

A Beginner's Guide to the 10 Best Train Travel Routes in Europe: Tips and Must-Sees

Europe's extensive rail network offers one of the most efficient, scenic, and eco-friendly ways to explore the continent, making it home to some of the best train travel routes in Europe. From traversing the snow-capped Alps to winding through picturesque villages, train travel in Europe combines convenience with adventure. For beginners, navigating train travel might seem daunting, but with a bit of planning and the right routes, it becomes an unforgettable journey.

This guide introduces the 10 best train travel routes in Europe and provides essential tips and must-see destinations to make your rail adventure seamless.

10 Best Train Travel Routes in Europe

1. The Glacier Express (Switzerland)

The Glacier Express, known as the "world's slowest express train," is one of the best train travel routes in Europe, connecting Zermatt and St. Moritz. This eight-hour journey takes you through Switzerland's iconic landscapes, including the Swiss Alps, pristine valleys, and historic villages.

Must-Sees

- The Matterhorn in Zermatt
- Oberalp Pass, the highest point of the route
- Rhine Gorge, Switzerland's "Grand Canyon"

Tips

Book a seat in the panoramic car for unobstructed views. Consider traveling in winter to see the snow-covered Alps in their full glory.

2. Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (Italy to France)

This luxurious train, one of the best train travel routes in Europe, transports passengers from Venice to Paris (and beyond) in vintage-style carriages. The journey exudes 1920s glamour with opulent décor and gourmet dining.

Must-Sees

- Venice's Grand Canal before departure
- The Swiss Alps as you cross into France
- Parisian landmarks upon arrival

Tips

Dress formally to fully embrace the sophisticated atmosphere. Book months in advance as tickets sell out quickly.



3. West Highland Line (Scotland)

The West Highland Line, one of the best train travel routes in Europe, offers a magical ride through Scotland's rugged beauty, from Glasgow to Mallaig. Potterheads will recognize the Glenfinnan Viaduct, made famous by the Harry Potter films.

Must-Sees

- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park
- Glenfinnan Viaduct
- Remote fishing villages near Mallaig

Tips

Travel during summer for extended daylight hours and better views. Don't miss the Jacobite Steam Train, which operates on the same route.

4. Bernina Express (Switzerland and Italy)

Connecting Chur in Switzerland to Tirano in Italy, the Bernina Express showcases breathtaking alpine scenery and is a UNESCO World Heritage route.

Must-Sees

- Landwasser Viaduct
- Lago Bianco (White Lake)
- Tirano's charming Italian streets

Tips

Sit on the right side of the train for the best views heading south. Take a break in Tirano and explore its quaint cafes before heading back.



5. Cinque Terre Train (Italy)

The Cinque Terre Express, one of the best train travel routes in Europe, links the five colorful coastal villages of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, and Riomaggiore. This short yet scenic ride offers stunning views of the Ligurian Sea.

Must-Sees

- Vibrant fishing villages perched on cliffs
- Crystal-clear Mediterranean waters
- Regional specialties like pesto and fresh seafood

Tips

Purchase a Cinque Terre Train Card for unlimited travel between villages. Avoid peak summer months for a less crowded experience.

6. The Flam Railway (Norway)

The Flam Railway, one of the steepest in the world, offers a dramatic journey from Myrdal to Flam. Experience towering waterfalls, lush valleys, and snowy peaks in just one hour.

Must-Sees

- Kjosfossen Waterfall
- Aurlandsfjord, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- The village of Flam and its Viking heritage

Tips

Travel in spring or autumn for fewer crowds and equally stunning views. Combine this trip with a cruise on the fjord for a complete experience.



7. The Douro Line (Portugal)

The Douro Line, one of the best train travel routes in Europe, connects Porto to Pocinho, following the scenic Douro River. The route takes you past terraced vineyards, olive groves, and charming riverfront towns.

Must-Sees

- Porto's historic Ribeira district
- Peso da Régua, the heart of Portugal's wine country
- The Douro Valley's UNESCO-listed landscapes

Tips

Stop at wineries along the route for tastings. Book a river cruise as a complementary experience.

8. The Rhine Valley Line (Germany)

This journey through the Rhine Valley between Mainz and Koblenz is one of the best train travel routes in Europe, offering storybook castles, rolling vineyards, and the legendary Lorelei Rock.

Must-Sees

- The 40+ castles lining the Rhine
- Medieval towns like Bacharach
- The Lorelei Rock, steeped in German folklore

Tips

Sit on the left side heading south for the best views. Pair your train trip with a Rhine River cruise for a different perspective.

9. Madrid to Seville (Spain)

Spain's high-speed AVE train, one of the best train travel routes in Europe, connects Madrid and Seville in under three hours, offering a seamless journey between two vibrant cities.

Must-Sees

- Madrid's Royal Palace and Prado Museum before departure
- Seville's Alcázar and Plaza de España upon arrival
- Andalusian countryside dotted with olive groves

Tips

Travel in spring to experience Seville's famous festivals. Book tickets early for discounts on the AVE.



10. The Arctic Circle Train (Sweden and Norway)

This overnight train takes you from Stockholm to Narvik, crossing the Arctic Circle, and is one of the best train travel routes in Europe. Experience the beauty of the Scandinavian wilderness, including vast tundras and sparkling fjords.

Must-Sees

- Abisko National Park, a prime spot for Northern Lights
- Sami culture and reindeer herding in Kiruna
- Narvik's fjords and World War II history

Tips

Travel in winter for a chance to see the Northern Lights or in summer for the Midnight Sun. Bring warm clothing and camera gear to capture the stunning scenery.

Essential Tips for Train Travel in Europe

1. Get a Rail Pass

If you're traveling to multiple destinations, consider purchasing a Eurail Pass for unlimited travel across various countries.

2. Book in Advance

While local trains don't require reservations, high-speed and international trains often do. Booking early ensures the best prices.

3. Pack Light

European trains have limited luggage space. Opt for a carry-on suitcase or a backpack to make boarding and disembarking easier.

4. Use Rail Apps

Apps like Trainline and Eurail provide schedules, ticketing options, and route details.

5. Embrace Scenic Routes

Choose slower, regional trains for the most scenic experiences, even if it adds extra travel time.



Why Choose Train Travel in Europe?

Train travel in Europe is not just about getting from point A to B—it's about the journey itself. With breathtaking landscapes, convenient connections, and the charm of historic railways, trains allow you to explore Europe's diversity in comfort.

Whether you're gliding through the Alps on the Glacier Express or hopping between coastal villages on the Cinque Terre Express, these 10 best train travel routes in Europe offer experiences that are as memorable as the destinations themselves.

So, pack your bags, board the train, and embark on an adventure that combines history, culture, and natural beauty. Europe awaits!