

GUIDEBOOK

Travel. Learn. DiscoverEU

**What might confuse you
or be unclear during
planning or travel?**

A group of four young women are standing on a train platform, smiling and waving small European Union flags. They are wearing backpacks and casual clothing. In the background, a high-speed train is visible on the tracks.

**ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS REGARDING:
CURRENCIES, PUBLIC TRANSPORT, NAVIGATING NEW
ENVIRONMENTS, ROAMING WORKS OUTSIDE EU, TRAVEL GRANT**

what is it? who can apply? how to apply? is it worth it?



The “Travel. Learn. DiscoverEU” project is designed to enrich the DiscoverEU experience for 18-year-old Europeans by encouraging active citizenship and strengthening a shared European identity through meaningful and well-supported travel. It motivates young people to take part in DiscoverEU by providing them with accessible, youth-friendly information through a comprehensive travel guide and an interactive online platform. The project also builds awareness of DiscoverEU through engaging media content that shares real experiences and inspires participation. Through systematic collection and analysis of participant experiences, the project generates valuable insights into the needs of young travelers. These insights are transformed into concrete recommendations that support the ongoing development and improvement of the DiscoverEU program at the European level. The project was developed in cooperation between the LEVEL UP association from Poland and the SUMA – Association for Sustainable Development from Croatia.

Note: The views and opinions expressed are those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them. The project is co-financed by the European Union.



**Co-funded by
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INTRODUCTION

Imagine being 18 and handed a free ticket to explore Europe – sounds incredible, right? DiscoverEU is exactly that: a European Union initiative offering young people the chance to journey across Europe, experiencing its rich cultures and landscapes. This guidebook was created **by young travelers, for young travelers** as part of the “Travel. Learn. DiscoverEU” project (KA210-YOU-20824D3A) co-led by LEVEL UP (Poland) and SUMA (Croatia). Our goal is to enhance your DiscoverEU experience – making information youth-friendly, practical, inclusive, and inspiring. The project brings a focus on sustainability (thanks to SUMA) and smart digital tools (courtesy of LEVEL UP), so you’ll find plenty of eco-friendly travel tips and app recommendations along the way.



Before we dive in, a quick note: **DiscoverEU** is part of the Erasmus+ Programme (2021–2027) and is co-financed by the EU. The views here come from the authors and fellow travelers – not official EU policy – but we’ve verified facts with official sources so you can trust the info. Now, let’s embark on planning your European adventure!

DiscoverEU - Your Ticket to Explore Europe

DiscoverEU is much more than a free train ticket. It's an EU initiative that has opened up Europe to thousands of 18-year-olds each year. If you've ever daydreamed about winding train rides through the Alps, sunset strolls in Paris, or making friends with fellow adventurers from across the continent, DiscoverEU could be your golden ticket. Every year, the European Commission awards tens of thousands of travel passes to young people like you. With a pass in hand, you can travel up to 30 days **across 33 countries** by rail – from the sunny islands of Greece to the snowy north of Norway – experiencing Europe's diversity firsthand.



What's on offer?

If selected, you receive an Interrail/Eurail travel pass to roam Europe's rail network (and ferries or buses where trains don't reach). You'll mostly travel by train – one of the most eco-friendly ways to go (more on that in our sustainability section). Along with the pass, DiscoverEU travelers also get a special DiscoverEU discount card (a version of the European Youth Card) loaded with **over 40,000 discounts** on accommodation, local transport, culture, food, sports and more. That means cheaper hostels, museum tickets, public transport and even meals – a big help for a student budget. In short, DiscoverEU gives you the freedom to craft an epic European journey, largely for free.

who can apply? ►



Who Can Apply?

To keep things fair, **eligibility is very specific**. DiscoverEU is open only to young people around 18 years old. In practice, this means you must be 18 on the first day of the application period for a given round (the exact birth date range varies by round). You also need to be a citizen or **legal resident** of an EU Member State or a country associated with Erasmus+ (currently Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia or Türkiye). Tip: The eligibility dates change each round – check the European Youth Portal for the latest details specific to your year.



Importantly, **DiscoverEU is for individuals of all backgrounds**. Whether you're from a big capital city or a small rural village, whether you consider yourself a seasoned traveler or have never left your home country, you have an equal shot. If you have a disability or health condition, don't be deterred. DiscoverEU provides assistance and support to ensure you can take part on equal footing.



When and How to Apply?

DiscoverEU application rounds happen **twice a year** – usually once in spring and once in autumn. Each round is a short window (often about 2 weeks long) when you can submit your online application on the European Youth Portal.

The application itself is straightforward and entirely online. You'll go to the European Youth Portal's DiscoverEU section and hit "Apply Now" (visible only during an open call). There, you log in (with your EU Login account) and fill out a form with your personal details (like name, nationality, and ID or passport number).

You can apply either as an **individual** or as a group of up to 5 friends. If applying as a group, one person registers first and gets an application code to share with up to 4 others, who then submit their details under that group code – so you'll be evaluated together.

and what then?



after that...

After the basics, you'll need to complete a short **quiz** (unless you're a group member; in group applications only the group leader does the quiz). Don't worry, it's not an exam – typically ~5 multiple-choice questions about Europe, the EU, and cultural or youth initiatives, plus one tiebreaker question.

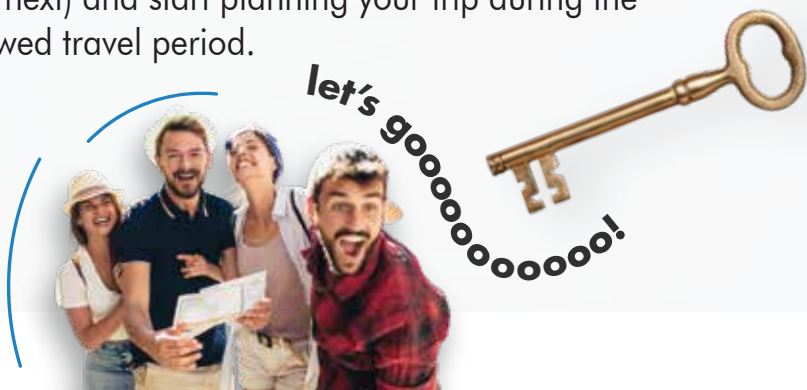
Once you submit, you'll have to practice that **virtue of patience**. Results aren't immediate; after the deadline, the European Commission evaluates applications and typically announces winners a few weeks later. All applicants are informed by email of the outcome.



Remember!

KEY POINTS TO RECAP:

- Two rounds each year. one around April, one around October. Check the European Youth Portal for exact dates and set reminders.
- Apply at 18. You must be 18 (specific birth date range given per round) and from an eligible country.
- Online application. via the European Youth Portal's DiscoverEU page, solo or in groups up to 5.
- Quiz & selection. Answer a few quiz questions about Europe. Winners are selected and notified by email a few weeks later.
- If you win, you'll claim your travel pass (more on that next) and start planning your trip during the allowed travel period.



What does the DiscoverEU Pass Include?

A decorative yellow starburst graphic with numerous small dots and larger four-pointed stars, trailing off to the right.

