



Paris, Milan, Florence, Venice.

A short field guide to the European train.

*“The train is perhaps the last place
on earth where arriving somewhere
new still feels like an event.”*

on European rail travel



The Practical Side:

Book early, but not too early:

Most European high-speed routes release tickets three to four months ahead. The sweet spot for fares is six to eight weeks before travel. Trenitalia, SNCF, and Eurostar all reward early planners handsomely.

Choose your class carefully:

First class in Europe is rarely the extravagance it sounds. On Trenitalia's Frecciarossa, which you will ride between Milan, Florence, and Venice, Business and Executive class offer wider seats, power at every seat, and a quieter carriage. Often for less than a short-haul flight.

Know your stations:

Paris has seven major rail terminals, and the one you depart from matters. Gare de Lyon serves Italy and the south. Milano Centrale is an Art Nouveau and Art Deco landmark, opened in 1931, worth arriving early for. Venezia Santa Lucia is one of the few stations in the world that opens directly onto water.

Arrive thirty minutes before:

European platforms are often announced only fifteen to twenty minutes ahead. Coffee, a pastry, and a quiet moment to orient yourself is always a better use of that time than rushing.



What to Wear:

Dress for arrival, not departure:

You will step off the train directly into the heart of a city. No taxi rank, no airport transfer. A considered outfit and a good coat matter more than comfort here.

Layer deliberately:

European carriages run warm. European stations run cold. A light knit, a silk scarf, and a tailored coat that can be carried or worn will serve you from Milano Centrale to the Florentine evening.

Shoes that can walk a cobbled street:

A loafer, a block heel, or an elegant trainer. Anything that pairs with a dress and survives a Venice bridge. Save the stilettos for dinner.

Neutrals photograph better:

Cream, camel, navy, black. The train window, the platform, the taxi rank becomes a backdrop rather than competing with what you are wearing.

One statement piece:

A silk scarf, a structured bag, a pair of gold earrings. One considered detail is what separates the traveller from the tourist.



Stations & Restaurants Worth Noting:

Le Train Bleu, Paris:

On the first floor of Gare de Lyon, Le Train Bleu opened in 1901 for the Universal Exhibition. Its gilded Belle Epoque dining rooms have been listed as a Historic Monument since 1972. Coco Chanel, Salvador Dali, and Brigitte Bardot have all dined here. Book in advance, or take a coffee in the Big Ben Bar.

Milano Centrale, Milan:

Inaugurated in 1931, Milano Centrale is one of the most architecturally ambitious stations in Europe. Marble floors, sculpted stonework, and steel and glass canopies spanning over seventy metres. The Royal Pavilion, created for the Italian monarchy, still stands within.

Santa Lucia, Venice:

Arriving into Venice by train remains one of the most cinematic entrances in travel. The station doors open directly onto the Grand Canal, with a vaporetto stop a few steps away. Luggage porters are available, and worth it.

Other stations worth a pause:

Antwerp Central, often called the railway cathedral, with its marble and glass dome. St Pancras International in London, Gothic Revival and Grade I listed, with a champagne bar on the Eurostar platform. Gare du Nord in Paris, whose Beaux-Arts facade features twenty-three statues, each representing a destination once served.



*The romance of European rail is not in the
speed.*

It is in the slow reveal of a continent stitched
together by small stations, good coffee, and the
quiet privilege of watching it all pass by.