

How to Plan a Gap Year in Europe

Once you've made a rough plan of where you want to spend your gap year, you'll need to start thinking about the more practical aspects of your time overseas. While this process might be a little daunting, a well-structured plan will give you peace of mind during your time in Europe and allow you to make the most out of your trip.

Check out our complete to-do list that will help you plan your gap year efficiently.

Step 1: Plan Your Budget

Planning your budget before you set off is an essential step of your gap year prep. Having a budget will help prevent financial troubles or stress during your travels!

When planning your budget, you should consider the following factors:

- Transport to and around your chosen destinations
- Accommodation and food
- Activities
- Pre-departure formalities (e.g. passport, visa, insurance)

Here you'll find some suggestions on how to **save money** to cover the costs of your European adventure:

- Cut back on unnecessary expenses (e.g. eating out, buying inessential items)
- Use free budgeting apps to keep track of your spending
- Work part-time alongside your studies
- Find a job during your time abroad

Step 2: Book Your Trip

A convenient and cheap way to explore Europe by train is using one of the **Eurail Passes**. This all-in-one ticket has plenty of perks:

- Flexible access to most trains across 33 different countries in Europe with The Global Pass
- You can explore a single country in-depth with the One Country Pass
- Variable validity, from three days up to three months
- Discounts on hotels, car rentals, tourist attractions, ferries, and private railroads
- If you're 27 or younger, you can take advantage of the Eurail Youth Pass
- You can explore a single country in-depth with the One Country Pass

Use travel booking platforms to compare trains, buses and flights throughout Europe and find the best and most affordable options.

Step 3: Find Your Accommodation

Depending on your budget and gap year plan, different accommodation options are on offer:

- **Hostels** are a popular, budget-friendly choice among travelers who want to explore Europe and meet other travelers
- Try **Couchsurfing** and stay at a local's house for free—this way, you'll save a lot of money and get valuable insight into a city's culture
- Although they are more expensive, **hotels** and **Airbnbs** offer more comfort and privacy
- **Renting a room** in a shared apartment is the best option if you plan on sticking to one place for a longer amount of time

Step 4: The Paperwork

- Make sure that your **passport is up to date** and valid for the entire duration of your trip
- To stay in Europe longer than 90 days, you'll need to **apply for a visa** prior to your arrival
- Although it's not mandatory, purchasing **travel insurance** for your year abroad is highly recommended and can cover emergency medical expenses, lost or stolen luggage, airline cancellations and personal liability
- Visit a doctor for a thorough, pre-travel checkup and ensure that you have all the recommended vaccinations for the countries you're planning to visit
- Check out the entry requirements for every country you'd like to visit (e.g., proof of vaccination, negative COVID-19 test, or medical certificate of recovery from COVID)

Step 5: Pack Your Bags

When packing for a gap year, avoid bringing everything you own. Take only the essentials and buy the rest when you arrive in Europe. Here is a list of items you'll need for your trip:

- **Clothes** that are weather-appropriate to your chosen destinations
- **Essential toiletries**
- **Documents:** passport, visa, proof of health and travel insurance, international driver's license, and student ID, with copies of each in a separate bag
- **Money:** bring both cash and your debit or credit card—exchange foreign currency before you go
- **Medical kit** with personal and basic medication for your travels
- **Electronics:** smartphone, camera, laptop or tablet, iPod or mp3, as well as battery chargers and a European adapter

Find more detailed info on this topic in the article "[How to Plan a Gap Year in Europe – Step by Step](#)".