The star of the show is the **travel pass**. This is essentially an Interrail Global Pass (or Eurail Pass for those from partner countries) that gives you **flexible access to almost all trains across 33 European countries**. Think of it as a magic ticket that lets you hop on and off trains from Portugal to Poland to Finland, covering thousands of destinations. Here's what you need to know about how the pass works for DiscoverEU participants:

- You can travel for **up to 30 days** in total. You're not obliged to use all 30, but that's the maximum covered. Within that, you have a certain number of **travel days** (days on which you can take trains) – usually the pass is flexible.
- The pass can be used in a **flexible way** via a mobile app. You activate a travel day when you start traveling that day. If you prefer a fixed itinerary, there's an option to request fixed-date tickets (useful if, say, you need paper tickets or have a set plan).

- Primarily, it's a train pass. Some premium trains (like international high-speeds or night trains) require a seat reservation with an extra fee, which the pass doesn't cover, so factor those small costs in. If you live on an island or in a very remote area, DiscoverEU won't leave you stranded – the initiative allows special arrangements to reach the mainland. Some ferry crossings (like between Greece and Italy) are included in an Interrail pass.

- Along with the travel pass, you'll receive a link to your **DiscoverEU European Youth Card** (digital). This card unlocks **thousands of discounts** across Europe. Flash it at museums, attractions, local transit, certain restaurants or hostels, and you can save money. For example, you might get discounted entry to the Louvre in Paris, 10–20% off at a youth hostel in Berlin, or a deal on bike rentals in Amsterdam. There are over 40,000 discount opportunities tied to this card. These discounts can significantly stretch your budget – free or cheaper museum tickets, reduced public transport fares, etc., add up over a month of travel.

- DiscoverEU encourages you to connect with others. You can apply as a group with friends from home, but even if you apply solo, you can link up with other winners. There's an official **DiscoverEU Facebook Group** with tens of thousands of members, where travelers chat, plan meetups, and find companions for routes.

Finally, note that **DiscoverEU is a one-time opportunity** in terms of the free pass. You can only receive the DiscoverEU pass once. If you apply and don't win, you can try again next round (as long as you're still eligible by age). But if you do win and travel, you can't apply for another pass in a later round.

Why apply? - Beyond the Free Ticket

At first glance, DiscoverEU might seem like just a free travel ticket – but it's more than that. Yes, the practical appeal is huge: a covered travel pass and discounts make it possible to see Europe at a fraction of the normal cost. But ask anyone who's done it, and they'll tell you about **personal growth and memories** that go far beyond the monetary value of the ticket.



Here are a few reasons young people (perhaps like you) are drawn to DiscoverEU:



- For many, this is the first time traveling independently, offering a rare chance to cover multiple countries in one trip, which makes it an adventure and discovery. It's an adventure in the truest sense.
- Traveling through multiple countries on your own or with peers can be a crash course in "real life" skills, leading to personal development. You'll learn independence (since you have to plan logistics and make decisions on the go), responsibility (keeping track of your budget and belongings), and problem-solving (train strike? missed connection? You'll figure out a Plan B).
- Europe is incredibly diverse. In a few weeks you might hear a dozen languages, visit both medieval castles and modern art galleries, learn to navigate metros in cities like Paris and also hike in the Swiss Alps. Each country has its own customs, history, and vibe. DiscoverEU gives you a front-row seat to this cultural tapestry.
- One of the best parts of traveling at this age is the people you meet, which often leads to valuable friendships and connections. Whether it's fellow DiscoverEU travelers you team up with or locals and other backpackers in hostels, you will form bonds on the road. Sharing a train compartment can spark a conversation that turns a stranger into a friend.



- Traveling under DiscoverEU often makes young people feel more connected to Europe. Crossing borders without checks (thanks Schengen!), seeing how countries are different yet share common values – it can spark a sense of being proudly European. And of course, **it's fun!**

Important things to know (Reality Check)

While DiscoverEU is an incredible opportunity, it's important to go in with realistic expectations and knowledge of what is **not covered** or what could be challenging. Here are a few key points to keep in mind so you're fully prepared:

- The DiscoverEU pass covers your transportation (trains and some ferries, plus initial connectivity if needed) between cities and countries. But it does not automatically cover your accommodation, daily food expenses, local metro/bus tickets within cities, or entry fees to attractions. You'll need to **budget for your trip** (we'll help you with tips in the budgeting section).



- The flexibility of the Interrail pass is great, but popular routes and accommodations can fill up, especially in summer, so plan and book what you can. Many travelers find it's wise to **book some things in advance** – for instance, reserving seats on high-speed trains that require reservations, or booking hostels a week or two ahead for major cities in peak season. Spontaneity is part of the adventure, but completely last-minute travel can sometimes lead to headaches.

- **Travel with friends or solo?** Either is fine, but know your comfort level. If you go solo, you have ultimate freedom but you'll need to be confident navigating alone; if you go with friends, you share memories (and costs) but also responsibilities. Group dynamics can be tricky on a long trip.

- Traveling with an Interrail pass has a few quirks, so mind the rules. For instance, you must **activate your travel days** in the app before boarding, always have your pass and your passport/ID on you for train inspections, etc. If you forget to activate or show the wrong ticket, you could get fined on the train – ouch! Also note, if your country is outside the EU's Schengen area (like Türkiye, for example), you might encounter border checks traveling to/from there – ensure you have any visas if needed.



- Nowadays, everything from train tickets to navigation to hostel check-ins relies on your smartphone for connectivity and the DiscoverEU App. EU roaming is free for EU SIM cards, but if you're from a non-EU associated country, check roaming costs – you might get a local SIM or an eSIM for data. The **DiscoverEU travel app** is a must-have; but note that app is great yet not perfect – some travelers found that it didn't show all local train options.

In summary, DiscoverEU is an opportunity of a lifetime – but it's not a free vacation where everything is taken care of. You'll be responsible for making it a great experience.

- In summary, **DiscoverEU is an opportunity of a lifetime – but it's not a free vacation where everything is taken care of.** You'll be responsible for making it a great experience.



and what with those older than 18? ►

DiscoverEU Inclusion Action: Travel for all

While the main DiscoverEU scheme is a competition open to any 18-year-old, there's another path to a similar adventure for those who may not usually get the chance. It's called the **DiscoverEU Inclusion Action** – essentially, a tailored program under Erasmus+ to help young people with fewer opportunities (up to age 21) experience DiscoverEU in a supported way.

What does “fewer opportunities” mean? In EU terms, it refers to youth who face obstacles that might prevent them from traveling independently. This could be due to economic difficulties (low income, unemployment), social challenges, health issues or disabilities, cultural differences (migrants, refugees), geographic limitations (remote rural area, islander), or educational barriers. The Inclusion Action exists to **break those barriers** and ensure the DiscoverEU experience is truly accessible to all young people, not just those who already have the means or confidence to apply on their own.

