

A FEW WORDS ABOUT EURAIDE 2012

Introduction: Many of EurAide's clients are first-time train travelers in Europe. If you are very experienced, much of the following will be familiar to you. Nevertheless, a quick review before we discuss your travel plans will insure that we both have the same background, and it will also introduce you to EurAide and the services that we provide.

The Railroad System of Europe: More than twenty countries, each with one (or more) railroad company, have joined together in a reservation system that allows a traveler to reserve a seat or a bed on most long-distance trains. Each railroad makes its own rules regarding prices and refund policies. Some railroads have turned over the operation of selected trains to private companies with different rules. All of the information below is generally true, but there are many exceptions.

What EurAide Does: In the U.S. we take your itinerary, reservation preferences, and credit card numbers and fax them to our Munich office, located in the Munich train station, where we use reservation equipment of the German Railroad to create tickets and reservations. You can think of our office as a counter of the German Railroad. Charges are in euros. Because we are using software through the German rail system, you will see Deutsche Bahn (or "DB Reisebüro") showing on your billing statement for the work done by us in Munich (or other locations appointed by EurAide).

Contact Your Credit Card Company: EurAide accepts American Express, MasterCard and Visa. Your credit card company converts the euro charges to dollar charges at the prevailing exchange rate plus their fee of 0 to 3 percent. Before we can process your order, you will need to contact your credit card company(s) and tell them not to block purchases in Europe (for DB Bahn). Otherwise, they may prevent EurAide from charging your card in our German-based offices and they may prevent you from making purchases when you are in Europe. Delays in doing this when placing your order with us may result in lost reservation opportunities.

EurAide sells all tickets, rail passes, and reservations at cost with no markup in the price. A ticket or rail pass is for your transportation. Reserved seats and beds are extra cost items (often called supplements). Some tickets are sold with a "global price" that includes the reservation.

EurAide Service Costs: Our services, which are consulting in nature, are separate from any ticketing and shipping fees. Our basic fee for suggesting and arranging an itinerary, based on your wishes, is \$30, plus an additional \$30 for handling and shipping in the United States. If you opt to cancel the order after you've received the itinerary for approval, you will be charged the \$30 consulting fee. Shipments to Canada and/or expedited services will cost extra. Consulting services that are exceptionally complicated (or a group exceeding 5 people) may be charged a higher fee. You will be informed of this at the outset of the order.

Price Quotes: We can provide you with prices that are very close to the actual costs for railpasses and reservations. Point-to-point tickets require additional research. Therefore, broad estimates are provided at the time of ordering. Customized price quotes may be made for \$50. This fee is separate from the consulting/shipping and handling fee.

Itinerary Pricing: When you receive your final itinerary for approval, it will include pricing estimates for railpasses, tickets, and reservations. Most customers find that the prices in the final itinerary, plus 10 – 20% for any unexpected changes, is adequate for budgeting purposes.

Receipts and Invoices: All travel documents that you receive from us – the reservations, tickets, and railpasses – have their prices on them. This takes the place of itemized billing.

Refund penalties range from 15% to 100%: These penalties vary from country to country (and railroad to railroad) based on their policies. In some cases, there is a requirement for the return of the original documents (to the issuer) before the refund procedure can begin. When possible, we do try to make changes to meet your needs with minimal additional costs. However, EurAide must comply with the established policies of the railroads.

Train Delays: Compensation for train delays is based on European regulations. EurAide is not responsible for processing any claims by its clients for compensation from a specific railroad (or railpass) company.

Rail passes: Rail passes are often the cheapest and most convenient way to travel in Europe. Tickets for a few long train trips usually cost more than the “right” rail pass. There are literally hundreds of different rail passes. EurAide can help select the best one for you. Most rail passes are prepared in our Florida office and charged in dollars. We recommend that you make your final pass selection after consulting with us to make sure that you buy the best one. Once we know your full itinerary, we can make customized recommendations to meet your needs and budget.

