FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Europe

40 questions · November 3, 2026

1. What kinds of pilgrimages and tours are available in Europe?

European itineraries may focus on Catholic pilgrimage sites, cultural landmarks, or a combination of both. Common destinations include Rome, Assisi, Lourdes, Fatima, Santiago de Compostela, Paris, and other historic cities and shrines.

The pace and spiritual emphasis vary by itinerary, so review the daily program carefully before booking.

2. Will Mass be celebrated during a European pilgrimage?

Catholic pilgrimage programs often include Mass, prayer, or devotional time when scheduling and local permissions allow. Exact locations and times may change because churches and shrines manage their own liturgical calendars.

Follow the final itinerary and the pilgrimage leader’s instructions for each day’s worship schedule.

3. What passport and visa rules apply to travel in Europe?

Requirements depend on your nationality, destination countries, length of stay, and transit route. Some travelers may enter certain European countries without a traditional visa for a short visit, while others need a visa or travel authorization.

Check the official information for every country on your itinerary and review the U.S. Department of State travel site before departure.

4. What is the Schengen Area, and why does it matter?

The Schengen Area is a group of European countries that generally allow travel across their internal borders without routine passport checks. It does not include every European country, and immigration rules still apply when entering or leaving the area.

Travelers should understand which itinerary countries are inside or outside Schengen and keep their passport accessible during travel days.

5. Should I check for a European travel authorization before departure?

Yes. Entry systems and travel-authorization requirements can change, and implementation dates may be revised. Do not rely on old articles or previous travel experience.

Confirm current requirements through the official immigration authority for your destination and the European Union travel information portal.

6. How long should my passport remain valid?

Passport-validity requirements vary by country and may also depend on the date you plan to leave the region. Your passport should also have enough blank space for any required stamps.

Verify the exact rule for every country on the itinerary before booking flights or submitting visa applications.

7. How should I monitor safety conditions in Europe?

Europe is diverse, and local conditions can vary by country, city, and event. Review current government advisories, stay alert in crowded areas, and follow instructions from local authorities and the tour team.

U.S. travelers can consult the official travel advisories shortly before departure and during the trip.

8. How can I reduce the risk of pickpocketing?

Pickpocketing can occur in busy tourist areas, public transportation, stations, and queues. Keep phones, wallets, passports, and cards in secure front-facing or zippered compartments and avoid displaying large amounts of cash.

Stay especially attentive when distracted by crowds, maps, ticket machines, or street performances.

9. What health preparations should I make before traveling to Europe?

Make sure routine vaccinations are current and discuss any personal health concerns with a medical professional before departure. Travelers with chronic conditions should plan for long flights, walking, climate changes, and access to prescription medicine.

Destination-specific guidance is available through the CDC Travelers' Health destination pages.

10. How should I travel with prescription medicines in Europe?

Carry medicines in their original labeled containers in your hand luggage and bring enough for the full trip, plus a reasonable reserve for delays. A copy of the prescription or a physician's letter may be useful.

Because some medicines are regulated differently abroad, verify any restrictions before traveling with controlled or specialized medication.

11. Is travel insurance necessary for a European pilgrimage?

Comprehensive travel insurance is strongly recommended. A suitable policy may help with trip cancellation, interruption, medical treatment, delayed baggage, or emergency transportation, depending on its terms.

Read exclusions, benefit limits, pre-existing-condition provisions, and claim procedures carefully before purchasing.

12. What level of walking should I expect?

European itineraries often involve long periods of walking and standing, cobblestones, stairs, hills, historic buildings, and large transportation terminals. Some pilgrimage sites and old city centers have limited vehicle access.

Prepare with regular walking before departure and bring supportive shoes that are already broken in.

13. Are European tours accessible for travelers with limited mobility?

Accessibility varies widely. Modern hotels and transportation may be accessible, while historic churches, monasteries, narrow streets, and older stations may have stairs, uneven surfaces, or limited elevator access.

