

2024 – 2025

EUROPE

Escorted Small Group Tours by Rail

All stops 3 or 4 nights • 4 and 5 star hotels • First Class rail travel
• Full luggage handling • Australian Tour Director





We are a boutique Australian-based tour company specialising in historical and cultural tours of Europe, travelling on Europe's great trains. We offer only a limited number of tours each year, most of which are personally led by the Company Principal, Mr Stan Klan, a published historian and former history teacher, who has been introducing people to his beloved Europe since 1977.

TRAVEL ON EUROPE'S GREAT TRAINS

Europe's trains are the finest in the world – from the high-speed French TGV streaking across the continent at 320kph to quaint Swiss mountain trains. A rail journey permits you to meet the locals, to stroll down to the restaurant car and bar, or simply to take in the ever changing scenery - vineyards, alps and lakes. All rail travel is in First Class reserved seats, except on some local trains where seats are not reservable or where only standard class is offered.

3 NIGHTS MINIMUM STOPS

Travellers quickly tire of whistlestop coach tours which move on to a new hotel every night. On the Great Trains of Europe Tours, most stops are at least 3 nights, giving you time to unpack and start feeling like a local.

QUALITY CENTRAL HOTELS

Were you ever on a tour where your hotel was a motorway chain motel an hour outside Venice or Paris? On the Great Trains of Europe Tours we use centrally located hotels – on the Grand Canal in Venice, in the heart of Paris' Montparnasse on the Left Bank, next to the KuDamm in Berlin. In cities we use 4 star boutique or 5 star hotels and the highest category historic village inns available in the countryside.

LUGGAGE TRANSPORTED ON AHEAD

Have you tried a rail journey but found loading your luggage a pain? No problems on the Great Trains of Europe Tours: your luggage is collected from your hotel on departure morning and is transferred on ahead to await your arrival in your new city.

LIMITED GROUP SIZE

The maximum number of participants on each tour is limited to 25 paying guests. This makes the groups small enough to avoid the "herd mentality" yet big enough to offer a variety of new friends.

FULL SIGHTSEEING PROGRAMME

How much to include? How to provide for first timers who want to see everything and also for those experienced travellers who want to have a more leisurely time? The eternally popular "must see" sights are included in an orientation sightseeing tour on arrival in each new city.

On some tours, clearly explained and optional excursions are offered. We'll need to know your choices before departure. Freedom to do your own thing, or a full sightseeing and activity programme. On the Great Trains of Europe Tours, the choice is yours.

MEALS

Nothing on a group tour causes more angst than the question of meals: pit-stops for re-fuelling before dashing out to a concert or to do some more exploring? Or a gourmet experience every night? Should expensive wines be costed in, the non-drinkers subsidizing the drinkers?

On the Great Trains of Europe Tours we include in the tour cost the first evening meal in each new city or village, at a local trattoria or bistro. Drinks are at your own expense. On the other nights your Tour Director either recommends restaurants at different price levels or accompanies you to dinner.

QUALITY ASSURANCE – A PERSONAL TOUCH

Most tours are personally escorted by an Australian historian who has more than 35 years experience in introducing people to Europe: he is not only the Tour Director; he is also the Company owner, guaranteeing a level of quality control few companies can match.

WHO TRAVELS ON THE GREAT TRAINS OF EUROPE TOURS?

While all are welcome, the tour member profile is usually in the 40+ age bracket, but families are most welcome on all tours. Selected tours are identified as **Family-Friendly**: the programme and pace are especially suitable for families with children, and children under 12 sharing a room with adults stay free. In this brochure the **Winter Wonderland Tour with White Christmas** is especially designated as family friendly.

Advice of any mobility or dietary issues is required at the time of booking. If you cannot walk 500 metres and climb 50 stairs without assistance, your booking will be accepted only along with a booking from a designated carer.

Our tour members (some up to their 11th tour with us) have an interest in history and art but don't want in-depth lectures from professors; they love food and wine but don't take too kindly to "pompous git" experts; they enjoy new experiences and have a sense of humour.

While the majority of our tour members are Australians and New Zealanders, we have also welcomed (and become friends with) Americans, Canadians, South Africans, Malaysians and Brits. All are welcome. All tours are conducted in English.





WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT GREAT TRAINS OF EUROPE TOURS?

- Leisurely pace – most stops 3 or 4 nights
- Quality, centrally located 4 & 5 star hotels and historic village inns
- First Class rail travel in reserved seats
- Full luggage handling between stops
- Most tours personally escorted by an Australian historian, who is the company owner (35 yrs experience as a tour director)
- Small groups
- Many repeat customers (up to 11th tour) happy to give personal recommendations
- Consider the environment – diesel bus or electric train?



LIST OF TOURS

Off the Beaten Track - Autumn Shades

Hill Villages and Market Towns of Italy and France
October 20th 2024

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Pre-Christmas Magic - Christmas Markets and Classical Music

Germany, Austria, and Prague
November 30th 2024

Pg. 4 - 5

Winter Wonderland

Swiss & Austrian Alps, Paris (New Year's Eve), Venice, & Prague
December 28th 2024

Pg. 6 - 7

Blossoms & Bulbs

Springtime Gardens of Europe and UK with Chelsea Flower Show
May 4th 2025

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Off the Beaten Track - Autumn Shades

Hill Villages and Market Towns of Italy and France
October 5th 2025

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Pre-Christmas Magic - Christmas Markets and Classical Music

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EUROPE'S PRE-CHRISTMAS MAGIC

Enjoy the world-famous Christmas Markets and Classical Music tradition of Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. One performance - orchestral, opera or ballet - is included at each stop.