Reservations: Reservations are **mandatory on night trains**. Seat reservations for day-time travel are **mandatory on most “premier” trains**, such as TGV, Thalys, AVE and Eurostar Italia. These seat reservations can be as high as almost €60 and will cost more if you forget and have to buy one from the conductor. Seat reservations are optional on most “main line” trains, such as ICE, IC, and EC. A seat reservation on a main line train typically costs €4 - 10. Many regional trains have no reserved seats, a condition called “open seating.”

Seating Considerations: The more people in your group and the longer the trip, the more you will want reserved seats. A small group (2 or 3 people) traveling on a one or two hour trip might want to take a chance on finding unreserved seats or standing in the aisle. This choice is not possible on trains with mandatory reservations. Due to the wide variety of equipment configuration, we cannot know how the interior of the train will be, so specific requests (e.g., four at a table) cannot be honored.

All reservations are non-smoking. Many trains are now non-smoking only.

When your order is completed by EurAide (usually in our Munich office), it is processed for delivery by our American office in Massachusetts where it is checked and shipped to you by FedEx or some other reliable carrier. The cost of shipping is included in the \$60 fee that EurAide charges for consulting and shipping (additional to Canada). Expedited shipping will cost more, and this will be agreed upon during initial discussions. You will be sent an email with tracking information when the order is ready to ship.

TRAIN ACCOMMODATIONS

First class on a day train gives the traveler a car with better upholstery and other appointments and fewer seats per car. Fewer seats mean more room for your legs and luggage and fewer people using the washroom. Your fellow passengers are usually persons who are willing to spend more for comfort. First class cars are likely to get faster attention when repairs are needed. The holder of a first class pass or ticket can sit in first or second class cars. Second class ticket holders can usually buy an upgrade to first class. Youth railpasses are for second class seating.

First class on a night train is whatever the operating railroad says it is; there is no universal standard. A couchette compartment with 4 bunks may require a first class ticket on one train and second class ticket on another. EurAide will not sell you a first class ticket if a second class ticket is good enough. EurAide may sell you a first class upgrade if your second class pass is not sufficient.

Night Trains: There are two main categories of sleeping accommodations on night trains: sleeper cabins and couchettes (pronounced koo-shet). Some night trains will have cars with seats (usually 2nd class). Night trains may have **private cabin/sleeping cars** for 1, 2, 3, or 4 persons. Such a cabin will usually have a bed, fresh bedding, a wash basin, and a door with a lock. Beds are no more than 30 inches wide and are stacked two or three high. A single traveler can usually reserve a bed in a private double (T2), triple (T3), or quad (T4) cabin to be shared with some other traveler(s) of the same gender. Per person reservation costs range from €30 to €260. €70 is a good number to use for budget planning. Some trains have private cabins with shower and WC for an additional cost of €20-40 per person. Important: **some night trains** (e.g., overnight between Paris and Italy) **no longer provide any discount associated with the use of a rail pass. In other words, the pass cannot be used on this route, and “global-price” tickets will be required (that include the supplement for the reservation).**

Couchette compartments may have 6 bunks (3-high) or 4 bunks (2-high). Travelers have a mattress, pillow, and blanket. Take off shoes, tuck valuables inside your clothes, and get under the blanket. Per person reservation costs range from €15 to €100. €35 is a good number to use for budget planning. Couchette compartments may lock on some routes, and they may not on others. Some seasoned travelers carry a bicycle chain and lock to make it more difficult for amateur thieves to steal luggage. Some people carry a wooden dowel about 30" long to make it difficult to open the sliding door. Toilets

(and sometimes showers) are at the end of the car. Luggage may be stored in an alcove over the door or under the bottom bed/bunk or at the end of your bed. Keep the space restrictions in mind when packing for your trip.

The EurAide website <http://www.euraide.com> gives important information about popular night trains. Here you can learn what accommodations are included and the cost of those accommodations to a rail pass holder. The cost may be different if you have a point-to-point ticket. **Note: some point-to-point tickets are not valid for a specific night train.**

TRIP PLANNING:

EurAide may give incidental travel advice at no additional charge when taking your order. More extensive trip planning can be purchased from our staff in Munich and Berlin for US\$40 per half hour.