Discuss mobility needs with Holy Land Tours and Travel before booking so the agency can explain the itinerary's demands and available arrangements.

14. Are European pilgrimages suitable for older adults?

Many older adults participate successfully, but suitability depends more on mobility, balance, stamina, and medical needs than on age alone. Group schedules may begin early and include several hours away from the hotel.

Review the pace honestly, prepare physically, and consult your doctor about any concerns.

15. What should I wear when visiting churches and shrines?

Modest clothing is appropriate at religious sites. Shoulders and knees should generally be covered, hats may need to be removed, and clothing with offensive messages should be avoided.

A lightweight scarf or shawl is useful when dress requirements differ from the day’s general sightseeing plans.

16. What shoes are best for European travel?

Supportive walking shoes with good traction are essential for cobblestones, marble floors, slopes, stairs, and long days. Break them in before departure to reduce the risk of blisters.

A second comfortable pair is helpful if the first becomes wet or uncomfortable.

17. What kind of weather should I expect in Europe?

Weather varies significantly by country, season, elevation, and distance from the coast. The same itinerary may include warm afternoons, cool mornings, rain, wind, or colder conditions in mountain areas.

Check forecasts shortly before departure and pack layers, a compact rain jacket, and appropriate sun protection.

18. What should I know about European hotel rooms?

European hotel rooms may be smaller than comparable rooms in North America, and bed configurations, elevators, air conditioning, and bathroom layouts can differ. Historic properties may also have architectural limitations.

Review the rooming arrangements in your tour documents and inform the agency early about important accessibility or bedding needs.

19. Will hotel rooms have air conditioning?

Air conditioning varies by country, season, hotel, and local energy regulations. Some properties operate it only during designated months, and older buildings may use less powerful systems than travelers expect.

Ask about specific accommodation needs before booking, but understand that exact room temperatures may not be guaranteed.

20. What food should I expect on a European tour?

Meals vary by region and may include local breads, soups, pasta, rice, vegetables, meat, fish, cheeses, pastries, and desserts. Group meals are usually structured around the itinerary and may offer fewer choices than ordering independently.

Trying regional dishes is part of the travel experience, while hotels may also provide familiar international options.

21. Can dietary restrictions and allergies be accommodated?

Many hotels and restaurants can assist with common dietary needs when notified in advance, but ingredients, preparation methods, and cross-contact standards vary. Provide the agency with clear written details before departure.

Travelers with severe allergies should carry prescribed emergency medication and a translated allergy card.

22. Is tap water safe to drink in Europe?

Tap-water quality is generally regulated, but conditions and traveler preferences vary by country and location. Follow local guidance, hotel advice, and posted notices.

Where tap water is not recommended or where you are unsure, use sealed bottled water.

23. What currencies and payment methods are used in Europe?

Many European countries use the euro, but not all of them do. Credit and debit cards are common, while some cash remains useful for small purchases, donations, public restrooms, markets, and businesses with minimum card amounts.

Carry more than one payment method and confirm foreign transaction and ATM fees with your bank.

24. Should I choose to pay in my home currency when using a card?

A merchant or ATM may offer to convert a purchase into your home currency. This service can include an exchange rate or fee that differs from the rate used by your card issuer.

Read the screen carefully and understand the total cost before accepting any currency-conversion option.

25. How should I use ATMs safely in Europe?

Use ATMs located inside banks, hotels, or well-lit public areas when possible. Shield the keypad, inspect the machine for anything unusual, and avoid accepting help from strangers.

Keep your card issuer’s international contact number separately and withdraw only the amount of cash you can store securely.

26. What electrical adapters will I need in Europe?

Most of Europe uses a higher voltage than North America, but plug shapes vary by country. Check the voltage label on every device before connecting it.

A universal adapter is convenient for multi-country itineraries, while a voltage converter is needed only for appliances that are not compatible with the local supply.

27. Will I have Wi-Fi and mobile service in Europe?

Wi-Fi is common in hotels and many public places, but speed and reliability vary. Mobile service is generally strong in cities and towns, though coverage can weaken in rural, mountain, or underground locations.