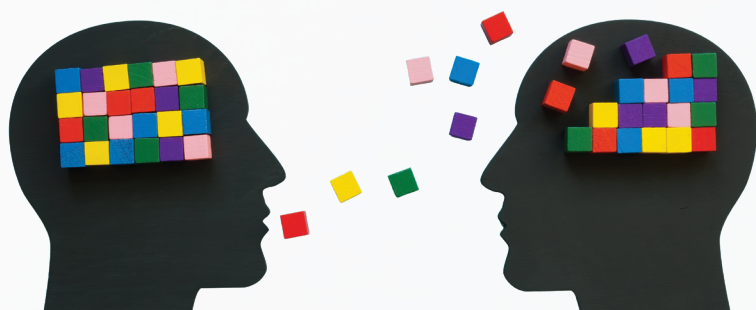


How does it work? Unlike the main DiscoverEU (which you apply for individually on a portal), the Inclusion Action is implemented through organizations. Essentially, youth organizations, NGOs, informal youth groups, or even schools can apply for Erasmus+ funding (Key Action 1, KA155) to run a “DiscoverEU Inclusion” project. These projects will recruit a small group of young people with fewer opportunities, prepare them, and take them on a DiscoverEU trip together with support.

Key features of the Inclusion Action:

- It targets **young people aged 18-21** who have fewer opportunities. So if you missed the main call at 18, or you’re 19-20 and thought you were too old, this could be a second chance, provided you meet the fewer opportunities criteria.
- Participants travel in **groups of 1 to 5 people**, and these can be informal groups (doesn’t have to be a registered org as the participants) but an organization or informal group leader must apply and lead the project. Typically, there will be at least one adult group leader or trained youth worker who accompanies the group.
- The Inclusion Action projects are funded by Erasmus+, which means basically all eligible expenses are paid for. This includes the travel pass plus many extras the regular DiscoverEU doesn’t cover. For example, it can cover your accommodation, meals or a per diem, local transportation, travel insurance, and even “extraordinary costs” related to your situation. Extraordinary costs could be things like a visa fee, medical certification, special assistance, or a financial guarantee if needed.

- Along with the travel pass, you'll receive a link to your **DiscoverEU European Youth Card** (digital). This card unlocks **thousands of discounts** across Europe. Flash it at museums, attractions, local transit, certain restaurants or hostels, and you can save money. For example, you might get discounted entry to the Louvre in Paris, 10–20% off at a youth hostel in Berlin, or a deal on bike rentals in Amsterdam. There are over 40,000 discount opportunities tied to this card. These discounts can significantly stretch your budget – free or cheaper museum tickets, reduced public transport fares, etc., add up over a month of travel.
- The **travel pass** in Inclusion Action is similar but slightly different: currently, it offers unlimited train travel for **7 travel days within a 30-day period**. In other words, you have a one-month window in which you can choose 7 days to actually ride trains (they don't have to be consecutive).
- A big component is that these projects **include comprehensive preparation, mentorship, and follow-up** – it's not just "here's a ticket, have fun." Organizations will typically hold pre-departure meetings, training on travel skills, intercultural workshops, etc., to get participants ready.



How to get involved?

If you think you qualify as a young person with fewer opportunities and this sounds like something for you, the approach is a bit different from the main DiscoverEU application. You don't apply individually on the portal; instead, you'll need to find a project or organization that is running a DiscoverEU Inclusion Action and join their group. Here are some ways to do that:

- Contact the **Erasmus+ Youth National Agency** in your country.
- Check with local **youth organizations, NGOs, or schools** – especially ones active in Erasmus+ or youth mobility.
- Look at the European Youth Portal or youth information sites for any news on DiscoverEU Inclusion calls.
- If you're in an informal group of young people and have an adult who could lead, you could even approach an organization or form a group to apply for the grant yourselves – though that's more complex and usually done by experienced youth workers.

Criteria	DiscoverEU (Standard)	DiscoverEU – Inclusion Action
Age range	18 years old	18–21 years old
Application method	Individual online application (lottery system)	Application through an organization
Travel format	Independent travel or with friends	Group travel
Costs covered	Free travel pass (Interrail)	All costs covered (travel, accommodation, food, activities)
Support during travel	Self-planned trip, no formal support	Group leader / mentor support
Target group	Young people with fewer barriers to travel	Young people with fewer opportunities (economic, social, health, geographical)
Main goal	Independent exploration of Europe	Inclusive and supported travel experience
Level of independence	High	Moderate – with guidance

In short, the Inclusion Action is a **more structured, supportive pathway** to do DiscoverEU. It's there to ensure that youth who might lack money, have a disability, or other hurdles are not left out of this fantastic initiative. The Inclusion Action is also an official part of Erasmus+, so participants may receive a **Youthpass certificate** at the end, recognizing skills they gained.

Planning your DiscoverEU Adventure

So you've got your DiscoverEU pass (or you're confidently aiming to get one) – exciting! Before you jump on that train, **planning is key** to making your adventure smooth and enjoyable.

Your **starting point** is to create your travel squad (or go solo).

First step: decide **who's going**. Will you travel with friends, or go solo and meet people along the way? Both options work in DiscoverEU; just remember if you applied as a group, you'll presumably travel together. If you applied solo, you still might find travel buddies via the DiscoverEU community.

Traveling with friends can be a blast – you share all the laughs, you can split costs, and you'll have someone to watch your back. On tough days, a friend can lift your spirits, and on chill days, you can enjoy a park or beach together.

Group travel also means decisions are collective, which can ease the burden. However, it also means compromise. A great tip from past groups: have a **team planning session** (or several) before you go.

If you're **traveling solo**, that's equally awesome. It's normal to feel a twinge of fear at the idea of backpacking alone at 18. But thousands have done it and loved it. You have ultimate freedom – you can wake up and decide. The key for solo travelers is to stay **open to others** and be proactive in connecting – join walking tours, say hi to the traveler next to you, use the DiscoverEU Facebook group to meet up with others in your city on given dates.



Defining Your Route and Budget

Europe is vast and full of wonders – how do you even begin to choose where to go? Planning your route might feel overwhelming, but here's how to break it down step by step:

- 1. List your must-sees**, as each person in your group (or you, if solo) should list the top countries or cities they dream of visiting. Make a wishlist. Try to focus on one general region or a logical path. Be realistic with time! Each big city easily needs 2-3 days to enjoy; travel between them often eats half a day. Overloading your route is a common rookie mistake. **"More is not always better,"** as past travelers learned.

Once you have the must-sees, **sketch a rough route** that connects them logically. For example, if our musts are Paris, Berlin, Prague, and Budapest, we might draw a line Paris Berlin -> Prague -> Budapest. Consider starting and ending points. Many prefer to do a loop or an open-jaw. With Interrail, you usually get a journey from your home country to the border and back included – the rule is typically you can use your pass for two trips in your home country: one outbound, one inbound.

2.

- 3. While you need a solid route, leave room for spontaneity.** Many travelers advise: plan the framework (major stops and dates), but allow flexibility for side trips or changes if you fall in love with a place and want to stay longer. **Be flexible and spontaneous** – it's one of the "golden rules" from past travelers.



4. Calculate Budget Early. Even though the train pass is free, you will spend money on daily living and tourism. A sample budgeting approach: First, figure out accommodation costs. If you plan hostels, check an app like Booking or Hostelworld for your cities: what's the average per night for a bed? Multiply by nights. That's likely your biggest fixed expense. Next, food: decide if you'll cook sometimes or eat street food vs. restaurants. Set a daily food budget target, e.g. "€25/day for food" as a ballpark. Local transport and activities: Many cities have transit passes (some under 26 discounts) – budget a few euros each city for metros/buses.

