

5 fantastic European vacations to take on a budget

(Courtesy of Lori Zaino, The Points Guy)

Looking to save money on your next epic vacation around [Europe](#)? Whether your idea of a dream trip is skiing the slopes, exploring a new city or basking in the sunshine on the beach, here are five diverse holidays to have in Europe without breaking the bank.

City break: Istanbul

Istanbul is ideal for an affordable city break.

Although the European continent features various budget city breaks, one of the best is Istanbul. The city is, on average, [approximately 40% cheaper than Barcelona](#), which means things like hotels and meals are very affordable for travelers.

With key attractions like the Hagia Sophia, the iconic Blue Mosque (free entrance!) and the Topkapi Palace, Istanbul is perfect for history fans. But tourists just looking for a city adventure will enjoy roaming Istanbul's streets, indulging in Turkish foodie delights, shopping at the Grand Bazaar and boating along the Bosphorus.

Budget shoppers will love Istanbul's Grand Bazaar.

Besides relatively low cash rates for hotels (some as low as \$60 per night according to Hotels.com), it's possible to find budget points deals too. There are a number of [Marriott Bonvoy](#) properties in the city that cost between 8,000 and 20,000 Bonvoy points per night.

Ski trip: Livigno, Italy

For Swiss-style powder at Italian prices, consider Livigno for your next [ski](#) holiday. The area, just across the Swiss border from St. Moritz, offers Swiss-style slopes at a fraction of the cost. Day ski passes cost about \$32, whereas day passes at nearby St. Moritz can cost nearly double that price, or even more on peak dates.

A quick search on [Airbnb](#) shows that cozy apartments with mountain views start at just \$85 per night. In contrast, fancy alpine resorts that would cost \$500-\$900 per night in ski destinations like Switzerland or Austria offer rates starting at \$244 per night.

Livigno, Italy, is an alternative to pricier ski destinations in Switzerland and Austria.

Livigno has another perk: It's tax-free for skiers that also love perusing the stores. This means you can shop to your heart's content without having to pay any value-added tax.

Beach vacation: Fuerteventura, Spain

Fuerteventura's beaches are windswept and beautiful.

One of Europe's most affordable beach destinations, [Fuerteventura](#) in the Canary Islands has wild, pristine stretches of sand. The best part? Besides being ideal for budget travelers thanks to low-cost accommodation and meal options, the island sees sunshine and warm temperatures all year long,

meaning you can have an epic winter sun holiday or an iconic summer break — really, a beach getaway at any time of year.

All types of surfing are popular in the breezy Fuerteventura.

Once there, it's a breeze to find cheap accommodation, from affordable all-inclusive hotels to low-cost beach rentals. Surfboard rentals cost as low as \$11 per day, and the island is also exempt from value-added tax.

Train adventure: Prague to Budapest

Prague's Old Town is especially beautiful beneath a layer of snow.

For a scenic and affordable adventure, take the train between two of Europe's most beautiful and cheapest cities: Prague and Budapest, Hungary. The seven-hour ride costs as little as \$21 each way on RegioJet.

The trip is as gorgeous as it is cost-effective. You'll glide past picturesque landscapes like rolling hills and castles, even catching sight of the Danube River during the ride.

Budapest is one of Europe's most affordable capitals.

Although Budapest is 12% cheaper than Prague, both cities reign when it comes to affordable dining, lodging and activities. For example, entrance to the Buda Castle is about \$4, and it's simple to find a pint of beer in either city for less than a couple of dollars.

Road trip: Croatia

Rovinj along the Istrian Peninsula.

Whether you love iconic natural landscapes like far-flung beaches and glistening cascades or prefer discovering red-roofed villages and historical sites, a road trip adventure through Croatia has it all.

It costs less than \$10 per day in the low season to rent a car at Croatia's Zagreb Airport from popular rental agencies like Avis or Sixt, according to Kayak. From there, you have options.

You can head east to the Istrian Peninsula to discover [beautiful fishing villages](#) and quiet beaches, visiting destinations like Porec, Rovinj and Pula.

Road trips through Croatia are both affordable and incredibly picturesque.

Another alternative is to head south but stay inland, stopping at the famous Plitvice Lakes National Park as well as Rastoke, which is known as the "mini" Plitvice Lakes. Or, head south along the coast to Krka National Park and Split. If you're traveling in the off-season, continue on toward Dubrovnik, which is much more affordable (and less touristy) outside the busy summer months.

A Europe getaway doesn't have to break the bank

Whether you love a road trip or prefer to ski, it is possible to travel despite rising costs. Besides selecting the right destinations, now is the perfect time to dig into that stash of points to save on accommodations or airfare. Combining strategies, like picking affordable spots and using your points, means you may be able to have a luxury vacation without overspending.