November 30th: MUNICH The tour commences today in our 4 star boutique hotel in the heart of Munich. Get to know your fellow travellers at Welcome Drinks and Dinner. [D]

December 1st: MUNICH A sightseeing tour this morning of this thousand year old city. Munich is the capital of Bavaria with strong Wagner, Carl Orff and Richard Strauss associations. Munich is home to the Bavarian State Opera, the Bavarian State Ballet, and the Bavarian State Radio Orchestra. Details of our Classical Music performance will be provided closer to departure. The afternoon is free for the Christmas markets. [B]

December 2nd: MUNICH - Visit Nuremberg markets Ask any German which city has the very best Christmas markets and the unequivocal answer will be "Nuremberg". We have a mid-morning departure for the one hour train journey to Nuremberg, Bavaria's second city. The markets come alive as the lights come on. Back to our Munich hotel this evening. [B]

December 3rd: MUNICH - King Ludwig's Castle Visit An excursion by local rail today into the foothills of the Bavarian Alps to visit the fairy tale Neuschwanstein Castle, built by "mad" King Ludwig. Back to our Munich hotel. Will this be the night for a classical concert or an opera? [B]

December 4th: SALZBURG Our luggage is taken on ahead as we join Austria's flagship train, the Railjet, to Salzburg the city of Mozart and Maria von Trapp. On arrival we enjoy a walking tour through the Old City, and a funicular ride to the Hohensalzburg Fortress for a panoramic view across the city. Then some of the major Mozart sights and Christmas markets before our included dinner. [B,D]

December 5th: SALZBURG A day for Sound of Music fans, as we join a tour of the main locations used in the film. Another bash at the Christmas markets. [B]

December 6th: SALZBURG How about a day in the Austrian Alps? We take the Railjet again to the Hapsburgs Winter Capital, Innsbruck where after a short walking tour, we take a cable car up the Alps for lunch with a view across the city from 7,000 feet. Back to Salzburg, her markets, and our hotel. [B]

December 7th: VIENNA Today we join Austrian Rail's Railjet to Vienna, the Imperial Capital of the Hapsburgs and still – after more than two centuries – still the world capital of Classical music. It was home to Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Mahler, Brahms, Schubert, Bruckner, Korngold, Gluck and Strauss. Not a bad roll call! We settle into our city-centre hotel, where our luggage awaits. Vienna's fine buildings look magnificent by night, as do her Christmas markets. [B,D]

December 8th: VIENNA Our morning city sightseeing programme introduces us to this stately city - the Ring, the Hofburg and St Stephen's (setting of Mozart's wedding and his funeral). Watch the fountains and listen to the music. [B]

December 9th: VIENNA A free day in Vienna. Her Christkindlmarkt (Christmas markets) are world famous, as are her opera companies and orchestras. Will this be the night for our classical music performance? We will be advised as programmes are released. [B]

December 10th: VIENNA After a short rail journey we arrive in the Hapsburg's second capital – and home to Franz Liszt, Dohnányi, Kodály and Béla Bartók - Budapest. Our city sightseeing includes the Chain Bridge, Buda Castle, the Gothic St Matthew's Church, and the Fisherman's Bastion. Visit one of the famous historic coffee houses and the Christmas markets before re-joining our train to our hotel in Vienna. [B]

December 11th: PRAGUE Today's rail journey brings us in the early afternoon to magical Prague. Our afternoon stroll includes the nearby Old Town Square which has buildings from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. Enjoy the view over coffee in an outdoor café. [B,D]

December 12th: PRAGUE This morning we begin to discover this magnificent city. Prague was never bombed, and much of the Old City is untouched from the fourteenth century. The Castle, the Charles Bridge, Wenceslas Square, and the Jewish Quarter feature in our sightseeing. Classical music opportunities abound. Mozart loved Prague, and his love was reciprocated. [B]

December 13th: PRAGUE Enjoy your free day in this beautiful city, shopping or enjoying the music and the markets. Prague is the centre for world famous Bohemian crystal. [B]

December 14th: LEIPZIG Our luggage is taken on ahead as we join Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) for a panoramic rail journey down the gorges of the Vlatava River and on to the city of Bach, Mendelssohn and the Schumanns – Leipzig. Enjoy the markets before our included dinner. [B,D]

December 15th: LEIPZIG This morning's city sightseeing includes the Thomas Church where we pay homage at Bach's grave, the University of Leipzig which counts both Bach and Goethe among its alumni, and the Nicholas Church – famous for its role in the end of Communism. The afternoon is free for the Christmas markets.. [B]

December 16th: LEIPZIG - Visit to Dresden While Leipzig was the cultural capital of the Kingdom of Saxony, its princes ruled from the palace in their capital Dresden. Today we visit this stately city which is still being rebuilt from its near-total destruction one night in February 1945. Sensational museums, the Semper Opera House and plenty of Christmas markets. Back to Leipzig tonight. [B]

December 17th: BERLIN Our short rail journey today has us in Berlin before lunch time. Our afternoon's sightseeing introduces us to the city which divided Europe for 45 years - the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag, Unter den Linden. Tonight's classical music performance, if available, will be chosen from some of the world's finest orchestras and opera companies. [B]

December 18th: BERLIN More sightseeing today in the city with a greater concentration of museums than London, and one of the world's great zoos. Will the Berlin Philharmonic be in town? [B]

December 19th: BERLIN A final day for that last minute Christmas shopping. Couldn't find it in the markets? Visit the greatest department store in the world [in your Tour Director's humble opinion] – KaDeWe, a short walk from our hotel. Our farewell dinner tonight. [B,D]

December 20th: AUF WIEDERSEHEN Our tour ends after breakfast. If you are joining the White Christmas Week in the Swiss Alpine village of Grindelwald, there is an included transfer to Grindelwald in Switzerland.



