

Europe Travel 201

By Ryan Huber

Nantes summer 2010

(The goal here is to give you some advice as to how you might want to go about planning some of your travel once in Europe. This comes from my own personal experience – I planned, by myself, most of the weekend trips I went on – and experiences I’ve heard from others. This contains everything I didn’t know when I got there and everything I learned – trial-by-fire style. Skip what you think you already know or what you find irrelevant.)

Flights in Europe

Flying around Europe is generally pretty easy. Once you’re inside the EU, you don’t need to go through customs to fly to another EU country (the U.K. not included) – it’s like going from state to state.

- **EasyJet** – EasyJet was the best of the low-cost airlines that I dealt with. They have limits on carry-on baggage (size) and checked luggage (weight). Strictness depends on the gate agent but if you have to check a bag, pay for it online when you buy your ticket! Seating is first-come-first-served. They are strict to where you only get 1 carry-on item. Not one purse and one backpack – 1 item, total.
 - www.easyjet.com
- **Ryanair** – Ryanair’s website and everything I came across online made them seem really strict about everything. They have limits on carry-on baggage (size) and checked luggage (size and weight). They can refuse you boarding without a refund if your backpack is too heavy or too big or if you’re bold enough to have a purse AND a backpack. So watch it. Seating is again unassigned and they too are strict when it comes to the number of carry-on items. One. Total. Also, they get really excited when they land safely. And their website is horrible and can be hard to use.
 - www.ryanair.com
- **Vueling** – Vueling is Spain’s low-cost airline. Of the three, it was the most difficult to deal with. Our plane was delayed (4 hours) and there was no one there to tell us – we were waiting at the gate, and then the info disappeared from the screen. Also, if you don’t book well in advance the prices became about the same as a normal airline.
 - www.vueling.com

Eurail Pass

When the trip started, there were people saying that they wasted their money on the Eurail pass because they didn't need it or weren't going to use it. They were wrong. It pays for itself pretty quick – you really don't want to have to continue to purchase train tickets everywhere you go. They add up.

There are different passes available. The Global Pass (which some people bought) lets you go to any country in Europe except the U.K. (and Montenegro). You **don't** need this pass. Everyone that bought it regretted the extra money they spent. There are regional passes and single country passes, but the most popular are the Select Passes where you choose 3, 4, or 5 countries (that border each other) and you can use them for 10 or 15 days within a 2 month period. I bought the 5 country pass with 15 days. So I could ride trains on 15 different days during the time I was there. I only ended up using 4 countries on the pass but I was able to squeeze 16 days out of it. You can figure that part out; I'm not going to tell you anything other than: *don't get caught* – especially in Italy.

To buy your pass, go to www.eurail.com. Be sure to check the exchange rates at the time of purchase. You have the option to pay for it in U.S. or Australian dollars or in the Euro.

When I bought mine, the Euro was down and I saved almost \$90 by paying in Euros. Buy it early, it cannot be purchased once you are in Europe and it cannot be mailed to a European address.

If you are 25 or under you are eligible for a youth pass! They are cheaper. Rejoice.

Train Reservations

Eurail pass-holders need to buy reservations on high-speed trains in order to ride them. The best way to go about this is to go to the train station in Nantes. But using a website, while it might cost a few extra dollars, will be quicker and require no tackling of a language barrier.

Go to:

http://www.raileurope.com/us/rail/point_to_point/passholderrequest.htm

or

http://travelocity.raileurope.com/us/rail/point_to_point/passholderrequest.htm (if you have trust issues and need to see a well-known web-address like Travelocity in the address

bar). They are the same thing. Eurail.com is not helpful for making reservations, only buying the pass.

I booked my first weekend before I left (which I recommend) and I was the first person in my group to go about making train reservations, so this is the step-by-step guide I came up with while making reservations the first time around.

You do not need to have your pass in your hands to make a reservation. You needn't even have bought one. It doesn't ask for a pass number or anything. You will however need the pass once you go to use the reservation in Europe.

Once you've gone to one of those links, the first thing you need to do is select the type of Rail Pass you have. This step is not specific at all, so you can pretty much select anything that includes the country in which you will be travelling. Make sure you select the **"SECOND CLASS"** Class of Service box.

In the "From" box select "Nantes" if you are originating from Nantes – do not put "Paris" if you have to go through Paris. Booking the Nantes-Paris trip will cost you an extra booking fee. By entering your origin and final destination, more options become available – such as regional trains that don't show up in the Eurail timetable.

