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KEY

	Food and drink
	Wellness and relaxation
	Sights and history
	Activities
	Arts and culture
	Nature
	Train
	Bus
	Ferry
	Bicycle
	Electric/hybrid car
	Rail
	Water
	Road
	Other Land
	Daytrip

Bag a window seat as your French TGVs (Train à Grande Vitesse) speeds across the country

Introduction

by Tom Hall, London 2019

Waking up on a train somewhere in Europe must be one of the great pleasures of travel. Out the window the outskirts of Rome or Edinburgh or Vienna roll by. After a short stroll along a platform you emerge into the morning of one of the world's most iconic cities. Just like that – no airport security lines, little stress, and with the warm glow of travelling by a more climate-friendly form of travel.

It's only recently that flying short-haul in Europe became anything like the norm. Generations of post-war travellers got to know Europe – and each other – by inter-railing or taking longer independent trips across the continent by bicycle or even hitch-hiking. Since the rise of low-cost carriers we've been able to inexpensively and more quickly get to more places.

Recently though it feels like we might have lost some things along the way. The joy of slow exploration, watching the landscape gradually change from a bicycle, ferry or train window feels a long way from the whistle-stop weekend away. Certain undoubtedly beautiful places have become victims of their own popularity, with many cities still trying to get to grips

with having too many people in the same places. And in these climate-conscious times, the impact of aviation on carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions can, for many travellers, no longer be ignored.

Happily Europe remains a wonderful place for low-carbon travellers. An ever-growing network of fast high-speed trains rivalling planes for end-to-end journey times complements inter-city, regional and local services to form a network reaching from northern Norway to Morocco, from the west of Ireland to the point where European Russia meets Asia, and beyond. Where the rails run out, there are buses and ferries. And across the continent cycling and hiking paths, combined with hostels, guesthouses and social accommodation, make doing your own thing easy. There's no need to fly from London to Amsterdam, Madrid to Barcelona or from Paris to Zurich. And to spend a week or more cruising the cycle lanes of Denmark or the Netherlands is a wonderful window on a whole different take on getting from A to B.

This book is an important project for Lonely Planet. All of us here are

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Art trail to Amsterdam

Paris • Lille • Antwerp • Amsterdam

This short route artfully combines engaging cities with world-class galleries, disembarking the train to meet French Impressionists and the masters of the Dutch Golden Age.

Departure points

This trip makes the most of high-speed rail links between Paris and Amsterdam. It's very easy to link up with this itinerary from the south, with services to Paris Gare de Lyon from Lyon Part Dieu (2h), Marseille's Gare St-Charles (3h) and Milan Centrale (7h). Alternatively do the route in reverse, departing Hamburg Hauptbahnhof for Amsterdam (5h) or intercept half way, travelling direct from London St Pancras to Lille Europe station (1h30).

1 Paris

Paris is a titan of art – from Renoir's visions of the city in the Musée d'Orsay, to a certain person's enigmatic gaze in the Louvre. For something different, head

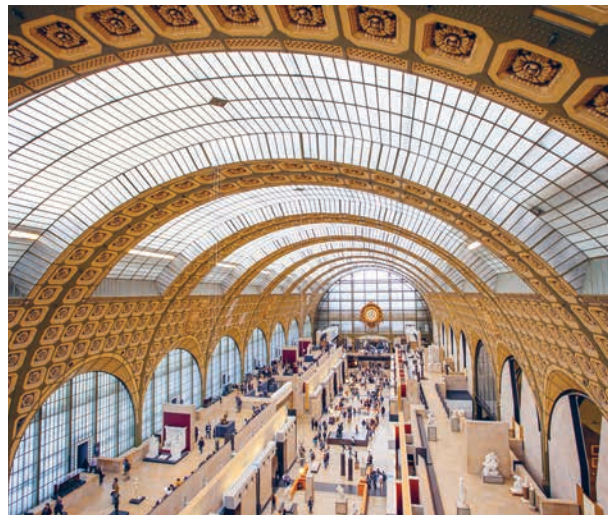
Fact box

Carbon (kg per person) 10
Distance (km) 513
Nights 6+
Transport budget (€) 300

to the Musée Picasso: it's spread over a 17th-century mansion in the Marais district. Works chronicle the artist's life in the city, during which he was accused of stealing the Mona Lisa.