ENJOY

Europe's pre-Christmas buzz.

Included Classical music performances - ideally one in each city, but this will depend on offerings once programmes are published.

Plenty of free time for shopping in Europe's legendary Christmas markets, department stores and boutiques.

TRAVEL

- All stops 3 or 4 nights
- First Class rail travel in reserved seats
- 4 and 5 Star Hotels with buffet breakfasts
- 6 dinners, sightseeing and entrances as indicated
- Tips for local guides included
- Full luggage handling between cities
- 1 Classical Music / Opera / Ballet performance in each of the cities where we stay. Details will be advised when programmes are finalised.

FACT BOX:

DURATION: 21 DAYS

DEPARTURES:
NOVEMBER 30th 2024
NOVEMBER 30th 2025

COST:

\$12,500 per person twin share
Single supplement \$1,500pp

Land Content Only, commencing in Munich and ending in Berlin.

DEPOSIT

\$2,500 with booking, final payment 3 months before travel.



WHITE CHRISTMAS

POST-TOUR ADD-ON TO THE PRE-CHRISTMAS MAGIC TOUR:

Why not enjoy a White Christmas in a beautiful Swiss Alpine village (with opportunities to visit Christmas markets) after the Pre-Christmas Magic Tour?

On arrival on December 21st there is a transfer included to the picturesque Swiss Alpine village of Grindelwald, nestled under the North Face of the Eiger. Our hotel is rated 3+ stars and oozes Swiss charm. There are breathtaking Alpine views and a roaring log fire. We have reserved superior standard rooms with private facilities for our tour members.

Every morning there is a buffet breakfast, and every evening a four course dinner is provided for our tour members. This includes the festivities of a special Christmas Dinner, as Swiss tradition dictates on the night of Christmas Eve. There is a beautiful church 50 metres away with a midnight service on Christmas Eve should you wish to attend.

Grindelwald is a snow sports fan's heaven. But if you are not a snow bunny, there are a million other things to do. Grindelwald is a hub for the Swiss mountain train networks and there are many gondolas and cable cars to the Alpine peaks all around. It is an easy train ride to the cities of Berne, Basel and Zurich with their Christmas markets.

The village itself offers excellent shopping and a wide variety of restaurants and coffee shops for lingering lazy lunches, before returning to the hotel to read or snooze in front of the log fire.

- 8 nights accommodation in a superior standard room with private facilities in a 3 star hotel in the Swiss village of Grindelwald.
- 8 buffet breakfasts, 7 four course dinners (inc. Special Christmas Dinner on Christmas Eve).
- Transfer from Berlin to Grindelwald at the end of the Pre-Christmas Tour.

NOTE: Your hosts are on hand to provide sightseeing suggestions and assistance, but there are no escorted activities during this relaxing week.

FACT BOX:

DURATION: 8 DAYS

DEPARTURES:
DECEMBER 20th 2024
DECEMBER 20th 2025

COST:

\$AU 3000 per person twin share
Single supplement \$1,500



WINTER WONDERLAND

Swiss and Austrian Alps and the Romantic Cities of Venice, Prague and Paris

December 28th: PARIS Settle into our 4 star Left Bank Hotel. Meet your fellow tour members for Drinks and Dinner. [D]

December 29th: PARIS Every day on a Great Trains of Europe tour begins with a full buffet breakfast. Our morning sightseeing includes the Arc de Triomphe, Champs Elysees and the Eiffel Tower, winding up in the Latin Quarter for lunch. There is time this afternoon for a museum or art gallery. [B]

December 30th: PARIS Department stores, fashion boutiques, a long lunch watching the crowds?

December 31st: PARIS A final free day in every true romantic's favourite city. Join the crowds tonight on the Champs Elysees to celebrate the dawning of the New Year. There is an **optional excursion** offered today to the Somme Battlefields of WWI. Here we visit sites sacred in Australia & NZ's national history. [B]

January 1st: INTERLAKEN – Swiss Alps & Lakes Farewell Paris this morning. We begin our love affair with the Great Trains of Europe on her fastest – the French TGV – reaching 320kph towards the Alps and Interlaken with stunning views of the Eiger and Jungfrau. This is our home for 3 nights. Interlaken hosts a huge street party on New Year's Day culminating in spectacular fireworks. [B,D]

January 2nd: INTERLAKEN – Swiss Alps & Lakes Enjoy a late and leisurely brunch before deciding whether to do nothing or to do very little. Your Tour Director will have suggestions for some mountain railway or cable car rides to the peaks of the surrounding Alps. There is an **optional excursion** the Top of Europe, the Jungfrau, Europe's highest railway station at 3,463 metres, that's 11,360 feet. [B]

January 3rd: INTERLAKEN – Swiss Alps & Lakes Today we take one of the Great Rail Journeys of the World – the tiny red Glacier Express through the Alps as we enjoy breathtaking views from the panorama car. [B]

January 4th: To VENICE Another of Europe's great rail journeys today. The Swiss-Italian Cisalpino takes us through the Alps past the Northern Italian lakes via Milan and on to the City of Canals, Venice, another of Europe's truly romantic cities. Our 4 star hotel overlooks the Grand Canal. Settle in, watch the lights come on as the waterbuses chug past. [B,D]