In the "To" box, enter your final destination. Then pick the day you want to leave and the number of reservations you wish to make – there is a limit of 9. As a personal side note, I would HIGHLY recommend not planning the travel for more than 4 people, yourself included. Four person hotel rooms are generally as big as they come and trying to coordinate more people than that gets old really quick. If more people want to go to the same place, feel free to share your travel information, but under no circumstances should you feel obligated to book it for them (see the "Hotels, Hostels & Travel Info Sites" section for reasons why).

After you click "Check Fares" you should get a list of results. Some of them will not have a price but will say "Reservation Required." This is not a good sign – it is likely that all of the reservations for that train have been sold. There is a finite quantity of them and once they're gone they're gone. **Just because you have a Eurail pass, doesn't mean you get a seat on every train.** Remember that – and don't wait until the last minute. The Paris-

Nantes trains sell out quickly. Also, you cannot book reservations on raileurope.com if it is within a few days of travel – you’ll have to go to the train station.

Within France, most reservations on the website cost \$11.00 USD. At the train station it is only € 3. If you are travelling outside of France on a train, the reservations can jump much higher – this is when you might think the Eurail Pass is not worth it, but consider that if the reservation is \$80, what does the actual ticket cost? A lot.

Overnight trains with Couchette cars will cost about \$32 for a reservation. The two times I tried to book night trains in Europe I was told that “they are not running this weekend.” So I don’t have much to share about them, but they sounded good.

Some of the trains will say “Reservation Recommended” in orange. In this case I would go to the train station and find out if I should buy one or not. If the train itself is almost sold out, then buy one. Generally the trains that “Recommend” a reservation aren’t going to fill up. There could also be green text that says “Reservation Not Required” or something to that effect. In this case, you don’t need anything other than your pass in order to ride this train. Make sure your pass is filled out and get on. No ticket necessary.

Once you find the reservation you want, select it and add it to your cart and follow the on-screen instructions that continue you through check-out. At some point it will ask you if you want the \$9 insurance fee on your \$11 reservation. Hit “NO.” When you have the chance to select how you want your ticket – you want to print it at the station. Be sure to print the email you get with booking numbers and information. This is helpful when you try to print your ticket.

Don’t forget to book your return trip! And don’t be afraid to look around. Going through different cities can be quicker and/or cheaper – and if you have a longish layover you might be able to head into an unexplored town for an hour or so.

Booking reservations at the Nantes train station (or any train station) is cheaper. It is not always easier. Remember that you’re dealing with the French, who are often moody and not always helpful. If you get the wrong person it can be awful. If you get the right person, it is really easy. My advice is to go into the North Entrance of the Nantes train station (the one by the tram stop) and when you walk in, the ticket queue is to the right. Instead of getting in

line, continue all the way down to the “International” area where there are two desks (they close earlier than the normal line, I think). The people there often speak decent English and can help you (and a small group) book at once. If, for some reason, they won’t help you or are closed, get in the main line and cross your fingers that you don’t get the lady named “Ketty.” Also, if you need to book a train from Venice to Rome (or any city-to-city outside of France) and you’re trying to do it in Nantes, they might not help you – because SNCF (the French train company) doesn’t make any money off of it. The SNCF has a website (<http://www.sncf.com/>) – which is good for regional trains – but I never used it because they didn’t add an English option until I got back to the United States.

Train Timetables

<http://www.eurail.com/downloads/eurail/eurail-timetable-2010-trains-europe.pdf>

That is the link for the 2010 Eurail Timetable. You also get a booklet-copy of it with your Eurail pass. Remember that the cities appear in their tradition local spelling (Cologne, Germany appears as Köln, etc.). Also, if you have to buy something on a French website, the United States is going to show up as Etats-Unis (this was embarrassing not to know when I needed to know it).

Here is the link for how to read the timetable. It is self-explanatory:

<http://www.eurail.com/downloads/eurail/eurail-timetable-2010-explanation-english.pdf>

The official Eurail timetable is nice, but it doesn’t list every train. Do not rely on it exclusively – it bit me. Go to raileurope.com and go through every step until you get to the “Purchase” point. Make sure the train exists before you book your hotels or flights. Also, regional trains aren’t listed in the timetable and they are extremely helpful for smaller trips, like to Normandy. These trains ARE listed on the website.