Check whether your roaming plan covers every country on the itinerary, especially countries outside the European Union.

28. How can I avoid high roaming charges?

Review your carrier’s international terms before departure and understand how data, calls, texts, voicemail, and hotspot use are billed. Disable background data and data roaming unless they are included in your plan.

An international plan, approved SIM, or eSIM may be useful for travelers who need regular connectivity.

29. What should I know about motor-coach travel in Europe?

Group itineraries often use motor coaches between cities and pilgrimage sites. Travelers should be prepared to board promptly, follow seat and safety instructions, and keep the aisle clear.

Large coaches may not enter narrow historic centers, so some visits require walking from a designated drop-off point.

30. Will we use trains or public transportation?

Some itineraries may use trains, metros, ferries, or other public transportation when they are the most practical option. Stations can be large and busy, with stairs, escalators, platform changes, and limited time to board.

Keep luggage manageable, stay close to the group, and follow the guide’s instructions carefully.

31. What should I expect at European airports?

Large European airports may require long walks, shuttle trains, passport control, security screening, and gate changes. Connection times can feel shorter when terminals are crowded.

Keep travel documents accessible, wear comfortable shoes, and follow the group’s meeting instructions exactly.

32. What can I pack in my carry-on luggage?

Carry essential medicines, travel documents, valuables, basic toiletries, and one change of clothing in your hand luggage. Liquids, batteries, sharp objects, and other restricted items must comply with airline and security rules.

Review the TSA What Can I Bring page and the operating airline’s policy before packing.

33. How much luggage should I bring on a multi-country itinerary?

Pack lightly enough to manage your own bags through airports, hotels, stations, and coach-loading areas. Airline and rail baggage limits vary, and elevators may be small or unavailable in older properties.

Follow the allowance in your final documents and confirm current limits with the operating carrier.

34. What languages will I encounter in Europe?

Europe has many national and regional languages. English is often used in tourism, but fluency varies outside major hotels, airports, and attractions.

Learning simple greetings, polite expressions, and words such as please and thank you in the local language is respectful and helpful.

35. What cultural etiquette should I follow?

Respect local customs, posted rules, quiet spaces, lines, meal schedules, and expectations about punctuality. Speak softly in churches, avoid blocking entrances for photographs, and ask before photographing people.

Your guide will explain customs that are specific to each country, shrine, or community.

36. May I take photographs inside European churches?

Photography rules differ by site and may change during Mass, prayer services, or special events. Flash, tripods, video, and phone use may be prohibited even when ordinary photography is allowed.

Check posted signs and follow the instructions of clergy, staff, and your guide.

37. What should I know before visiting the Vatican and major basilicas?

Major basilicas and Vatican sites may require security screening, modest dress, advance reservations, or timed entry. Large crowds and special liturgical events can affect access without much notice.

Follow the final group instructions and consult the official Vatican website for authoritative information.

38. What should pilgrims know about Lourdes, Fatima, and Santiago de Compostela?

Each pilgrimage destination has its own prayer schedule, processions, devotional traditions, accessibility conditions, and seasonal crowds. Participation in optional devotions may depend on the group itinerary and local operations.

Approach each place respectfully, follow the pilgrimage leader, and allow time for both organized worship and personal reflection.

39. Can the itinerary change because of strikes, closures, or major events?

Yes. Transportation strikes, demonstrations, weather, religious celebrations, government restrictions, traffic, and unexpected site closures can affect the planned schedule.

The tour team may change the order of visits, use alternate transportation, or substitute an activity when necessary.

40. How can I manage jet lag during a Europe trip?

Begin adjusting your sleep schedule gradually before departure, stay hydrated during the flight, and spend time in daylight after arrival. Avoid planning heavy personal activities immediately after a long overnight journey.

Use the local time shown on your phone or hotel clock because seasonal clock changes can affect the difference from home.