January 5th: VENICE This morning we begin to explore the art and history of Venice. Byzantine St Mark's is considered by many to be the most beautiful church in the world and the historic Doge's Palace and its Bridge of Sighs are "must sees". [B]

January 6th: VENICE There is time for a gondola ride and a visit to an outer island – Burano for exquisite lace, Murano for world famous Venetian glass. Art lovers will want to see the Tintoretto paintings in the Scula di San Rocco, the Titian in the Friary Church and the collection of Venetian Renaissance art in the Accademia Gallery. [B]

January 7th: VENICE or Day Trip to Florence Either another quiet day today exploring the bridges and canals of Venice or join an **optional excursion** on Italy's flagship train the Eurostar Italia for a visit to Florence, the cradle of Western civilisation and birthplace of the Renaissance.

January 8th: To INNSBRUCK Farewell Italy, as we head back towards the Alps. After lunch we join our Eurocity train for Innsbruck as our luggage is taken on ahead. We are not staying in downtown Innsbruck but in the beautiful Alpine Village of Igls perched 15 minutes above. Thaw out with a glass of gluhwein in front of the roaring log fire. This is our home for 4 nights. [B,D]

January 9th: INNSBRUCK Choices today: skiing or join your Tour Leader in an exploration of Innsbruck, the Imperial city of Hapsburgs. We commence by riding a tramcar through snow-decked forests, to Innsbruck below. Explore the mediaeval quarter and take a ride up the Hungerberg railway for a panorama of the Alps. [B]

January 10th: INNSBRUCK or Day Trip to Salzburg Today you may choose to ski, to potter about the village, to sit in front of the log fire or to take the tram back down into Innsbruck to the shops. There is an **optional excursion** by Austrian Railjet train to Mozart's birthplace, Salzburg. [B]

January 11th: INNSBRUCK Another quiet day in our Alpine haven – a good book in front of the log fire? Alternatively, your Tour Leader will assist you if you wish to make a visit to nearby Munich or the fairy-tale castle of Neuschwannstein. [B]

January 12th: To PRAGUE Our luggage is collected and taken on ahead as we bid farewell to the Alps and join a EuroCity train for another of Europe's great romantic cities – Prague. Our hotel is in the historic centre. [B]

January 13th: PRAGUE Today there is a visit to Prague Castle overlooking the city. Here is also the cathedral church of St Vitus, incorporating the chapel built to house the relics of Good King Wenceslas, murdered here a thousand years ago. A free afternoon for the shops or to enjoy the music. [B]

January 14th: PRAGUE or Day Trip to DRESDEN A free day – continue your exploration of this city or join an **optional excursion** to Dresden, one of Europe's cultural wonders now emerging from the ashes of World War II bombing and 44 yrs of communism. [B]

January 15th: PRAGUE Enjoy a last free day in magical Prague. Understand why Mozart loved it. Crystal and garnet are popular with shoppers. Our Farewell Dinner tonight. [B,D]

January 16th: HOMEWARD BOUND The tour ends after breakfast this morning. [B]



WHITE CHRISTMAS

PRE-TOUR ADD-ON TO THE WINTER WONDERLAND TOUR:

Why not enjoy a White Christmas in a beautiful Swiss Alpine village (with opportunities to visit Christmas markets) before embarking on the Winter Wonderland Tour?

On arrival on December 21st transfer to the picturesque Swiss Alpine village of Grindelwald, nestled under the North Face of the Eiger. Our hotel is rated 3+ stars and oozes Swiss charm. There are breathtaking Alpine views and a roaring log fire. We have reserved superior standard rooms with private facilities for our tour members.

Every morning there is a buffet breakfast, and every evening a four course dinner is provided for our tour members. This includes the festivities of a special Christmas Dinner, as Swiss tradition dictates on the night of Christmas Eve. There is a beautiful church 50 metres away with a midnight service on Christmas Eve should you wish to attend.

Grindelwald is a snow sports fan's heaven. But if you are not a snow bunny, there are a million other things to do. Grindelwald is a hub for the Swiss mountain train networks and there are many gondolas and cable cars to the Alpine peaks all around. It is an easy train ride to the cities of Berne, Basel and Zurich with their Christmas markets.

The village itself offers excellent shopping and a wide variety of restaurants and coffee shops for lingering lazy lunches, before returning to the hotel to read or snooze in front of the log fire. On December 28th (is it all over so soon?) you are escorted on the rail journey to Paris to commence the Winter Wonderland Tour.

- 7 nights accommodation in a superior standard room with private facilities in a 3 star hotel in the Swiss village of Grindelwald.
- 7 buffet breakfasts, 7 four course dinners (inc. Special Christmas Dinner on Christmas Eve).
- Escorted rail transfer from Grindelwald to Paris on Dec 28th to join Winter Wonderland Tour.

NOTE: Your hosts are on hand to provide sightseeing suggestions and assistance, but there are no escorted activities during this relaxing week.