How to use your Eurail Pass once you’re in Europe

Unless you’re flying to Nantes (and I’m not sure why you’d do that), chances are the first train you’re going to take is from Paris to Nantes. Trains to Nantes leave from 2 of the many Parisian train stations. Paris Montparnasse is located in central Paris and has pretty many TGVs running throughout the day to Nantes. There is also the CDG 2-TGV station in the basement of Charles de Gaulle airport. If you’re flying into Paris (CDG) and not spending

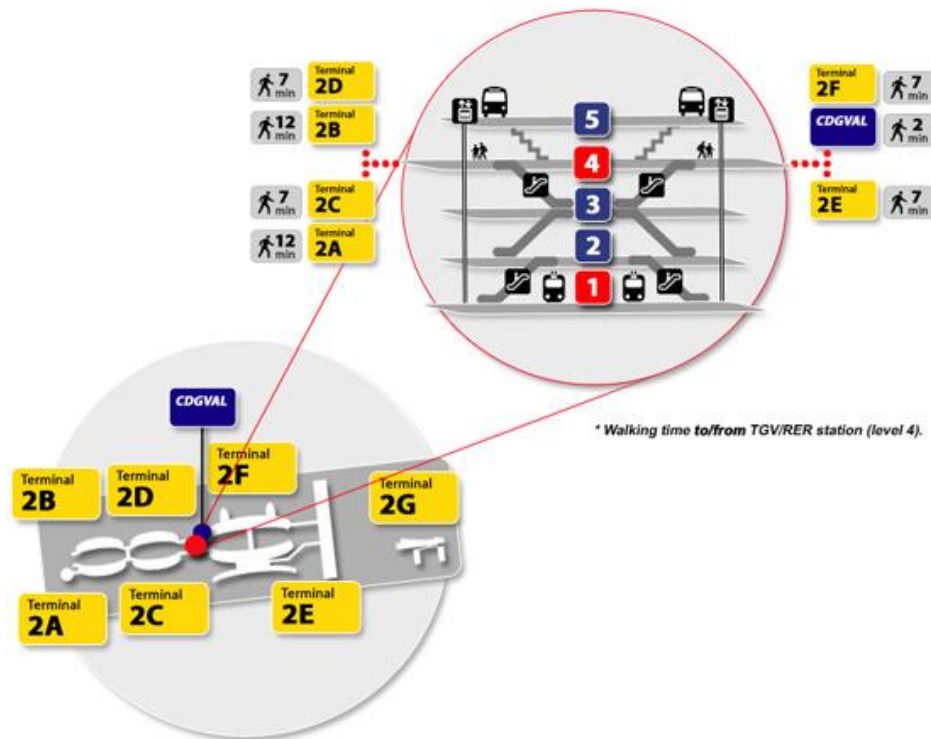
the night (or are spending the night near the airport), this is your best option. But there are only a few trains per day to Nantes from the airport, so reserve your seat early!

First, if you are using Gare Montparnasse, keep in mind that Montparnasse is a big train station and can be quite intimidating if it is the first train station you are exposed to. Taking the Metro (subway) from CDG to Montparnasse takes about 1 hour. Do not book your schedule too tight or you WILL miss your train! Three hours should be enough lead time to cross town – providing that your flight is on time and there aren't any other "snafus." I'd rather sit in a train station for an hour and be a little late to Nantes than to miss my train and be royally screwed.

The CDG 2-TGV station took me about forever to walk to from the gate where my plane landed. There are signs that look something like this:



Follow those signs! There is only one train station in CDG. It is located between Terminal 2C/E and Terminal 2D/F. You will have to go down multiple escalators to get to the actual station.



The ticket offices are on level 2 in that diagram. Once you get down to that level (and you'll know it – it's busy) there is a glass room with sliding glass doors on one side (probably the

on the right once you get to the bottom of the escalator). It should say something to the effect of “Billets” or “Tickets” (and look like this):



Once in that room, get in line. You’ll probably already need your name and any info you can fill out already on your Eurail Pass. Keep everything that comes with your Eurail pass attached to it. Don’t tear anything off. Leave it in one piece.