🚆 Around 20 daily services run from Paris Gare du Nord to Lille stations (1h). www.sncf.com

🏨 Hotel tip: Hotel Gavarni



The Musée d'Orsay in Paris



Rembrandt's The Night Watch in the Rijksmuseum

2 Lille

An industrial city at a crossroads of the Low Countries and France, Lille punches well above its weight when it comes to the visual arts. Founded on the instructions of Napoleon, the Palais des Beaux-Arts was built to introduce Old Masters to the masses, housing works from Raphael to Rembrandt. Fast forward to the present and those masses also flock to LaM, Lille's contemporary art museum and sculpture park, with a proud pedigree displaying weird and wonderful installations.

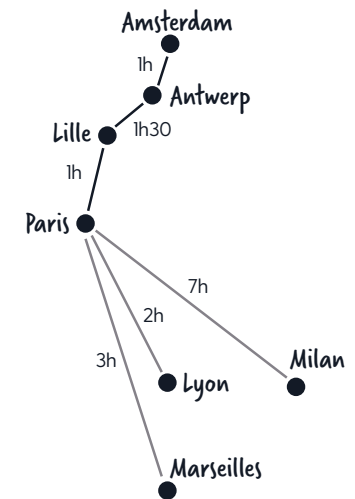
🚆 SNCF operates direct services from Lille Flandres to Antwerp Centraal (1h30). www.sncf.com

🚆 Day trip

Louvre-Lens

A northern cousin of the famous Parisian pyramid, this striking glassy structure opened in 2012 with a mission to provide a new home to a sizeable chunk of the Louvre's vast collection and to help regenerate the former mining town of Lens in the north of the country.

About one week



© Alexandra Lande / Shutterstock, © Alexander Tolstykh / Shutterstock

Hiking into the wild heart of Scotland

London • Glasgow • Corroul & Loch Ericht • Dalwhinnie • Edinburgh
Spectacular railways are the springboard for a hike through Scotland, tasting illustrious whiskies en route and resting weary limbs in Edinburgh at the end of the trip.

Departure points

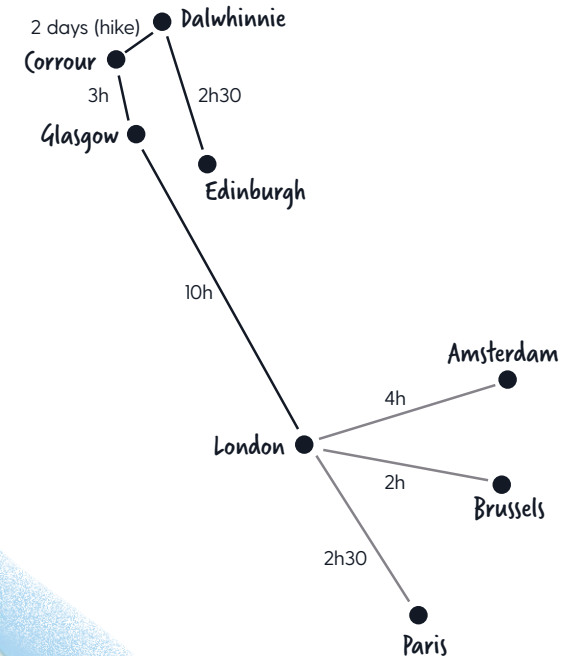
This itinerary makes the most of the Caledonian Sleeper, the train service that trundles overnight from London to the glens of the Scottish Highlands. It's also possible to start on mainland Europe, with trains to London from Paris Gare du Nord (2h30), Brussels Midi/Zuid (2h) or Amsterdam Centraal (4h). International

Fact box

Carbon (kg per person) 26
Distance (km) 1300
Nights 5
Transport budget (£) 400



Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond



sleeper and start at Glasgow. Be aware you'll be carrying a backpack full of hiking gear.

1 London

London's central Euston station is the starting point for northbound Caledonian Sleeper services. Steel yourself for the adventure with a punctual, pre-departure dinner from one of the vegetarian Indian restaurants on Drummond Street, located just behind the station.