Things can happen – you lose your wallet, you need to take an unexpected taxi, or you decide to splurge on paragliding in the Alps (why not!). Try to keep a reserve, even a few hundred euros, that you won't touch unless needed.

A word on **hidden costs**! Even with a free pass, there are some costs like seat reservations on certain trains (e.g. TGV in France, ICE in Germany sometimes). These are usually not more than €10-20 each. Alternatively, look for regional trains that don't need them – slower but cheaper.. Another potential cost: **luggage storage** – say you're in a city just for the day and leave bags in lockers at the station (might be €5-€10).





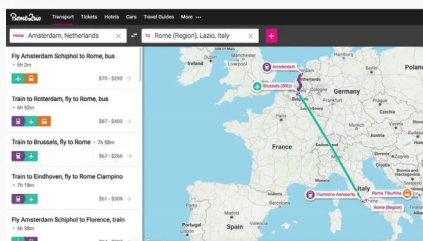
Interrail – The best rail Pass in Europe

The best way to see all of Europe – No fixed route – Flexible start date. Tour all of Europe with 1 rail ticket – Best value for money. Book now.

5. Use **Tools to Organize!** For the route, a simple Google MyMaps or map drawing on paper works to visualize. Apps like **Rome2Rio** or **Google Maps** can show transport options between places. But remember, Google Maps won't always show European train options perfectly – use it for general visualization. The **Interrail Rail Planner app** is essential – it has offline timetables for European trains. It even has a trip planner feature; you can plug in your route and it will show connections. However, travelers warned that the app sometimes doesn't list local trains or gives confusing info. One more thing: **include rest days** in your plan. It might sound counterintuitive when you have limited time, but trust us, constantly moving is tiring.

Finally, **learn from others' mistakes**. What do past DiscoverEU travelers say they wish they had known? A common lesson: they underestimated travel times and overestimated how many places they could see. Some didn't research local transport enough – e.g., not realizing the last train to their hostel suburb leaves at 11 pm and they missed it, or confusion about whether the pass covers city metros. Others wished they had printed maps or had offline maps ready when internet failed.

example:
Rome2Rio app



Packing smart means knowing **what** (and **what not**) to bring

The next big preparation step is **packing your bags** for a month on the move. It's tempting to want to pack for every possible scenario – but resist! The golden rule from experienced backpackers: pack light. You will be hauling your luggage through train stations, up hostel stairs, and along cobbled streets. Here's how to hit that packing sweet spot:

Choose the right bag. Most travelers opt for a backpack (around 40–60 liters capacity) rather than a suitcase. A backpack is easier to carry up stairs and run with if needed, and it leaves your hands free.

Pack for variable weather. European weather can vary wildly across countries and weeks so, bring layers for different conditions, comfortable clothes that you can layer.

Consider versatile and modest clothing. Versatile meaning things you can mix and match to create multiple outfits from fewer pieces. One traveler tip: pack a **bit of laundry soap or use hostel shampoo to wash essentials.**



anything else?



Documents and copies. Absolutely don't forget your **passport or ID**. Take your **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)** if you have one – it gives you access to public healthcare in EU countries. Also get **travel insurance** – this is critical. Print or have digital copies of your policy and important documents. It's wise to **photo-copy your passport/ID and other docs** – keep one copy separate from originals. Some travelers email themselves scans of their passport, visa, tickets – so even if everything is stolen, you can access a copy online.

Money and cards. Bring at least **two forms of payment** – typically a debit or credit card (Visa/Mastercard widely accepted) and some backup cash. A prepaid travel card or something like Revolut is popular. Let your bank know you'll be traveling so they don't block your card for suspicious foreign activity. Carry a bit of cash in euros for immediate needs or places that don't take card. Don't keep all your cash in one place.

Gadgets and electronics. The must-have is your **smartphone + charger**. Load it with all the apps. Consider a **power bank**. Trains often have outlets now, but not always. Pack **travel adapters** for the power outlets if needed. **Headphones/earphones** – great for music on long rides, but also consider you'll want to chat with people, so don't tune out all the time! **Pen and a small notebook** – useful for jotting train times or playing tic-tac-toe with friends when bored, and for journaling your experiences.



Miscellaneous important items

Medications. If you take any prescription meds, pack enough for the whole trip (and a copy of your prescription or a doctor's note for them). Also bring a basic **first-aid kit**. Also pack some basic **medicines for upset stomach or diarrhea**.

Toiletries. Go minimal here. Liquids under 100 ml if you carry on a flight at any point. A small shampoo, soap, deodorant, travel-size toothpaste and toothbrush, comb, sunscreen (important in summer!). Many hostels have lockers but you need your own lock.

Snacks! Pack a few snacks to start out – a protein bar or some nuts, especially for long train rides or if you arrive late somewhere and shops are closed. Some travelers bring a **filter water bottle** to be extra safe or in case of uncertain water.

What not to pack? Don't bring too many clothes. You truly don't need 5 pairs of pants and 10 shirts. A good guideline is pack for 7-10 days and do laundry. Avoid valuables like expensive jewelry.

One trick! **After packing, test carry your bag.** Can you walk comfortably with it for 1 km? Can you lift it above your head (to put in a train luggage rack)? If it's a struggle, revisit and remove some items. Many travelers come back saying "I didn't really need that second jacket or those extra shoes."

Shared items in groups. If traveling with friends, coordinate so you don't double-up on things you can share. For example, you might need only one travel-size iron or one first-aid kit among you. Sharing the load is smart.

To quote a seasoned traveler: **"Pack half the clothes and twice the money you think you'll need."**

Researching Destinations and Information Sources

Part of the joy of travel is the discovery, but doing a bit of research on your destinations beforehand can greatly enrich your experience. Here's how to get informed:

A good starting point is simply Googling “Things to do in [City]” or checking travel blogs and YouTube. **Social media is surprisingly useful.** Instagram and TikTok can show you cool spots – search tags like #DiscoverEU, #Interrail, or #[City] to find posts. TikTok has become a go-to for Gen Z travel tips; you might find a TikTok saying “5 hidden gems in Budapest” that leads you to an awesome ruin bar or a local food spot.

Nearly every city and country has an official tourism site listing attractions, events, and often free things to do. You don't need to read a whole guidebook, but skimming a bit helps prioritize.

Learn a bit of language basics because it's both respectful and useful to know a few key phrases in the local languages of your route. “Hello”, “Thank you”, “Excuse me”, “Do you speak English?”, and maybe “Where is the train station?”. Locals appreciate when you try, and even if you butcher a word, it often breaks the ice in a friendly way.



Download **offline maps** for each country or city on Google Maps. Apps like **Maps.me** or **HERE WeGo** allow offline navigation too. For public transport, Google Maps is often fine, but local transit apps can be better. Many countries have their own rail app.

Part of research is knowing where you'll sleep. Read **reviews** on Booking.com or Hostelworld; they often contain tips like "close to metro" or warnings like "area feels sketchy at night". Location is key – a cheap hostel far out of town might cost you more time and money in commuting, so balance that. Check if the place provides lockers, free breakfast, etc. – **those can add value**.