KIDS STAY FREE – White Christmas & Winter Wonderland

Children under 12 sharing adults' room stay free.
Children aged 12 to 17 sharing adults' room stay at 50%.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 nights in each of Europe's Most Romantic Cities: *Paris, Venice & Prague*
- New Year's Eve in Paris
- 3 nights in the Swiss Alps
- 4 nights in the Austrian Alps
- Ride the Glacier Express

INCLUDED FEATURES:

- First Class rail travel in reserved seats
- 4 star city centre hotels
- 5 dinners
- Full luggage handling
- Australian Tour Director

DEPART ANY DAY – INDEPENDENT TOURING

The Winter Wonderland Tour is available as an unescorted tour, departing any day of the year at a **SAVING** of 25% of the group tour cost. We provide hotel accommodation, rail travel and detailed sightseeing notes.





BLOSSOMS & BULBS

Dutch Bulbfields, Chateaux Gardens of France, English Villages & Gardens and the Chelsea Flower Show.

May 4th: AMSTERDAM The tour commences at check-in to our city centre hotel, our home for four nights. We rest from the flight, or take an afternoon canal cruise to get our bearings, before meeting our fellow travellers for a Welcome Drink and Dinner. **[D]**

May 5th: AMSTERDAM Every day on the Great Trains of Europe Tours begins with a full buffet breakfast. **[B]** We spend a full day in one of the world's finest bulbfields, the Keukenhof Garden, with 80 acres of tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and other flowering bulbs, shrubs, ancient trees, exhibitions, gurgling streams, flower parades, and seven themed gardens. Little wonder we need all day to visit the Keukenhof! There are restaurants and tea shops. **[B]**

May 6th: AMSTERDAM We head into the countryside today (who will be first to see a windmill?) to the Gardens of the Dutch Baroque Palace Het Loo, the Royal Palace from the 1680s until 1982. Established by LeNôtre, the gardens feature perfect symmetry, axial layout with radiating gravel walks, parterres, fountains, basins and statues. **[B]**

May 7th: AMSTERDAM This afternoon there is an optional visit to the Aarlsmeer Flower Markets this morning, the hub of the world flower trade, where 19 million stems are auctioned each day. We visit the historic and beautiful Dutch city of Delft, home of Vermeer, and imagine what Amsterdam might have looked like centuries ago. **[B]**

May 8th: PARIS A great rail journey today. Our luggage is taken on ahead as we take our reserved First Class seats in the sleek Thalys train, for Paris at 300kph. On arrival we settle in to our 4 star hotel on the Left Bank. On our city sightseeing tour we begin our acquaintance with the City of Lights. **[B,D]**

May 9th: PARIS A quiet morning to stroll in the nearby Luxembourg Gardens or to visit a museum. Monet's waterlilies are finally on view in their original context at l'Orangerie. See them in real life this afternoon on our visit to Giverney and Monet's Garden. We enjoy the flower garden called Clos Normand and the water garden with its famous Japanese Bridge covered with wisteria, which should be at its best this week. Then the weeping willows, and the famous nymphaeas (water lilies). **[B]**

May 10th: PARIS A high speed French TGV train today into the Loire Valley and the Garden of Villandry, created by Dr Joachim Carvallo, from 1906, in complete harmony with the Renaissance architecture of the chateau. Great horticultural skill was deployed, especially in the use of vegetables. An arbour of grape vines leads to a great

parterre, conceived as a Garden of Music. On the other side of the canal is a Garden of Love. **[B]**

May 11th: NORTH YORK MOORS Another of the great rail journeys of the world as we farewell Paris and join the 300 kph Eurostar through the Chunnel. Customs requires that we travel with our luggage today. In London we join British Rail in the tracks of the Flying Scotsman to the mediaeval city of York. We see the Minster and the Shambles, then transfer to our inn in the North York Moors village of Pickering. A pub dinner tonight. **[B,D]**

May 12th: NORTH YORK MOORS This morning we visit the gardens of Castle Howard, laid out by Sir John Vanburgh in the early 18th century. Castle Howard is the palace of the Flyte family in "Brideshead Revisited". We lunch (with Claude Jeremiah Greengrass?) in the village of Goathland, "Aidens field" in the TV series 'Heartbeat'. Here we join the historic North York Steam Railway home to Pickering. **[B]**

May 13th: NORTH YORK MOORS This morning we visit historic Harewood House. Its garden is classic Capability Brown - forming an idyllic rural setting. We move on to the spa and garden town of Harrogate for a cream tea or a stroll around Harrogate's famous public gardens. Can you spot Agatha Christie? She 'disappeared' here in 1926. **[B]**

May 14th: LAKE DISTRICT We journey this morning through the Yorkshire Dales, immortalized in James Herriot's "All Creatures Great and Small" novels and television series. A village pub lunch stop, then on to the Lake District where we settle into our Lakeside hotel. **[B,D]**

May 15th: LAKE DISTRICT A visit this morning to a very special Lakeland garden, Holehird, which specialises in Lakeland flora and offers sweeping views of Lake Windermere. A bit of whimsy on the way home: we drop in on Beatrix Potter's garden, Hill Top - watch out for the fierce bad rabbit. **[B]**

May 16th: LAKE DISTRICT We take a magical rail journey today through some of the Dales' and England's finest scenery on the historic Settle to Carlisle Railway. A pub lunch, an afternoon cream tea and visits to some more of the Yorkshire Dales' picturesque villages. **[B]**

May 17th: COTSWOLDS Our British Rail journey south today brings us to the Peak District of Derbyshire, to visit the gardens of historic Chatsworth House, dating from 1687. Another Capability Brown garden, Chatsworth has been famous for its beauty since Jane Austen's Day. We move on in the late afternoon to the Cotswolds where we stay in a village inn in the pretty riverside village of Bourton-on-the-Water. **[B,D]**