These 2 dates need to be filled in for your pass to be valid

Eurail CIV No. 00001234567890 EL

EURAIL SELECT PASS 3 COUNTRIES FLEXI

Valid in **France - Portugal - Spain** Issuing stamp: G EURAIL G
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E 07 Jan 2010 E
Class: 1
MUST BE ACTIVATED BEFORE 07 Jul 2010
EURAIL GROUP ONE
13 MAY 2010
US\$RIGHT

Category: **Saver** 2 Adult 1 Child Validity: 15 days within 2 months

First day: 14 05 10 Name: Clark, J
day month year Country of residence: USA

Last day: 29 07 10 Passport #: 123 456 789
day month year

Travel calendar below must be filled in:

Day:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Month:	<u>14</u>														
	<u>05</u>														

12345678 This coupon is only valid with Control Voucher, EURAIL cover and passports. See conditions of use. EUR:

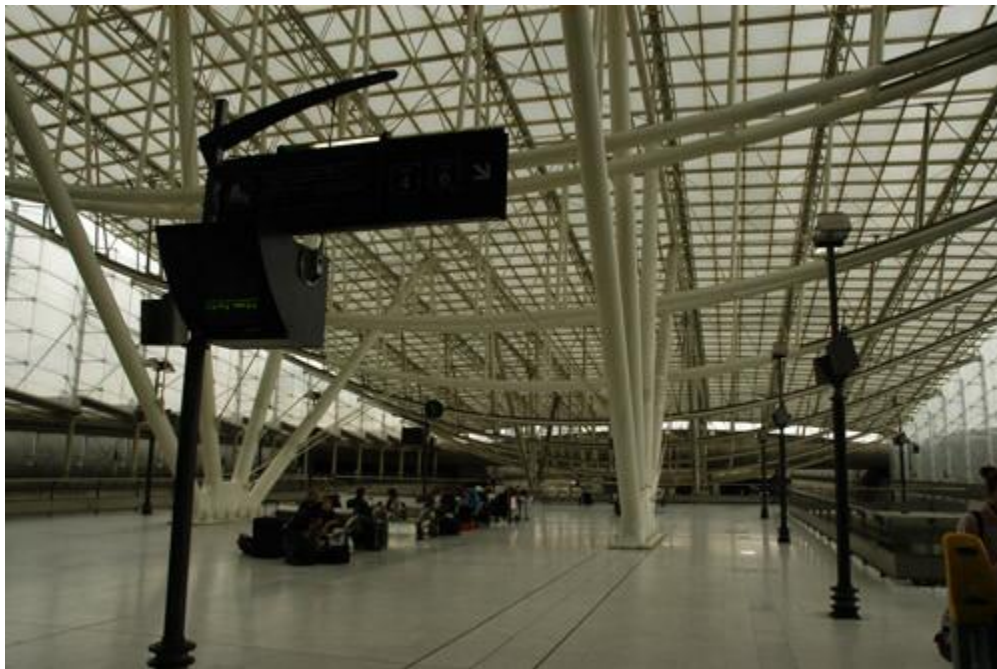
Travel calendar

(There will be a piece of paper similar to this stapled inside a folding paper booklet thing. Leave everything attached! And make sure your name is filled out).

The person waiting on you will have to write something on your pass and stamp it to activate it. Be sure to have your reservation confirmation email printed out and with you at that time and they will be able to print your ticket for you. (My reservation confirmation emails never included a confirmation number. Therefore I was unable to use the self-printing machines at the train station. I just waited in line and they printed my ticket for me each time). Once you have your ticket and your pass is filled out and ready to go, head out

of the glass room/office/ticket line and back into the lobby of the CDG2-TGV station. To the right are more doors that head to a covered out-door area. The trains are below this area (see Level 1 of the above diagram). **THE SUBWAY (actually it's the RER, which is a kind of commuter/subway) ARE ALSO LOCATED IN THIS AREA.**

If you have to use the Metro in Paris, <http://ratp.info/orienter/cv/carteidf.php?lang=uk> is extremely helpful in looking at things before you head out into the wild.



Above is the “outside” area of the CDG2-TGV station. Notice that TV screen on the left. That screen will list arrivals/departures on it. Keep track of the city you are going to and the train number and the platform. The sign above the TV has directions to the different lines. Your train will be announced about 15 minutes prior to arrival. Make sure you get on the right train and are **on the platform before it arrives**. It doesn't sit there long so be ready to run if you aren't standing near the door of where you need to be. There are diagrams that show how the train is laid out... but they aren't always crystal clear. Witness:

STORY TIME: The train I was on to Nantes left this train station and there were two trains listed on the departures screen with the same time and platform number. One said “Nantes” and the other said “Rennes.” When the train arrived, it was actually two trains connected to each other. My ticket was to Le Mans, where I was supposed to get off and switch to a different train. My ticket also showed me in the cabin of one of the cars on the Rennes train.