You should ask past travelers and pick the brains of friends who traveled on Interrail or did DiscoverEU in a previous round. **They'll have tons of firsthand advice**. There are also communities like subreddits (r/Interrail, r/travel) or the DiscoverEU Facebook group where you can ask questions.

Plan key attractions ahead and consider booking tickets online in advance if possible. Many major attractions allow or require advance reservations. Some have free days or youth discounts (like many museums in Europe are free or discounted for under 26 – e.g., Louvre is free for EU residents under 26, as referenced in a tip).

Be aware of **local norms and laws** and check if there are any particular cultural etiquette points. For instance, in some countries, jaywalking (crossing street on red) is frowned upon or even fined; in others, it's normal. Little things like that – usually your research or a quick question to locals can clarify.

Save important info offline by making a note on your phone of critical info. Addresses of your accommodations (for when you arrive, you can show a taxi or find it), any door codes, train times for crucial legs, etc. Don't rely solely on internet bookmarks – have the vital stuff written somewhere accessible without WiFi.

On the Road: Managing Finances and Staying Safe



or



Traveling is an adventure, but it shouldn't turn into a misadventure. This section is your safety net – literally. We'll talk about keeping your trip **budget on track** (so you don't run out of cash halfway) and **staying safe and savvy** in unfamiliar places.

Money Matters: Budgeting and Spending Hacks

You've set a budget – now you need to stick to it (more or less) while making the most of your journey. Handling money wisely on the road will save you stress and maybe even allow you to extend your trip or splurge on something special because you economized elsewhere. Here's how to be financially smart on the go:

Use cards smartly and carry backup. Many young travelers swear by apps like **Revolut** or **Monzo**. If not, your normal debit card will likely work in most places; just watch out for foreign transaction fees your bank might charge. When withdrawing cash, try to use bank ATMs (avoid generic ATMs in tourist centers that may add fees). Also, decline currency conversion if an ATM or card machine asks – choose to be charged in the local currency, not “EUR” on a non-euro country card, for a better rate. Keep some **cash** handy though, for small **vendors, public toilets**.

Maintain daily budget discipline, knowing that some days you'll spend more and other days less. Don't let it ruin fun – but awareness can prevent that “uh oh, I only have €100 left and 10 days to go” moment.

Food can sneakily become a large expense if you eat out for every meal. But you can enjoy local cuisine without going broke. **Cook occasionally** if you can – many hostels have communal kitchens. European supermarkets often have inexpensive fresh bread, cheese and fruits. Also, try local bakeries and street food which tend to be cheaper than sit-down restaurants and super tasty.. Don't forget student discounts: if you have an **ISIC student card** or even just proof of age under 26, you can get reduced or free entry to many attractions.



money discipline!

Apart from choosing hostels or cheap hotels, consider alternatives. **Youth hostels** are obvious – dorm beds are cheapest, but even private rooms in hostels can be cheaper than hotels and you still get the social vibe.

Couchsurfing (staying with locals for free) is an option some travelers love – it's more about cultural exchange and meeting people. If doing that, read host reviews carefully and maybe travel with a buddy for first time. Another lodging tip: many inter-railers take **overnight trains or buses** which double as transport and accommodation. Use your **DiscoverEU discount card** for hostels and attractions.

Your main inter-city travel is covered by the pass, but **local transport might not be**. Many cities have youth transit discounts or even free transport under a certain age. E.g., in some cities under 19s travel free on public transit, or under 26 get reduced fares – check each city's policy. But also, **walk whenever possible**. Also consider **bike rentals** in bike-friendly cities.



Keep an emergency stash. If you lose your wallet or card stops working, that note could buy you a taxi or a meal to get out of a bind. Likewise, have a backup card separate from your main wallet, in case one gets lost or eaten by an ATM. One traveler recounted how their friend's ATM card got demagnetized, but she had a backup prepaid card to continue the trip – lifesaver.

Avoid unnecessary fines or fees, because they can be a hidden trip killer. Always **validate your train/bus tickets** if required. On trains with your Interrail, always **activate your travel day and seat reservation** if you have it. Ticket inspectors in some countries are strict.

Make use of free experiences, as there are lots of ways to enjoy Europe that cost little or nothing. Parks, beaches, walking tours (just tip), free museum days (many national museums in Europe have one free day a month or are always free for youth), open-air festivals or concerts, street performances – take advantage.

Finally, a piece of advice from past travelers: **avoid costly mistakes**. Some have recounted spending way extra because they missed a train and had to buy a new ticket for a reserved high-speed, or got scammed by an overly expensive taxi. Common sense: use official taxis or ride-shares (or public transit) to avoid rip-offs, especially from airports or late at night. Also, set your phone to avoid roaming charges – get a local SIM or a roaming plan.

Now that the money is under control, let's ensure your safety and well-being throughout the journey.

Travel Safety and Well-Being

Europe is generally a very safe place to travel, especially in the EU countries you'll be visiting. But as with any travel, especially when you're young and maybe it's your first time away from home so long, it's wise to follow some safety guidelines. These cover personal safety, health, and how to handle the unexpected.

Protect your documents and valuables, such as your passport, tickets, and cards – guard them like treasure. Use that money belt or inner pocket for passport and the bulk of cash. When you're out for the day, you might leave your passport locked at the hostel. **In transit**, especially crowded trains or city buses, be alert for pickpockets. Simple moves: wear your backpack on your front in packed areas, or have a hand on your zippers.

Never leave luggage unattended. On trains, especially if you're in a compartment and you put your bag on a rack, try to keep it in view or at least put the strap around something. In stations, always keep a hand or eye on bags.

Exploring European cities' nightlife is part of the fun. Just do it smart. Stick with at least one friend if possible when going out at night, or if solo, let someone know your general plans. When partying, **watch your drinks** – never leave your drink unattended or accept open drinks from strangers, to avoid spiking. Use licensed cabs or rideshares (e.g., Uber, Bolt) to get home at night if you're not sure about walking or public transit.

watch your bags!



A little research on common scams in touristy areas helps you be mindful of local scams. For example, in some cities people might approach you with petitions to sign, friendship bracelets, or “found a gold ring” trick – all usually ploys to distract and pickpocket or guilt you for money. Just politely say no and walk on.

If traveling in a group, agree on what to do if you get separated. It can happen in a crowded festival or train station rush.

The universal European emergency number is **112** – memorize it or save it in your phone. Have the contact of your country’s **embassy or consulate** in the countries you’ll visit, just in case you lose your passport or face a serious emergency.

Listen to your body! Travel can be tough on the body. Try to get enough rest – yes, you want to seize every day, but getting severely sleep-deprived can lead to exhaustion or falling ill.

Plan for the unexpected by having an emergency plan. For example, if you lost all your money/cards – do you have a way to contact family or someone to wire money? If you miss your train and it’s the last one, do you have enough cash for a hostel or alternate transport? Always keep a little buffer cash for these cases.

Europe is generally LGBTQ+-friendly and diverse, especially in big cities. Still, attitudes vary by region. If you’re LGBTQ+, you can research if any particular areas are conservative where you might want to be more discreet. But overall, many travelers find Europe welcoming.

Alright, heavy stuff aside. Remember that by taking care of finances and safety, you are free to have maximum fun with minimal worries. You’ve got a sound plan, a packed bag, and street smarts in your pocket. Now get ready to immerse yourself in the experience – meeting people, soaking up cultures, and seeing the world through your own eyes.