May 18th: COTSWOLDS This morning's sightseeing takes us to picturesque Cotswold villages of honey-golden stone: Lower Slaughter, Stow-on-the-Wold, Chipping Campden. After a village pub lunch we visit one of England's favourite gardens - Hidcote Manor, designed and developed by Maj. Lawrence Johnston, who scoured the world to secure rare and exotic species for this extremely pretty garden, a series of "outdoor rooms". **[B]**



...with
The Chelsea Flower Show

May 19th: COTSWOLDS Today we visit Stowe Landscape Gardens, covering 750 acres and including 40 listed historic monuments and temples. It is considered one of England's most important landscape gardens and the greatest names in English garden design were involved in its creation from Bridgeman in the 1710s to Vanbrugh, Kent, Gibbs and "Capability" Brown. Afternoon tea in the Cotswold village of Burford, serious about antiques. **[B]**

May 20th: LONDON Back on British Rail today we journey through more of the Cotswolds' rolling hills, as our luggage is taken on ahead to await our arrival in our London hotel. We enjoy London's sights from a double-decker bus. The Oxford Street shops are only a bus ride away from the hotel. A West End Show tonight? **[B]**

May 21st: LONDON The Oxford Street shops or Harrods this morning before an afternoon excursion to the Royal Horticultural Society's Wisley Garden, where keen English gardeners have gone to be inspired for over 100 years. Spread out over 240 acres, Wisley is a lovely, peaceful place for a stroll as well as a demonstration garden full of practical garden design ideas and cultivation techniques. **[B]**

May 22nd: LONDON A full day today at the renowned Chelsea Flower Show, arguably the world's greatest and best known. Our Farewell Dinner tonight. **[B,D]**

May 23rd: HOMEWARD BOUND Our tour ends this morning after breakfast. Thank you for your company on the Great Trains of Europe Tours. **[B]**

FACT BOX:

DURATION: 20 DAYS

DEPARTURE:
MAY 4th 2025

\$AU 13,950 per person twin share

Single Supplement : \$1,500

Enquire about competitive airfares

HIGHLIGHTS A full day at
CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

RAIL JOURNEYS

- High Speed Thalys
- English Channel Eurostar
- Tracks of the Flying Scotsman
- North York Moors Steam Railway
- Settle to Carlisle Historic Railway

GARDENS

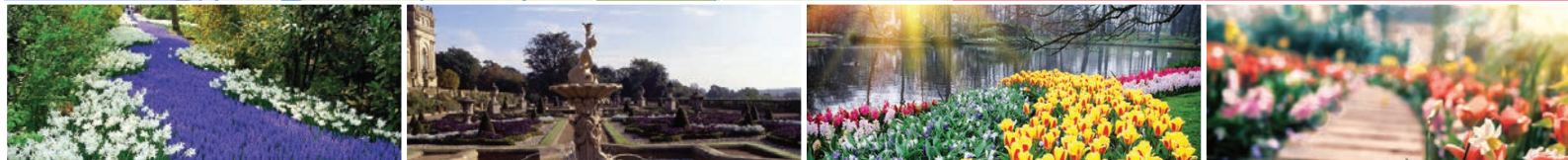
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|---------------------|-----------|
| • Keukenhof Gardens | • Hidcote |
| • Het Loo | • Wisley |
| • Monet's Garden | |
| • Villandry | |
| • Castle Howard | |
| • Harewood | |
| • Holehird | |
| • Chatsworth | |
| • Stowe | |

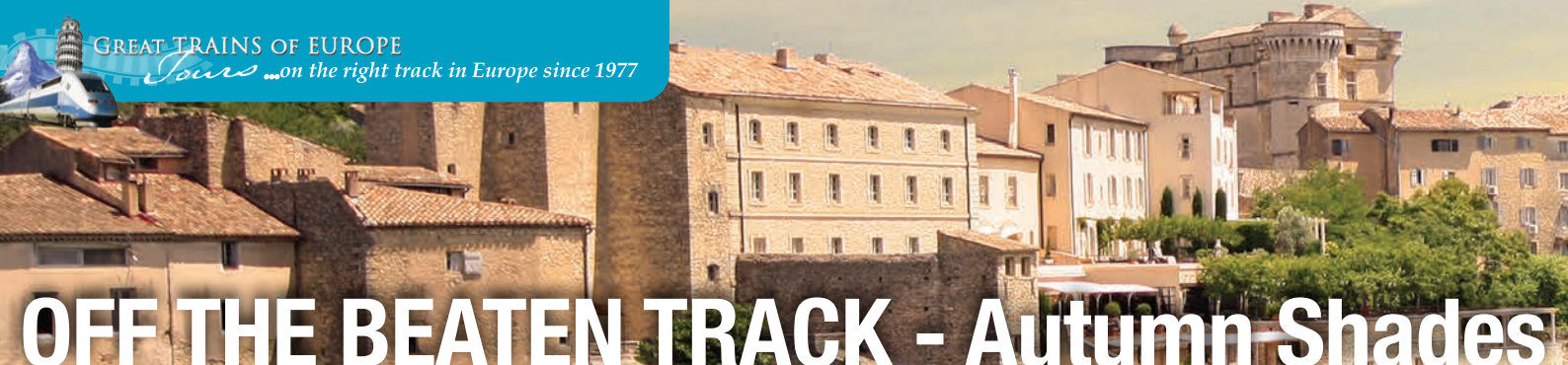
SIGHTS

- "Heartbeat Country"
- Heriot's Yorkshire Dales
- Lake District
- Cotswold Villages

INCLUDED FEATURES:

- First Class rail travel in reserved seats
- 4 star city centre hotels
- 3 or 4 star historic village inns
- 6 dinners
- Full luggage handling [not on Eurostar]
- Local expert garden guides [where permitted]
- Full time Australian Tour Director





OFF THE BEATEN TRACK - Autumn Shades

From Paris to Rome via the hill villages and market towns of the South of France, the Cinque Terre and Tuscany.

