

**P**icture yourself hiking the emerald hills of Ireland, sipping May wine against a backdrop of ice-tipped Alps, discovering your own private swimming cove somewhere along Portugal's Algarve coast. Sound pretty good? Right. Sound pretty expensive? Not necessarily. If you know how to do it, your trip to Europe can even end up being less expensive than traveling in the United States.

The key is to travel around the Continent as European students do. Europe has long had lots of lodging facilities and transport options geared to students with little money to spend. The dollar may have dropped in value relative to many European currencies, but that's had little effect on these rock-bottom options.

Here are the ways to make travel through Europe cheap and easy. Read carefully, talk it over with your friends and start making your plans for an unforgettable summer adventure in Europe.

### Strategies to Keep it Cheap

One way to keep costs down is to head for a part of Europe where you can still get by for very little money. Twenty-five cent beers and the original Bohemian atmosphere have made Prague the current student capital of Europe. If the baroque splendor of Prague doesn't excite you, how about the sun, sea and dramatic landscapes of the Greek islands? Enjoy the birthplace of Western civilization without paying more than \$5 for lodging or a hearty meal of moussaka, salad and wine. Portugal is another under-\$25-a-day bargain, if you happen to like sunny beaches, good food and wine or quiet medieval villages. If you want real travel bargains, your best bets are Greece, Portugal, Turkey and the countries that used to be behind the Iron Curtain.

Of course, if you decide to hang out in the grand cities of Western Europe, you'll have to be prepared to spend more, but even here there are lots of ways to keep costs down. For example, there's no reason you have to be foolish enough to spend a couple hundred dollars a night for the Paris Hilton when you can stay at a good hostel in the heart of Paris for around \$15 a night. The strategy here is to take advantage of things like hostels, rail passes and student discounts so that even the most expensive European cities can become affordable on a student budget.

Wherever you decide to go, you need to develop a general travel plan and make a realistic budget. This will

require checking out prices for food, lodging and entertainment in an up-to-date guidebook that's geared to students who want to travel cheap. The best are the *Let's Go* guides compiled by Harvard students and the *Berkeley Guides* from UC-Berkeley students. Make your budget and then take along 15% to 20% more than you expect to spend, just in case.

To get the best deals, spend some time reading up and asking around. Rick Steves' *Europe Through the Back Door* is far getting psyched: It's full of personal tips from a writer who can boast, fondly, of going "29 out of 30 nights without paying for a bed." In Europe, gregariousness will get you everywhere.

### in the Air and on the Road

Your biggest expense will be getting to Europe and getting around once you're there. For that reason, it's especially important to check out the low-cost transportation options like rail passes and student airfares to keep your budget under control.

To be sure that you're getting the best deal, phone or visit one of the offices of Council Travel, the largest travel organization in the United States geared specifically to budget travelers (see back cover). The staff

there are experts at finding the cheapest airfare. See the chart on page 16 for an idea of how much your airfare will cost. It might save you money to fly into one city and return from another ("open jaw" in travel agent lingo) so you won't have to retrace your steps. (To compute an open jaw fare, add one-half of each round-trip airfare.) Special student airfares are available on many transatlantic routes. To qualify, you will need the International Student Identity Card for internationally recognized proof of your student status (see the application form in the center of the magazine). And be sure to ask about student airfares within Europe, as well.

Once in Europe, trains are most students' choice for getting around; the network is unbeatable and the price is right. If your plans include extensive travel in several countries, then get your hands on one of the several types of Eurailpasses available. If you are under 26, you qualify for one of the Eurail youth passes, which are about 40% cheaper than the regular Eurailpass. If you are planning extensive travel within one country, the best option might be a rail pass valid only for that country. Don't forget, you'll need to get your rail passes before

Get the most  
for your money  
when you travel the  
Continent

BY SANDY  
MACDONALD

Common sense can save you money wherever you travel in Europe, from Ireland's magical Dingle Peninsula to a sunny outdoor cafe in Amsterdam.