People, Culture, and Connections: Making the Most of Your Journey

Travel isn't just about the places you go – it's also very much about the people you meet and the cultural experiences you have. This section is all about the human side of travel. Meeting others, getting along with your group, adapting to different cultures, and basically growing as a person through these interactions.

Meeting Other Travelers and Locals

One of the best things about DiscoverEU is that you immediately have a huge community of peers who are also exploring. Don't be shy – **other travelers are generally very open** to chatting and making friends. Here are some tips to connect:

If you're staying in hostels, you have built-in opportunities. Introduce yourself to your dorm mates. Join activities hostels often run: pub crawls, walking tours, game nights. Hang out in common areas. The key is to be approachable and sometimes take the first step if others are quiet.

Long train rides are great for striking up conversation. Europeans are sometimes reserved, but another young person with a backpack is likely a kindred spirit. **You might get local tips from a local or find out another traveler's route overlaps with yours.**

As mentioned, the official **DiscoverEU Facebook Group** is a great place to connect. If you haven't, join it and maybe post an introduction: "Hi I'm traveling in August, going from Vienna towards the Balkans, anyone on similar route?" The European Commission also organizes **DiscoverEU meet-ups** in certain cities.

Generally, if someone invites you to join an activity – like a group from your hostel is going to watch the sunset from a viewpoint – **be open and say yes (with caution)**! That's where spontaneous fun happens.

Meeting locals can give you deeper insight. How to meet locals? Consider **free walking tours**. Use platforms like **Couchsurfing Hangouts** (even if you're not surfing, the app often has a feature to meet for coffee/drinks). **A smile and polite approach break barriers.**



Respect differences, as you will meet folks from all corners of Europe (and beyond). This is a chance to learn. What's normal for you might be unusual to them and vice versa. Respect cultural differences and local customs.

Every person you meet has a story, **so learn from others**. Ask about their country, their travels. You'll pick up travel tips. You'll also learn about lifestyles around Europe. You might come away with new perspectives you never considered.

In summary: **be friendly, be approachable, and take initiative** to meet others. Your trip will be 10x richer with friends and connections made along the way. As one tip from previous travelers: "Don't be afraid to approach people and start a conversation. Take every opportunity to socialize and build new friendships."

Traveling in a Group: Teamwork and Challenges

If you are traveling as part of a group, there are unique joys and a few challenges to group travel. It's often said that you really get to know someone when you travel with them. Here's how to keep your group dynamics positive:

One way to avoid friction is to share tasks. Someone could be in charge of navigation today, another handles accommodation check-ins, another keeps track of tickets. Or one can research restaurants while another figures out train timetables. This way no single person is carrying the whole mental load, which can cause stress. If one person is naturally the planner, make sure they also get a break and others step up.

Most group conflicts arise from **lack of communication**. Be open about your needs and feelings. If you're exhausted and need a rest day while others want to go sightseeing, tell them – maybe you can split for a half-day so you can chill while they go to the museum, and meet later.

Stay flexible and be ready to compromise. In a group, you won't get your way 100% of the time – and that's okay. Perhaps you really want to try a famous pizza place but your friend wants street food; maybe you do pizza for lunch and street food for dinner, or split up for meals. Little compromises go a long way. One of the advantages of group travel is having company and support, and one of the disadvantages is needing to coordinate and sometimes giving up personal preferences.

We touched on budgeting together, but reiterating – settle how you handle money as a group early. It can be a big stress if one person feels another is overspending or freeloading. If you use an app like Tricount or Splitwise to track expenses and everyone settles up, it keeps trust.

Respect personal space and alone time. Even best friends can get tired of each other after 24/7 togetherness. It's normal! Schedule or allow for some alone time. It can refresh everyone. Also, respect differences in routines.

Handle disagreements maturely! Inevitably, something might cause an argument – stress, fatigue, a missed train that people blame each other for, etc. Try to stay calm and address the issue, not attack the person. Use “I” statements (“I feel worried when we deviate from the plan without discussion”) rather than “You” accusations (“You always change plans last minute!”).

Traveling in a group, you learn **teamwork, empathy, and leadership skills**. You might discover new sides of your friends. And you'll likely come out with a stronger bond – sharing intense experiences does

Communication and Personal Growth

Travel is an intense course in **interpersonal communication**. You'll be communicating across language barriers, within your group, and with all sorts of people. Here are some pointers and reflections on that:

Speak clearly and simply! When English is the lingua franca among international travelers (as is common), note that many are not native speakers (and neither might you be). Avoid using too much slang or speaking too fast until you know the other person's comfortable. Simple, clear English works best for mutual understanding.

Non-verbal communication involves paying attention to body language – both yours and others'. A friendly posture and smile go a long way in showing you're approachable. Conversely, if someone's body language shows discomfort, adjust – maybe you're standing too close, or you accidentally touched a sensitive topic.

Apply the "limited trust rule" with strangers, meaning you should stay cautious with trust while also being open. Sadly, a few people take advantage of naive tourists. That overly friendly person who insists on guiding you somewhere could be genuine or could have bad intentions. Don't tell strangers your whole itinerary or where you're staying if it feels off.



We mentioned it before, **planning together avoids difficulties later**. This also includes emergency plans – discuss “what do we do if someone gets lost?” or “if one of us is ill, how do we adjust?” Having those chats shows good communication and preparedness.

Travel pushes you **out of your comfort zone** socially. Even if you're introverted, try to engage with people – you don't have to become an extrovert, but even one meaningful conversation can enrich your day. One traveler said, *"Even if you're introverted, human contact is essential. Life becomes much more interesting that way!"*.

Since travel is unpredictable, **it is important to stay flexible and positive**. Trains get delayed, weather changes, you might lose something. The more you can adapt and keep positivity, the better. Often a "disaster" turns into an adventure if you frame it right. **Be flexible and spontaneous, but also stay organized enough to not court avoidable trouble**. That balance is key.

Keep connected back home. It's good to update family/friends so they know you're okay and share highlights. But try not to spend your whole trip glued to chatting with home – be present where you are.

Before we wrap up, here's a nice thought: Many DiscoverEU travelers become ambassadors or advocates for the program afterwards – giving talks at schools, making videos, etc., to inspire others. Maybe you will too. And you'll likely have a network of new friends across Europe to engage with. How cool is that?

Now, having delved into how to travel and connect, let's gather some golden pieces of advice from those who've done it before – their "Golden Rules" if you will – as a neat summary.

I am having so much fun!



Top Tips from DiscoverEU Travelers

(The “Golden Rules”)

Over the years, thousands of DiscoverEU adventurers have shared their wisdom – often learned the hard way. We’ve compiled some of the most common and valuable pieces of advice into a list of “Golden rules.” These aren’t strict rules, but rather guiding principles to help you travel smart and savor every moment. Let’s go through them, highlighting each key idea:

1. Be flexible and spontaneous. Some of the best experiences happen when you wander off the planned path. Give yourself permission to get a little lost in a new city – you might discover a charming bookstore or a beautiful view not in any guidebook. Travel is an adventure; treat your plan as a guideline, not a binding contract. This flexibility also reduces stress – if you miss something, you can adapt. In essence: have a plan, but welcome the unexpected.