Day 1: BIENVENUE a PARIS

Our tour commences with Welcome Drinks and Dinner [D]. We meet in the hotel bar at 6pm. [D]

Day 2: PARIS

Every day on the Great Trains of Europe Tours begins with a buffet breakfast. Our morning's sightseeing, anyone for an afternoon visit to Monet's Garden at Giverny? Includes Champs Elysees, the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel tower. The afternoon is free for your own sightseeing. The Louvre will be closed tomorrow, so if you wish to visit Mona Lisa, today's the day. We are spoilt for choice of restaurant this evening. [B]

Day 3: PARIS

Most Paris museums are closed Tuesdays, but the Orsay (home of the Impressionists) and the Marmottan (a mansion with more than 50 Monets) are open today. An optional excursion is offered today: a full day to the Somme Battlefields of World War I [B]

Day 4: To SARLAT, Dordogne

Our luggage is taken on ahead as we head South at 300kph on the high speed French TGV to Bordeaux (lunch available on board) where we change to the little local train winding its way through the world famous Bordeaux vineyards into the Dordogne region. The walled mediaeval market town of Sarlat is our home for 3 nights. As our luggage arrives we settle in. The village has 5,000 inhabitants and 11 restaurants in the Michelin red book. Excursions from Sarlat are offered each day and included in the tour cost, but feel free to enjoy lazy days in our 'home' village. [D,B]

Day 5: SARLAT

Our day begins with a visit to the walled 'bastide' town of Domme, with excellent shopping and a fine view of a vast sweep of the Dordogne River Valley. It is Market Day in Domme. After an early lunch, we wind along the banks of the Dordogne River on our way to the mediaeval cliff-face village of Rocamadour - very much ON the beaten track. Pilgrims have come to visit the Black Madonna here since the 12th century. [B]

Day 6: SARLAT

The morning is free in the village of Sarlat. This is a 'foodie's' paradise with a vast array of gourmet shops. In the afternoon we visit one of France's most beautiful gardens, the nearby Jardin d'Eyrignac. [B]

Day 7: VILLENEUVE-les-AVIGNON, Provence

Our luggage is taken on ahead, as we join our cross-country trains, via Toulouse, to the historic Provence village of Villeneuve-les-Avignon. Excursions from Villeneuve are offered each day and included in the tour cost. Our hotel boasts an excellent restaurant where we have our included dinner tonight. [B,D]

Day 8: VILLENEUVE-les-AVIGNON

The nearby village of L'Isle-Sur-la-Source prides itself on being France's second largest antiques centre. Visa cards with chronic fatigue syndrome have been known here. It is a very attractive town with streams and water wheels, nicknamed the "Venice of Provence". Today is Market Day. We move on to Fontaine de Vaucluse for lunch beside the waterfall. [B]

Day 9: VILLENEUVE-les-AVIGNON

A visit this morning to the Pont du Gard, a Roman aqueduct dating from Classical times. Then we move on to van Gogh country and the village of St. Remy, ending the day in the walled city of Avignon, seat of the Popes from 1309 to 1377. The afternoon is free in Avignon. [B]

Day 10: VILLENEUVE-les-AVIGNON

Off the beaten track again today as we drive through some of Provence's favourite villages - hilltop Gordes (market day), Bonnieux, rainbow-coloured Roussillon, and Loumarin - with stops for coffee, lunch & shopping. [B]

Day 11: SANTA MARGHERITA LIGURE

An early start for the TGV train along the French Riviera to Nice, then a progression of slower local trains across the Italian border to our seafront hotel in Santa Margherita Ligure, just north of the Cinque Terre. Our luggage awaits our arrival [B,D].

Day 12: Cinque Terre - SANTA MARGHERITA LIGURE

Today we take a boat ride down the Italian Coast past the five villages more commonly known as the Cinque Terre, making stops at two of the villages. Elevenses, a ridiculously long lunch in a seafront restaurant or just a sundowner overlooking the Mediterranean? Back to our hotel tonight. [B]

Day 13: Portofino - SANTA MARGHERITA LIGURE

A leisurely stroll or short bus ride brings us to uber-touristy Portofino. [B]

Day 14: San Gimignano, TUSCANY

An early start today, so that we can get to San Gimignano before its Market Day ends. Our luggage is transported on ahead as we wind along the Mediterranean coast and into archetypal Tuscan countryside - vineyards, olive-groves and cypresses - down the Vale of Chianti and up the hill to San Gimignano. This walled hilltop village with its 13 towers, standing almost unchanged since the 12th century, is our home for 4 nights. Short day excursions from San Gimignano are provided (and included in your tour cost). You may choose to join the excursion or simply stay in San Gimignano and relax. [B,D]

Day 15: San Gimignano, TUSCANY

A drive off the beaten track today through Southern Tuscan vineyards and olive groves to visit two beautiful hilltop villages and wine centres - Montalcino and Montepulciano. [B]

Day 16: San Gimignano, TUSCANY

This morning we explore the artistic gem of Siena, which stands today much as it did in the twelfth century. You know it from "My House in Umbria" and "Under the Tuscan Sun". Where better to take lunch than at one of the open air trattoria on the Campo? This is the historic city square, the setting for the Palio horse race in the summer. On the way home to San Gimignano we visit the walled village of Monteriggioni. [B]

Day 17: San Gimignano, TUSCANY

This is a good day to climb the tallest tower for panoramic views of the Vale of Chianti, and to visit the small cathedral with its Ghirlandaio painting. You recall Judi Dench's efforts to preserve it in the film 'Tea with Mussolini'.