I got on and STAYED AWAKE AND ALERT. In Le Mans, I was unsure what to do. I showed my ticket to the lady next to me, who was eating caviar and drinking Perrier (seriously). She didn't speak English, but she said "No" and pointed to the door. Knowing the train wouldn't be sitting there too long, I grabbed my 4-ton suitcase and hopped off, ran down to the other train (which by this point had been separated from the Rennes train) and hopped on. I assumed it was going to Nantes because it apparently wasn't going to Rennes. An hour later I arrived in Nantes – 40 minutes early. I was supposed to get off of that train in Le Mans and wait 30 minutes for a different, dedicated train to Nantes. But I got there. So whatever.

Before heading to the platform area of the train station (this goes for every train station in France, I can't remember about the other countries) be sure to punch your train ticket. In France there are these things:



Located before you walk out to the platform area. Stick your ticket in it and wait for it to click/print. It will print the town/date/time stuff. This "activates" your ticket. Also, make sure your Eurail pass is filled out.

Sometimes there are special train ticket deals. I arrived the weekend before the program and because of a major sporting event going on in Le Mans, there was a deal on train tickets for the Pays-de-la-Loire region of France. A two-day ticket for up to 5 people for unlimited travel on regional trains in the region was only about € 30. And I didn't have to use days on my Eurail pass.

So once you're on the train, you're on it – so hopefully it's headed where you are. A conductor will walk through the train and you will have to hand him/her your ticket and

Eurail pass. They'll stamp or hole-punch your pass (once for each day you use it) and maybe your ticket. Also, they will yell at you (and sometimes really *yell*) if you use pencil.

Hotels, Hostels and Travel Info Sites

I refused to stay in Hostels. I took a very nice camera and refused to sleep with it in a room full of strangers and no lockable door. I have no advice to Hostels other than to say that I stayed in some VERY nice hotels and I did NOT overpay. Look around, you can find great deals. Hostels are usually (not always) cheaper – but you get what you pay for.

If you're brave enough, here are some hostel websites:

www.hostelbookers.com

www.hosteleurope.com

<http://www.hostelworld.com>

<http://www.hostels.com>

Review every hotel you plan to stay at. www.tripadvisor.com is great for that. Remember that LOCATION is very important. You don't have a car. Make sure wherever you are staying is within EASY walking distance to a metro station. If you are arriving very late at night, proximity to the train station is important (walking through Barcelona at 1 in the morning with all your luggage is not recommended. Then again, taking the metro in Barcelona in broad daylight with all your luggage is probably just as risky).

www.wikitravel.org provides great information about crime and safety for travelers on most cities in the world. They also have things to do and a list of hotels. It's worth a look.

Regardless of where you stay, you are going to have to do more walking than you probably realize. If "walking isn't your thing," seriously reconsider this trip.

Unknown/non-chain hotels can be cheaper but be careful. Check them out and check out their website – but remember, ANYONE can build a website and photos can be taken from very deceiving angles. I stayed at one very tiny local hotel (with 12 rooms) and it was fantastic. I also stayed at some small local hotels that were not so fantastic.

Most of my bookings were done on either www.priceline.com or www.expedia.com. www.travelocity.com and www.orbitz.com are also good sites, I just got comfortable with Expedia and stuck with it (see "The WTF!? Fund" for more info on why).

European hotels, for the most part, aren't staffed by high-school dropouts. Some of these people own the very hotels they work the desk at. They are not stupid. Booking a 4 person room and trying to squeeze 6 people into it CAN AND WILL come back to haunt you. This is why I recommend arranging travel for no more than 4 people. I stayed at two hotels (one was a family-run no-name hotel and the other was a Best Western) where we had 6 people in a 4 person room. Both hotels required that you leave the key at the front desk when you leave the hotel. Also, they copy your passports so they have photos of their guests. They keep track of who comes and goes (and tell you this very explicitly). A person who is unable to be accounted for that keeps wandering through their lobby will arouse suspicion. If you read the fine print on sites like Expedia, you will notice that "extra guest charges" can run up to the FULL ROOM PRICE PER NIGHT for each additional person. Don't do it. We had no idea that this was common policy in Europe and ended up having to rent an extra room once we arrived. The extra two person room that they paid for the day of arrival cost the same per night as the 4 person room booked on Expedia. And even if you get really creative about coming and going and never been seen with certain people, it gets to the point where it's an extreme hassle – and it made some people nervous when they had to be all sneaky.