2. Stay organized (especially with essentials). This might sound like the opposite of #1, but it’s all about balance. While you should be spontaneous, you also need to keep your stuff and plans in reasonable order. Book important things in advance when needed (like your first night’s accommodation, or a train that requires reservation). Keep digital and/or physical copies of important documents. Download maps and tickets offline. Have a backup plan for when things go wrong.

3. Be open but cautious. We've emphasized connecting with people and being outgoing – yes, absolutely be friendly, strike conversations, say yes to invitations. But also stay aware of your surroundings. Especially when meeting new people or exploring at night, keep that radar on. Check accommodation reviews for safety; if an area is notorious for pickpockets, be extra guarded. Basically, **trust people, but trust your instincts too.**

4. Pack light and smart. We've gone over packing in detail, but it's worth repeating as a golden rule because so many travelers say **"I wish I'd brought less."** You really don't need that third pair of jeans or full-size shampoo. Lugging a huge suitcase will only slow you down and tire you out. And leave space for souvenirs.

5. Treat DiscoverEU as the unique opportunity it is. Many past travelers stress that this isn't just any trip – it's a once-in-a-lifetime chance at this age. **Make the most of it.** That might mean pushing yourself a bit out of comfort zones, or choosing cultural experiences over just partying.

6. Be prepared for weather and quirks of travel. A few oddly specific but life-saving tips: *Carry a rain poncho instead of an umbrella* – it's lighter and won't invert in wind. *Trains can blast A/C in summer*, so have a light sweater or even a compact blanket for those chilly rides. *Consider bringing probiotics or activated charcoal pills to help your digestion adjust.* *Use an eSIM or local SIM if traveling outside EU to avoid huge data roaming fees.* *Always activate your train ticket (pass) before boarding and screenshot it, since network can drop.* *Double-check you're boarding the right train and from the right platform.* These little logistic tips can save major headaches.

7. Double-check and back up important things. Building on the last points: always do a quick check – passport, phone, wallet before leaving any place (hostel, train, cafe). So many lost items can be avoided by a simple routine of patting pockets or scanning the room.

To sum up the golden rules: **stay flexible, stay smart, stay open, stay light, and stay aware.** These tips come from those who have been in your shoes (probably literally, if you got second-hand hiking boots!). They learned and want you to benefit from their hindsight. Keep these in mind, and you'll avoid many common pitfalls and amplify the positives.

Remember, every journey is unique. You'll develop your own personal "Golden rules" too – maybe you'll discover a unique hack that works for you. That's the beauty of travel.

Now, up to this point, we've covered everything directly related to the youth traveler's experience. But we haven't forgotten about two important audiences:

parents/guardians and **youth workers** who are supporting these young travelers. The next sections will address their perspectives – giving parents peace of mind and equipping youth workers with tools to help make DiscoverEU journeys safe and educational.

1		Be flexible and spontaneous!
2		Stay organized!
3		Be open but cautious!
4		Pack light and smart!
5		Treat DiscoverEU as the unique opportunity it is!
6		Be prepared for weather and quirks of travel!
7		Double-check and back up important things!

For Parents and Guardians: Supporting Your Young Explorer

If you're a parent or guardian reading this, first of all – kudos for encouraging your teen's adventurous spirit. We understand letting your 17- or 18-year-old traverse Europe can be equal parts exciting and nerve-wracking for you. This section is dedicated to addressing your concerns and offering tips on how you can support your young traveler before and during their DiscoverEU journey, ensuring it's as safe, educational, and rewarding as possible (for them and for your peace of mind!).

Your top priority is undoubtedly safety! **Always remember "Safety First."** The good news is DiscoverEU is a structured initiative with support mechanisms, and Europe is generally safe for young travelers. But there are concrete steps to boost safety: - **Work with your teen to prepare a short emergency plan** as part of your pre-departure prep. This includes making sure they save important numbers like the universal European emergency number **112** on their phone (and yours too). Also have them note down contacts for your country's embassies in the nations they'll visit. Discuss scenarios: "What would you do if you lost your phone or passport? If you miss a train and get stranded at night?" It might also be wise to designate a trusted relative or family friend as a secondary contact person, in case you are unreachable at some point. - Ensure they have a valid **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)**. Double-check they know what it covers and how to use it (like which hospitals/clinics accept it). Purchase **travel insurance** that covers medical treatment, trip interruptions, and theft of belongings with both of you.

If your teen has any medical condition or allergy, equip them with necessary meds and a note explaining it. For example, if they have severe allergies, an epinephrine auto-injector and a card listing the allergen in local languages is a must. - **Agree on a regular check-in schedule** that works for both of you for effective communication and tracking. Discuss boundaries with this; it should be mutual trust, not surveillance. - If your teen is traveling in a **DiscoverEU Inclusion Action project**, know that a trained group leader/youth worker will accompany them. Get contact info for that leader and possibly the organizing NGO. Attend any pre-trip parent meetings if offered. If your teen is traveling independently or with friends, ensure you have the contact info of at least one of their travel companions and/or their parents. - **Know the itinerary** by asking for a copy of their travel itinerary.

As a parent, one of the best things you can do is ensure your teen has the **skills and knowledge to handle situations** on their own.

Some preparatory steps: - Go over reading a rail timetable, using a metro map, or figuring out foreign currency exchange together before they go. Show them how to use an ATM abroad with their bank card (and discuss fees). Make sure they know how to contact their bank to freeze a card if it's lost. - **Have a frank talk about common sense** stuff as part of the safety and etiquette briefing – avoiding unsafe areas at night, not flashing valuables, the buddy system, cultural respect.



Go over the important **“look after yourself”** points one more time: keep belongings secure, don’t get in cars with strangers, moderate alcohol intake, etc. (We know most teens will roll their eyes – “Yes Mom, I knooooow” – but say it anyway. - **For digital prep**, ensure their phone is in good working condition. - Discuss and set **expectations on money**. If you as parent are funding part or all of the trip, make sure they understand the budget. Perhaps set up a system – e.g., give them a preloaded travel money card with X amount per week rather than all at once, if you’re worried about overspending. Encourage them to track expenses.

Encourage responsibility, as this trip is a huge growth opportunity for your teen. It’s a step towards adulthood. Show them you trust them to handle it, with guidance. Talk about decision-making.

Your role during the trip is a delicate balance where you want to be supportive without hovering. Some advice! **Avoid over-communicating**. As long as you have regular check-ins and all is well, resist the urge to text every few hours. Trust the preparation you’ve both done. Know that letting go is part of the process. This trip can be a big step in your child’s journey to adulthood.

Finally, relish the positive. Your child is about to see amazing places, make friends across Europe, and return with widened horizons. That is a tremendous gift and will likely make them even more appreciative of your support.



Youth Worker Toolkit: Empowering Young Travelers

This section is intended for **youth workers, educators, or group leaders** who are facilitating DiscoverEU journeys, especially under the Inclusion Action or similar group initiatives. If you're a youth professional preparing a cohort of young people with fewer opportunities for a DiscoverEU trip, you play a pivotal role in making their experience safe, inclusive, and enriching. Below are strategies and tools to help you plan pre-departure training, manage risks, support reflection, and ensure your young travelers get the most out of the journey.