Anyone fancy a day trip into Florence? Pisa is also a possible destination for a day trip. Your tour guide will provide details. [B]

Day 18: To ROME

Our luggage is taken on to Rome as we wind our way through the Vale of Chianti on the local slow train to Florence, where we change to Italy's High Speed *Frecciarossa* to the eternal city, Rome. Our included dinner is not tonight, but on our final night, but let's go the Piazza Navona anyway for pizza as the Bernini fountains play. [B]

Day 19: ROME

Today's sightseeing focuses on Classical Rome and includes entrances to the Pantheon, the Forum and the Colosseum. "Roma - non basta una vita!" (Rome - one life is not enough!) Join your Tour Leader for a stroll to the Trevi Fountain after dinner. If you throw three coins in the fountain, your return to Rome is guaranteed, so the legend goes. [B]

Day 20: ROME

Catholic Rome today, including entrances and a guided tour of St Peter's Basilica, the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo's masterpiece. The fashion shops on the Via Condotti are open this afternoon. Our Farewell Dinner tonight. [B, D]

Day 21: GRAZIE e ARRIVEDERCI

Our tour ends after breakfast this morning. Thank you for your company on the Great Trains of Europe Tours. [B]

FACT BOX:

DURATION: 21 DAYS

DEPARTURE: October 20th, 2024
& October 5th 2025

COST: Land Cost Only
(Join in Paris, leave from Rome)
\$AU 13,950 per person Twin Share
Single Room supplement \$2,000
Enquire about competitive airfares

HIGHLIGHTS

EXPLORE EUROPE'S CULTURAL CAPITALS 3 NIGHTS IN EACH

- Paris
- Rome

ENJOY

- Village Market Days
- Sistine Chapel

DISCOVER BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES IN

- Dordogne, France
- Provence, France
- Cinque Terre
- Tuscany, Italy

INCLUDED FEATURES:

- First Class rail travel in reserved seats
- 4 star city centre boutique hotels
- 3 & 4 star historic village inns
- 6 dinners
- Full luggage handling
- Full time Australian Tour Director



BOOKING CONDITIONS

TOUR OPERATOR: Great Trains of Europe Tours
(ABN 75 325 01 0 987) are members of IATA #96836610

COSTS: Costs are expressed in Australian dollars and are based on transport and accommodation costs, and Australian dollar exchange rates effective as at 31st December 2023.

Exchange rate fluctuations in the price of any service provided, beyond the control of Great Trains of Europe Tours, may be passed on to travellers, right up to the date of departure.

A deposit of \$2,500 per person will guarantee a place (unless already filled, in which case you will be advised of your place on the waiting list. With a maximum tour size of 25 travellers, tours often fill early).

Full final payment is due 90 days before commencement of the tour. Please make payment by cheque to "Great Trains of Europe Tours" or by bank transfer as follows:

Heritage Bank, Toowoomba

BSB 638-060 Account Number 111 097 34 Payment by credit card attracts a 1.5% surcharge.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation at any time after the deposit is paid will result in the forfeiture of the deposit. Any booking cancelled between 90 days and 45 days before departure will incur a 50% cancellation charge on land content. Bookings cancelled within 45 days of departure will incur a 100% cancellation charge.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: A condition of joining a Great Trains of Europe tour is either the purchase of travel insurance through Great Trains of Europe Tours, or documentary evidence of a sufficient level of travel insurance purchased elsewhere.

BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE: A baggage allowance of 23kgs per person applies to all tour members.

HOTELS: Hotel star ratings, where provided, are those of the country in which the hotel is situated, and vary from country to country.

OTHER IMPORTANT ADVICE: The tour will proceed if a minimum of 15 travellers have paid deposits by 90 days before scheduled departure.

In the highly unlikely event that there are insufficient travellers for a tour, you will be offered either (i) a full refund of all monies paid, (ii) a modified cost structure for a smaller group, or (iii) a place on an alternative Great Trains of Europe Tour.

Each tour is sold as a package and there can be no refund for any element of the tour (eg. a meal or an excursion) not utilised by the traveller by her/ his own choice. Tour costs have built into them the costs associated with researching tours, communicating with overseas suppliers, brochure preparation and marketing. Great Trains of Europe Tours does not claim nor imply that some of the inclusions in our tours may or may not be available at a lower price direct from the overseas supplier. Travellers are reminded, however, that purchases made direct with overseas suppliers may not be covered by Australian Travel Agents licensing protections.

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Great Trains of Europe Tours cannot be held responsible for changes to provision of services by local suppliers, but we will do all in our power to provide an alternative service of equal standard to that advertised, or make a cash refund of the difference on the spot.

CONTRACT: The contract between the traveller and Great Trains of Europe Tours, entered into by your signing the booking form, shall be construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Queensland.

"Stan's tours are the group tours for people who don't like group tours: they are well organised but not regimented; flexible with plenty of time; no rush, no bustle."



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Jackie Wood, Melbourne

(5 time tour member on the Great Trains of Europe Tours)