Non-refundable hotel rooms are usually cheaper, but if your plans hit the fan, then you're screwed; which leads me to:

The WTF!? Fund

You can budget all you want. This much money for air travel, this much for food, clothes, etc. But you better not spread your finances too thin because weird \$!*# is going to pop up that you never even considered to be in the realm of possibilities. Every weekend (not an exaggeration) something came up that caused us to have to adapt our travel plans to suit whatever bizarre circumstance it was keeping everything from going smooth.

The first weekend there was a supposed flood (I say supposed because there was NO evidence of a flood) and our train was cancelled. Somehow, in a last-ditch effort to get there, we ended up in South Boofoo, France (actually it was Aix-en-Provence, one TGV stop north of Marseille). The Aix-en-Provence train station is nowhere near town – literally the middle of nowhere. It was 10pm and the train station was closing. So we had to rent a car. Not in my wildest dreams did I think I would have to rent a car in Europe. Especially not on the first weekend, which was planned well in advance to avoid such disasters. The American rental car companies wanted about € 500 for a two-door Fiat 500. We had 10

people plus another 12 from Ohio State who suddenly became our friends. We ended up using a European car rental company (Sixt) and paid about € 250 each for a Citroen C3 and Ford Fiesta. Boom. Week 1: an unforeseen \$90.

The next weekend there was a general strike in France – meaning that both the Nantes trams and SNCF trains were not running. None of them (well some of them – very few, but not the ones I needed). So I couldn't get out of Nantes the day I was supposed to be in Normandy. Luckily I was able to Skype home and, through my parents, get a hold of Expedia and bump my reservations for my Normandy hotel back a day for an extra \$0.90. Which worked out just fine and is why I stuck with Expedia.

Other people tried to get to Switzerland during the strike. They couldn't move their hotels and were forced to rent yet another car. This one was NOT cheap, costing about € 500 because they were dropping it off in Switzerland. In Europe, you need to be 21 to rent a car and you have to pay extra insurance. If you are 25 you get it for whatever the rate really is (no extra insurance). We had 1 person that was 25 who was able to get 1 car for cheap and the 22 year old got hers for slightly more. The Ohio State students were mostly under 21 and were asking us to sign for their car. We left them in Aix-en-Provence. Moral of the story: befriend your group elders.

I don't know what amount to tell you to budget for travel disasters and unforeseen things, but € 250 is probably not too much.

Real-Life Example #2: We decided to go to London. Someone found a flight for € 50. Great. Well that flight went to East Midlands – which is NOT London. So we figured we'd take a train to London. Well, we got to East Midlands, but there were no trains to London. We had to take a bus to Nottingham (£15 GBP or a little over \$20). Once in Nottingham, we had to get a £50 GBP train ticket to London. That's \$75. Suddenly, our steal of a \$65 plane ticket had become \$150. Stuff is going to come up. A high credit limit helps ease some of the stress – until you get the bill.

Getting around Nantes

Nantes has a tram systems called TAN that you will ride almost daily.



Older-style



Newer-style

You will need a ticket in order to ride them. Tickets can be purchased in a variety of forms from a couple different locations.

	1 Hour - € 1.50
	1 Hour (pack of 10) - € 12.30
	24 Hours - € 4.20
	24 Hours (for up to 4 people) - € 6.70

These are the four main types of tickets. You can purchase the 1 hour ticket, the 24 hour ticket and the 24 hour ticket for up to four people (which you probably won't end up ever using) at any tram stop. The colors may not always be the same as what is shown here.



Notice the ticket machine on the right side.

The ticket machines at the tram stops **ONLY ACCEPT COINS**. So your best bet is to break a €5 or €10 shortly after you arrive so you will be flush with €1 and €2 coins. You can purchase the pack of 10 tickets (or 12 if they are running a special like they were when I bought mine) for about €10-12 at any Tabac store (which are everywhere) or, I believe, at the TAN store located near Commerce (which is the main stop where 3 of the tram lines intersect). Using the machines at the tram stops is fairly simple; even if you don't speak French (the machines are only in French). There is a small scrolling device (similar to something you'd find on a Golden Tee Golf arcade game) that you use to find the option for a "1 heure" pass or whatever it is you are looking for. Click the scroller, insert your coins and a ticket will be dispatched. The ticket will not be stamped with a time or date and does not become effective until you compost it on the train.