1. Preparation is key, especially for youth with fewer opportunities who might have little travel experience. - **Organize a series of prep sessions**. Cover practical topics as itinerary planning (maybe have them help create the route), budgeting exercise (simulate how to allocate a daily budget), packing demos. Use interactive methods – e.g., a “What to do if...?” quiz game on various travel scenarios. Encourage them to come up with solutions as a group (peer learning is powerful). - **Simulate situations** like checking in at a hostel, asking for directions in a foreign language, dealing with a delayed train, or calling emergency services. Role-playing boosts confidence. You can play the skeptical ticket inspector or the non-English-speaking stranger, for instance, and have the youth practice handling it. - **Digital tools training**. Some youth, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, might not be fully savvy with travel apps. Do a session on using the DiscoverEU app, Google Maps offline, translator apps, etc., ideally hands-on. - Instead of lecturing, engage them in a **conversation about safety**. Use real stories (anonymized) from past trips as case studies. - **Inclusion and empathy!** If your group has mixed abilities or backgrounds, do

do team-building so they gel and understand each other's needs. - Because it's an Erasmus+ mobility, consider using the **Youthpass** framework. In a pre-trip session, ask participants to set personal learning goals.

2. Risk Management and Contingency Planning. As the group leader, a lot rests on you to foresee and mitigate risks. - **For a proper risk assessment**, create a simple risk assessment document. List potential risks (like medical issues, losing documents, group conflicts, theft) and note preventive measures and responses for each. Share relevant parts with the group (no need to scare them with every detail, but ensure they know key plans. - Decide how you'll **handle emergencies**. Know the addresses of the nearest embassies for your nationality in countries visited. If traveling between EU countries, identify local emergency numbers (though 112 covers all EU). - **For effective communication during travel**, have a group phone or local SIM, if possible, to ensure you (leader) can call locally. Use a WhatsApp group or similar with participants for quick updates. Enforce a buddy system – each youth has another they check on, so nobody gets forgotten. - **Make sure you have necessary parental consents regarding consent** and conduct (for minors if any are under 18 during trip, or for usage of photos, etc.). Also, establish a **group agreement** on behavior early (respect others, no wandering off without notice, guidelines on alcohol if they're 18, etc.). Involve youth in drafting it so it doesn't feel imposed. - **For travel documents safety**, perhaps collect and hold onto certain documents if appropriate. – weigh autonomy vs. safety here depending on group maturity. At least ensure each has digital backups of documents as well.



buddy system



3. During the Trip – Facilitation and Support. - **Empower youth-led** days by considering giving each participant a chance to lead a day's itinerary or an activity. You quietly supervise to ensure no major issues, but let them take charge. It builds confidence and skills. - Incorporate **brief reflection activities** throughout. On train rides, maybe do a highs & lows debrief every few days. Encourage journaling – perhaps provide pocket notebooks to each at the start. - **As you travel, facilitate interaction** with local culture to ensure cultural learning. Perhaps arrange a meeting with a local youth organization or a guided tour focusing on something relevant. Even informal, like encouraging them to talk to a hostel staff about their city recommendations, can spark cultural exchange. - **Monitor** how each participant is doing, particularly those with known needs (health, anxiety, etc.). Daily check: is anyone unusually quiet or agitated? Also ensure rest! Youths might want to stay up late every night; as leader, gauge when the group is exhausted and suggest a calmer evening if needed. - **Celebrate achievements** by pointing out and praising when they handle something well, especially for those with fewer opportunities who may doubt themselves, positive reinforcement is huge. - **Keep guardians** informed, particularly for minors or worried parents, by considering sending periodic updates.

4. Post-Trip Follow-Up and Maximizing Impact. - Once back home, hold a **debrief meeting**. Let each participant share highlights, challenges, and what they learned about themselves or others. - Help them fill out Youthpass certificates reflecting their competencies gained. This formal recognition can be valuable for their future. - **Encourage** your travelers to become **ambassadors** of the experience to help spread the word. They could share their stories with peers at school or youth centers – maybe you arrange a small event or social media takeover where they talk about DiscoverEU. - **Keep the inclusion going**, as for those from fewer opportunities backgrounds, the journey doesn't end at return.

As a youth worker, your role is part logistics manager, part mentor, part cheerleader, and part safety officer. It's a lot – but seeing these young people flourish on the journey is incredibly rewarding. Many youth credit supportive group leaders for making their experience life-changing. Your patience, enthusiasm, and guidance will help them turn a trip into a true learning journey.

In sum, provide structure and support, but also give youth the reins enough that they feel this is their adventure. With your toolkit of workshops, safety nets, reflection, and encouragement, you'll help transform a group of nervous first-time travelers into confident, connected young Europeans.

Conclusion: Embrace the Journey – Europe Awaits!

Traveling through DiscoverEU is so much more than ticking countries off a list. It's a journey of growth, learning, and self-discovery that will leave you with stories to tell for a lifetime. You've planned your route, packed your bag, learned the do's and don'ts, and prepared for challenges. You're ready to step out of your comfort zone and into a grand adventure. As you set out, remember to keep a sense of **wonder** and an open mind. Say "yes" to new experiences. Taste the strange foods, attempt the local phrases (everyone appreciates a "danke" or "grazie"), dance to that street musician, watch the sunrise from a train window, and take it all in.



To the **young traveler**: we hope this guide has given you the knowledge and confidence to travel wisely and boldly. The road (or rail) ahead is yours to explore. Make it your own. Take lots of photos, but also remember to put the camera down and live the moment. Stay curious, stay courteous, and have fun every day. This is your journey – shape it in a way that’s meaningful to you.

To the **parents and guardians**: thank you for supporting your young person in this adventure. Your guidance and trust provide the safety net that allows them to fly. They will return with broader horizons and deeper maturity – you’ll see it. Celebrate their stories and growth when they’re back. Your role in preparing them and giving them this freedom is truly an investment in their future.

To the **youth workers and group leaders**: your dedication makes opportunities like DiscoverEU accessible to those who might not venture out otherwise. By fostering inclusive, well-prepared youth travel, you’re nurturing global citizens and confident individuals. The ripple effects of your work will be felt in these young people’s lives for years to come – in their career choices, their social attitudes, their sense of empowerment. Thank you for being the enablers of these life-changing experiences.

And to anyone else reading – perhaps considering DiscoverEU – know that Europe’s doors are open. There are maps to be marked, trains to catch, friends to meet, and lessons to learn. The slogan might be *“Europe is at your feet. Take the first step.”* – and it couldn’t be more true. Each step (or train ride) will lead you to something new and unexpectedly wonderful.

As you embark on your DiscoverEU journey, keep this guidebook handy for tips – but also trust yourself. You’ve got the resources, and now you have the knowledge. The rest is up to you and the adventures you choose.

So pack your enthusiasm, double-check your essentials, hug your family goodbye, and set off on the rails. **Travel. Learn. Discover.** Europe is waiting to inspire you – and you’ll come back ready to inspire others.

Bon voyage and buona fortuna, viel Glück and buen camino – however we say it, have a fantastic journey!

Safe travels, and don’t forget to send a postcard!

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