WHAT TO TELL WHEN ORDERING:

Send an email to EurAide@verizon.net containing the following information:

For all orders:

- The address where you receive your credit card bills. Unless otherwise specified, this is where the tickets will be sent.
- The telephone number(s) of the principal contact person.
- Preferred shipping location, if not the billing address.
- The last date that you can receive a shipment of reservations, etc., before you leave for Europe.
- Your itinerary. If you know dates and times, tell us. If you only know approximate times, give us that information. For example, you may wish to go from Florence to Rome on 4 June leaving between 09h00 and noon, but preferably between 09h30 and 11h00.
- The information that we need to make a reservation is: date, departure time, departure city, and arrival city. The other information is easy for us to provide.

If you are ordering passes with EurAide:

- The first and last names of all travelers as those names appear on the passports.
- The gender of each traveler, M or F.
- The birth dates of all travelers younger than 26.
- The kind of railpass you think you need. We will help you pick the one that best suits your needs.
- Most of EurAide's clients (1) are U.S. citizens **and** (2) have lived in the U.S. for the past 6 months. If both of these conditions are not true for you and all members of your party, tell us what passport you carry and where you have lived in the past 6 months. This is important if you are buying any rail pass, as there are residency requirements associated with the passes. In addition, you may need to get visas for some of the countries you are visiting (or passing through).

Do not include:

- Your credit card information. Email is not a secure means to send this information. When you are called by our representative, be prepared to provide your credit card numbers, the expiration date, and the 3-digit Security Code on the back of a Visa or MasterCard.

We fax the information directly to our office in Munich for processing. Remember to call your credit card company to allow for euro purchases.

COST ESTIMATES:

Pricing for train travel in Europe vary by routes and countries. Second class tickets usually cost 30% less than the 1st class price, as a rough rule of thumb.

Below are some prices ("general fares") of popular routes. All prices are first class (the values in parentheses are the range for second class) seating for daytime connections unless noted.

Note: When available to EurAide [and with the agreement of the traveler(s)], we will obtain less expensive tickets that have additional conditions for use. These conditions can include, but are not limited to, additional refund penalties (up to 100%). Some special fares require a reservation whereas general fares (for the same route) do not.

Point to point tickets - general fares (per person and rounded up to the next €)

Paris to Munich €226-241 (€139-150) - via Strasbourg can be less expensive (than via Mannheim)

Paris to Milan €130 (€110) – daytime, direct train - includes reservation

Paris to Milan €80 – nighttime train in six-bunk couchette – includes reservation
Same train in a private (T2) double €145 – includes reservation

Munich to Venice €134 (€83) – daytime, direct train

Prague to Vienna €101 (€66)

Roma to Venice €104 (€76) - daytime trains - includes reservation

Budapest to Vienna €58 (€37)

Krakov to Prague €106 (€72) - daytime via Katowice with mandatory EC-reservation included

Reservations may be required on some routes, recommended on others, and not possible on others where open seating is the norm. Some travelers with 1st class passes may choose to sit in 2nd class on routes with mandatory reservations that charge a premium (1st class) price to save some money.

Reservations (general pricing)

Type of Train	Sample Countries	Cost per person
ES	Italy	€10
IC/EC	Italy, Germany	€4
TGV	France - domestic	€2 – 5
TGV/ICE	France – international	€10 – 30
ICE	Germany	€4
Switzerland to Italy	-	€10
THA	France (2 nd class/1 st class)	€26/56
AVE	Spain (2 nd class/1 st class)	€10 - 26
ATR/TLG/ALS	Spain (2 nd class/1 st class)	€10 - 26

Questions? Call EurAide at 781-828-2488 or email us at EurAide@verizon.net. We prefer an email first. Please note, we return calls evenings and weekends. Pre-arranged times help everyone – EurAide and traveler(s)!

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