🚆 Nightly sleeper trains depart at 11.50pm (weekdays, earlier at weekends) arriving in Glasgow at 7.22am (10h). www.sleeper.scot

🏨 Hotel tip: Zetter Townhouse Clerkenwell

© Rebecca Cole / Alamy Stock Photo

services arrive at St Pancras – from here it's a 15-minute walk to Scotland-bound services at Euston. You could also skip the

A Icelandic saga by sea

Hirtshals • Tórshavn • Seyðisfjörður • Egilsstaðir • Borgarfjörður Eystri

Follow in the wake of Viking adventurers on an epic voyage that goes from Denmark to Iceland, taking in puffins, waterfalls, remote islands and mythical beasts.

Departure points

Hirtshals is accessible by from Copenhagen (7h) with DSB train services, or from Hamburg Hauptbahnhof (9h) with Deutsche Bahn. It's also five hours from Gothenburg via the Frederikshavn ferry.

1 Hirtshals

Hirtshals sits near the tip of Northern Jutland, a region famous for its soft light and seafood. This Danish port is the only place in mainland Europe to offer ferries to the Faroe Islands and Iceland. Unsurprisingly its appeal is tied to the sea, with a white-sand beach, great seafood including clam chowder, and the impressive Nordsøen Oceanarium, where the hypnotically vast main tank holds

Fact box

- Carbon (kg per person)** 211
- Distance (km)** 1900
- Nights** 14+
- Transport budget (€)** 500

oceanic sunfish, dogfish and turbot.

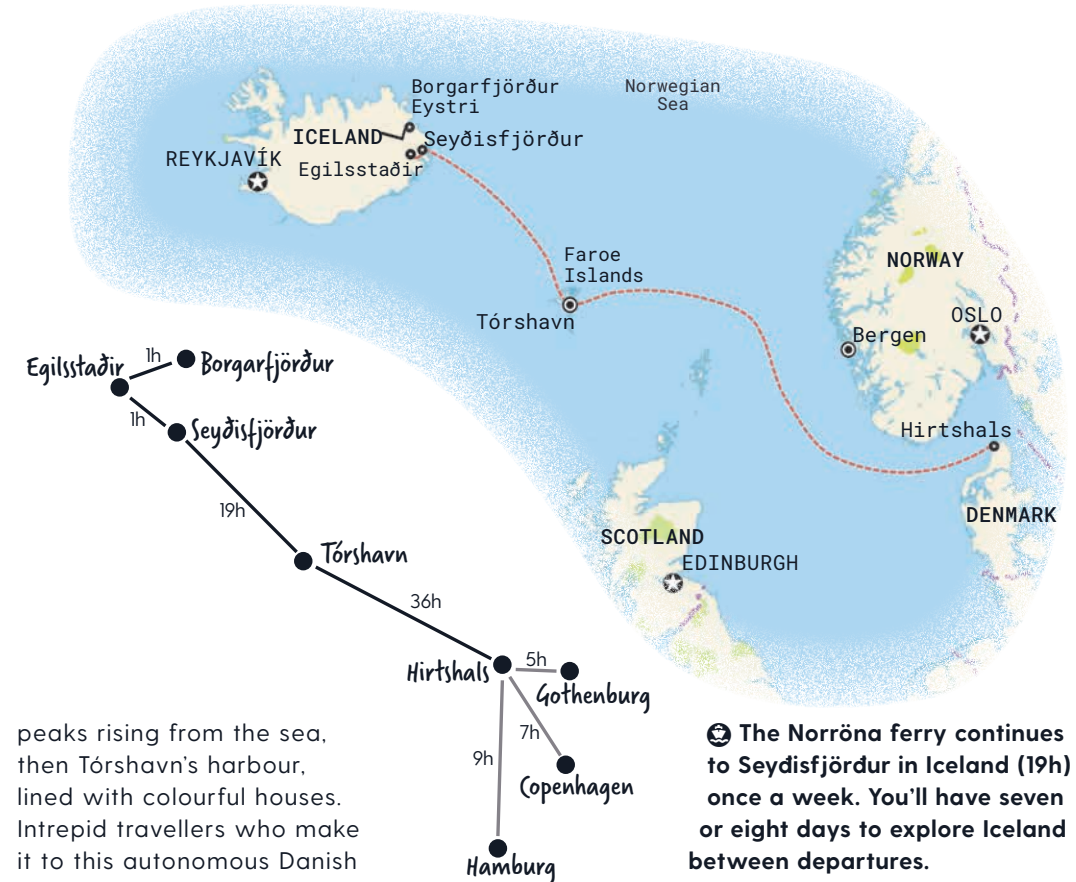
The MS Norröna ferry has one crossing a week (36h; two a week June–Aug) to Tórshavn, the Faroe Islands' capital. Cabins and couchettes are available (www.smyrilline.com).

