prices, and their fare calendars make it easy to browse prices over the course of a few months.

[WOW Airlines](#), which trumpets \$99 one-way flights to mainland Europe (with a connection in Iceland) is certainly worth a search. Note, however, that this price is hard



to find and doesn't include extras such as checked baggage (which can add up fast, [see our chart](#)), seat assignments, or anything to nibble on. (Read our [article on Wow Air](#) to get more details.)

[Norwegian](#) is another budget option that has been offering super cheap fares from North American to Europe. They fly non-stop from New York to London, and we've found some [excellent deals on Norwegian in the past](#). Read our guide to [making your trip on Norwegian more comfortable](#).

Will you score a \$99 one-way flight to Europe? Probably not, but it's still worth it for budget travelers to look for deals on [Wow! Airlines](#), [Norwegian Air](#), and [Westjet](#) (from Canada).

Partenze Departures			
	destinazione destination	orario time	ritardo delay
9951	SALERNO	19:33	5'
9447	ROMA TERMINI	19:38	
11733	PISA C.LE	19:38	
3088	LUCCA	19:38	
21483	FAENZA	19:40	
9580	TORINO P.N.	19:45	
6628	PISTOIA	19:47	
3175	CHIUSI-C.T.	19:50	
23373	PISA C.LE	19:53	
11997	BORGO		

## Saving on train tickets in Europe

The early bird definitely gets the best deals on long-haul train travel. Book those tickets in advance for big savings!

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It's tempting when planning a train trip from home to do a search and simply book the first thing that comes up in the search results. However, in this case, it can save you a lot of money to do a little research and book your train tickets well in advance through the official train websites of the countries you're visiting. Read on...

### Think twice before booking a rail pass

It's easy to forget that European rail passes purchased outside of Europe, such as the Eurail Pass, are not always a good deal. Sure, they offer some convenience and peace of mind, but they often don't save you money over simply buying individual point-to-point rail tickets (like the millions of Europeans who take trains daily).

The exception here is if you plan to fill your trip with numerous long-distance trips by train. Plot it out and compare the prices.

## **Book major train tickets in advance**

We recommend booking long-distance train tickets in advance, directly with the European railways themselves. These include:

- France: [SNCF](#)
- Germany: [Deutsche Bahn](#)
- Italy: [Trenitalia](#)
- Spain: [Renfe](#)

For long-distance train travel, ticket prices climb as the travel date approaches, so advance booking is essential to getting a deal. Furthermore, most of these railways offer discounted “saver” tickets early on that sell out quickly.

## **Know whether it makes more sense to fly or take a train**

Decide carefully between flying on a budget airline (like [Ryanair](#), [easyJet](#), etc.) and taking the train around Europe. Calculate the real travel time of the trip, adding in time to and from the airport and time for security.

Also add up the real cost of the flight, including baggage fees and transportation to the airport. And most importantly, if the cost and time is equal, which way do you prefer to travel? (For us, we always opt for the train if there's a choice. It's so much more enjoyable!)

## **Also consider taking the “slow train”**

When booking train tickets, think outside the high-speed rail network. Every journey deserves time, and in our meanderings by rail around Europe, we've made some [engaging slow diversions](#), favoring rural branch lines that really tap into the spirit of local landscapes. Plus, slowing it down is a great way to also spend less.





## Saving on cars

If you're planning to rent a car for your trip, the time to do that is now. When you book in advance, rental companies and agencies compete for your business, and those prices fall.

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Here are some tips for getting the best price:

### **Know the real cost of renting a car**

How much will that rental car *really* cost you? When you do a [quick rental car search](#) online, the rates you see will most likely not include taxes or insurance, and certainly won't include the price of gas or the tolls that you'll pay on major highways.

And what about parking? Add it all up in advance to know what the total cost will likely be.

## **Book early**

As most car rental companies allow you to cancel your reservation at no charge, we'd recommend snagging a reservation as soon as you think you've found a deal. (Make sure, of course, that your company does offer free cancellation!) Most of the [car rental agencies](#) that we work with on EuroCheapo offer free cancellation.

## **Picking up and dropping off in separate locations**

This one is tricky. Usually picking up and returning at the same location is cheaper, but sometimes if you play around with dates and locations, you can find a good deal. However, if you plan to pick up a car in one country and leave it in another country, you will probably have to pay dearly for this (as the company will need to transport the vehicle back to the originating country).

Also, be sure to check conditions regarding mileage before you take off on that epic road trip from Amsterdam to Athens...

## **Do you need insurance? Sure about that?**

Just as in the US, insurance for your car rental can be hard to decipher. Check with your current car insurance and credit cards to see if they offer any coverage for you abroad. Chances are, they will offer something.

Note that if you decline to purchase additional insurance when renting, the rental agency might place a high deposit on your credit card as a safety.

## **A friendly word about gas**

Make sure you know which type of fuel your car takes. In many cases it'll be unleaded, but in Europe, it could also be diesel. Triple check before filling up! ([We've been there](#), trust us.)

## **Really inspect your car before leaving the dealership**

Carefully inspect the car and report any scratches and dents. Plus, really check out the gas situation concerning how full the tank is. If necessary, turn the car on to get a reading on the gas meter to double check. You'll be responsible for returning the car with the same amount of gas.

## **Don't automatically rent a car on the first day of your trip**

Spending some time in Paris before driving off to Normandy? This might sound obvious, but don't rent a car until you're heading out of town! Many people instinctively book a car from the moment they touch down, regardless of whether or not they'll be spending several days in a city (where the car will be locked away in a parking garage).

And if you're thinking that you're going to be driving the car around the center of these major European cities, we'd strongly encourage you to reconsider...



# Now go forth!

Well, we made it, Cheapos. You've now done your basic homework and learned about how to save on the "big ticket" items of your trip.

We didn't cover sightseeing, shopping, eating and entertainment -- you know, what you'll actually be *experiencing* on your trip, but we have covered that extensively [on our blog](#).

Thank you for taking the time to read through our guide, and please consider using EuroCheapo to [book your hotels in Europe](#). Our hotel reservations are processed by Booking.com, the leader in European reservations, which offers a low-price guarantee on all reservations. Your reservations help support our website, so we can help keep travelers saving.

Looking for a hotel recommendation? Confused or curious about something you read here? Reach out to me directly, at [tom@eurocheapo.com](mailto:tom@eurocheapo.com)

Have a wonderful trip -- and *bon voyage*!  
Tom and the EuroCheapo team



## A note from the author

Hello, there! My name is Tom Meyers and I'm the editor and founder of EuroCheapo. I started the site way back in 2001 as a guide to the best budget hotels in Europe.

I created the site hoping it could provide practical, straightforward advice for travelers who, like me, were on a serious budget. Eighteen years later, our team has grown and the site is currently based back in New York, although we spend time traveling every year in Europe, updating our hotel recommendations and compiling new budget tips.