

How planeless can be painless...

Perhaps you think that being afraid to fly is a big handicap. Perhaps you think that if you can't travel by plane, you can't get much further than Calais. But think again... have you ever thought of your fear of flying as the perfect excuse to rediscover the art of travel that the airline-travelling masses have almost forgotten..?

50 years ago, everyone went to Europe by train and ship. Now, it's as easy as ever to go to Europe by train now that Eurostar links London and Paris or Brussels direct in just a few hours, with easy connections to destinations much further afield..

For example, take a lunchtime Eurostar to Paris, and catch one of the great overnight expresses with sleeping-cars, couchettes and restaurant car from Paris direct to Rome, Madrid, Barcelona, or Venice, arriving next morning in time for breakfast. Get off the Paris sleeper in Bologna and catch a connecting train to Bari in southern Italy, and you're just in time to hop on board the evening ferry to Cefalonia, Corfu or the Greek mainland. A stroll on deck, a night in your en suite cabin, and what's this? There you are, disembarking in Greece less than 48 hours from the concourse at Waterloo station. Would you prefer Morocco or Tunisia to Greece? No problem... Take Eurostar London to Lille, the night sleeper Lille to Marseille, and comfortable ships sail every day or two across the Mediterranean to Tunis. The journey from London to Tunisia takes less than 48 hours, and you'll remember (for the right reasons..!) the sea voyage across the Mediterranean into the blue-green waters of the Bay of Tunis, far longer than you'd remember the three hours pinned to a plane seat.

For Morocco, take the sleeper from Paris to Madrid, spend the day in the Spanish capital then take a second overnight train from Madrid to Algeciras. From Algeciras, Tangier is just a 2 hour 30 minute ferry ride across the Straits of Gibraltar, for the trains south to Casablanca and Marrakech. Corsica, Ibiza, the Algarve, Stockholm and St Petersburg can all be reached just as easily by train and ship.

It's true that this style of travel will cost you more than the cheapest budget airline fares - let's be clear about that from the start. But for most people it's quite affordable - for example, London to Paris by Eurostar starts at £59 return, then Paris to Rome starts at £38 one way or £76 return including berth in a 6-berth couchette compartment, or for more comfort £44 one way or £88 return in a 4-berth 'comfort' couchette including complimentary glass of sparkling wine to welcome you aboard and tea/coffee and croissant in the morning. A sea voyage across the Med from Marseille to Tunis starts at about £190 return.

So what's the catch? if there is a catch, it's that this style of travel requires a little more effort to find out about and book. You can't just walk into your local travel agent and ask for a ticket to Marrakech by train. Only certain specialist agencies can sell train tickets to Europe, and some agencies are better for some journeys than others. If your journey involves a ship across the Mediterranean, you'll probably need to book that separately, too.

But help is at hand if you're a newcomer to travel by train and ship. Precisely because it's so easy and enjoyable to travel this way, but so difficult to find out about and book, I have written a website called 'The Man in Seat Sixty-One...', www.seat61.com. This will help you plan and book overland journeys to Europe and beyond, explaining the best way to get from the UK to each country by train or ship, what the journey will be like, the approximate cost, and the best way to book.

So you're really not as limited as you think you are, the only limit is your imagination. Relax and enjoy your problem, and rediscover the lost art of travel..

www.seat61.com - The Man in Seat Sixty-One...

READ ABOUT TWO INTERESTING TRAVELS BY TRAIN THAT YOU CAN DO - "[First Class to Tuscany](#)" and "[Return ticket to the Slopes](#)"