2 Tórshavn

The ferry journey to Tórshavn alone is impressive (and the boat has stabilisers to make the journey as comfy as possible). Look out for the Shetland Islands, oil rigs, bird life and whales en route. Approaching the Faroe Islands, you'll see glorious green



The boat harbour in Tórshavn



peaks rising from the sea, then Tórshavn's harbour, lined with colourful houses. Intrepid travellers who make it to this autonomous Danish territory can hike across lush meadows, bleak moorlands and mountains that rise sharply from the sea, while puffins, kittiwakes and more reward bird-watchers. But while the Faroe Islands' landscapes, remoteness and traditional music scene give it a richly mythical feel, this is modern Europe, with good transport and comfortable accommodation. Depending on the Norröna's schedule, you can spend anything from a few hours to a long stay on the Faroes – overnighing in Tórshavn will help you get under the salt-lashed skin of this unique place.

The Norröna ferry continues to Seyðisfjörður in Iceland (19h) once a week. You'll have seven or eight days to explore Iceland between departures.

3 Seyðisfjörður

Forget the relative hubbub of Reykjavík: the ferry docks at Iceland's back door, making landfall in East Iceland, a quiet stretch of coast chiselled by fjords. Seyðisfjörður is the region's most compelling town, its multicoloured houses set against mountains and waterfalls. Several of its lovely timber buildings are home to craft workshops, there's an iconic pastel Blue Church, and it's a popular spot for musicians and artists. Several hikes run straight from town to waterfalls, a 'dwarf

Paris to London by bike

Paris • Chaussy • Gisors • Dieppe • London

A largely traffic-free cycling route, the Avenue Verte (Green Way) links these two capitals in a week with castles, rolling farmland, and a ferry across the Channel.

Departure points

Travel to Paris from many European cities, including London, via train with your bicycle. On the Paris-bound Eurostar from Brussels (1h30) or London (2h30) you need to pre-book and pay for your bike. Only two bikes per train can travel pre-assembled so be ready to pack it in a bike bag or box. Check-in 90 minutes before departure. There are two routes from Paris to London – this is the less hilly Normandy option, it's easier for families. The 460km ride is fairly flat. The super-fit can attempt it in three days, those looking to take in the scenery – and food and wine pit stops – should allow a week, not including exploring Paris, London or Chaussy. You can do the route in reverse too.

Fact box

- Carbon** 14.5
- Distance (km)** 400
- Nights** 5-10
- Transport budget (€)** 24 (Channel ferry)

1 Paris

Where better to kick off your city-to-city journey than outside the spiritual heart of Paris: Notre-Dame. The Avenue Verte takes you through the oak and beech trees of the Saint-Germain-en-Laye forest, past the outskirts of Conflans-Ste-Honorine and through the picturesque Vexin Français Regional Nature Park. Pre-book accommodation with a flexible estimated time of arrival (just in case you venture off



the path or take a picturesque detour!).

🚲 The signposted route to Canal St-Martin eventually joins the Seine valley for a 45km ride out of the city towards Gisors (160km from central Paris, two to three days).

🚲 Day trip

Domaine de Villarceaux

Take a day out from journeying to explore Domaine de Villarceaux at Chaussy. Beyond the manicured gardens and fairy-tale castle you can also learn about the sustainable rural development work of the Center Ecodevelopment Villarceaux (CEV). Accommodation is available here too in eco-conscious renovated farmhouses at La Bergerie de Villarceaux (Sheepfold of Villarceaux; <http://bergerie-villarceaux.org>), with seasonal rural meals at the organic restaurant on-site. Booking ahead is recommended.

🚲 On the road to Gisors you'll cycle through Chaussy, which is 12km north of the Seine.



2 Gisors

Heading for the medieval castle town of Gisors and the Epte Valley next, you'll find signposts are regular enough, but you may get lost among the quiet country lanes, orchards and hills of rural Normandy, so take a good map and ideally a GPS. After several days meandering through French countryside, the final push from the spa city of Forges-les-Eaux to Dieppe (50km) is along a former railway line, where the idea for the Avenue Verte began.