Once you have your ticket, you can board any of the trams. When you get on, you will need to compost the ticket for it to be valid. In every car on every train there are little boxes attached to the poles throughout the car – on the older trams they are orange and on the newer trams they are green. There is a little slot on that box somewhere and you need to slide your ticket in that box until you hear a very mechanical clicking sound. When you remove the ticket, it should have a time and date printed on it. If you have a 1 hour ticket, it is then valid for 1 hour from the time stamped on it. A 24 hour ticket is valid for the next 24 hours. Obviously you can figure out if it is advantageous as to which ticket you purchase.

You will see that some people aren't composting their tickets. Three possibilities here: 1. They've already composted it and their ticket is still valid. 2. They have a yearly pass because they are local. 3. They are clever.

The first time I rode the tram, I was by myself and I didn't really understand the instructions given to me by my host family. I bought a 1 hour ticket and got on the train and sat down. At one stop, a group of similarly dressed men hopped on the train and stood there. And when the doors closed, they broke out and swarmed the train, demanding tickets from everyone. I handed them mine and the man started yelling at me in French. I had no idea just what in the world was happening and an interpreter was brought in. I hadn't validated my ticket. He wrote something on it, handed it back to me, and walked away mumbling, surely something about a "stupid American." I got lucky.

Other people did not get so lucky. If you are caught by the TAN Police without a valid ticket, they will fine you. The fines vary based on the level of your crime. If you have a ticket but did not stamp it, something like € 30. If you don't have a ticket at all, that will easily double. Some people bought a single € 1.50 ticket that they used for weeks. Some people paid over € 100 in fines because they *thought* they could cheat the system. Others went legit and ended up paying about € 25 total for tram tickets. I spent a total of about € 20 on tram tickets – but I was able to walk to school. I know people that spent more than € 60. I'd budget about € 60-70 and then, depending on where you live and how often you want to go out, you may be able to save money – or spend more.

Tip: the TAN Police randomly board trains out of nowhere – even from the most random of stops. They are usually dressed alike in black suits with green shirts and a TAN logo somewhere on them. You can usually see them waiting at an upcoming stop and they generally don't demand tickets until the doors close and the tram starts moving – giving you getaway time if you need it. Also, trying to stamp your ticket once you see them get on doesn't necessarily work. They "lock" the compost boxes when the doors close, so if your ticket isn't stamped by then, you are screwed. If and when it all goes south: play dumb.

Actually riding the tram is quite simple. There are maps in each car that list all the stops and where the lines intersect. There are 4 lines, one of which kind of runs east-west while the other two are more north-south and I never paid attention to the yellow line. Make sure you

read the front of the car you are about to get on so you don't end up heading off in a direction you don't want to go.

There are also plenty of bus lines – the most important of which goes to the airport. You can buy an airport bus ticket at the TAN office at Commerce. It is slightly more expensive than a typical ticket (€ 5 or so). The bus leaves from Commerce but also stops at the SNCF station. For general bus riding, I'm pretty sure you can pay the driver when you get on, but I never really rode the bus, so don't hold me to that. The tram will get you just about everywhere you need to go, but you might have to walk a little once you get to the stop. And walking is part of Europe, so get over it.

To get to Audencia, you will need to be on the red line tram headed toward **Orvault Grand Val**. There are two stops near Audencia. One is *Ecole Centrale Audencia* (which is actually beyond it and easier if you live out past Audencia). The other is *Facultes*, which is easier if you are coming from closer to the heart of Nantes. I recommend *Facultes* and once you are familiar with where you need to be within Audencia you'll probably find it easier.

After about 10:30 – 11:00 pm, the trams only run every half hour with service stopping at about 1:00 am. It can be a *long* walk home if you miss that last tram.

BONUS

I did a lot of the planning for most of my trips and I paid *a lot* of attention to my surroundings and the general infrastructure of European travel. I know where I stayed, how much I paid and what I'd recommend. I could (and am willing to) provide information on the cities I travelled to, what I encountered and how to get around (buses, metros and trains, etc... I think we added it up and all told used about 14 different forms of transportation).

The cities I visited:

Nice.

Monaco.

American Normandy WWII sights (and Mont Saint-Michel).

Madrid.

Barcelona.

London.

Bruges.

Amsterdam.

Venice.

Cinque Terre.

Rome.