

## Europe Trip 2012

Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q: Do I have to be a political science major?**

A: No. The trip is 1-3 credit hours in political science, but is designed to appeal broadly to students with a variety of majors. Any student wishing to learn more about European culture, history and politics will enjoy the trip.

**Q: Will we have free time in each city?**

A: Yes. The instructor will provide a grand tour of each city for the group, visiting some of the most remarkable sites, but students will also have free time during which they can visit other locations of interest to them. The instructor will have guide books available for students to locate particular points of interest. If you are not comfortable spending free time on your own, you are always more than welcome to accompany the instructor throughout the trip.

**Q: Do I have to know the languages of the places we are visiting?**

A: No. We will have some language tutorial sessions before we travel, but these sessions will only provide a very basic vocabulary so that you can politely inquire if the person you are speaking with speaks English (in many cases they will and they will be glad to help you).

**Q: What are the graded components of the class?**

A: The class is designed toward experiential learning and is simply graded on a credit/non-credit basis. The requirements for a passing grade are attending the three class sessions before the trip, and writing daily in a travel journal.

**Q: Can I participate if I am not a WSU student?**

A: Yes. The WSU admissions office allows non-WSU students to be admitted as "guest students" for a fee of \$30. You can then enroll in the Travel Seminar.

**Q: When do I enroll in the class?**

A: The Travel Seminar (Pol S 399) is offered as a Summer Pre-Session course. You can enroll in the spring 2012 for 1 or 3 credit hours.

**Q: What does the cost of \$3,500 include?**

A: The cost includes airfare, rail pass, lodging, breakfasts, and museum fees for the entire trip.

**Q: What is NOT included in the cost?**

A: • Lunches and dinners. Cost depends on how well you want to eat, bread and cheese at the grocer is much cheaper than eating at a restaurant. Most prices are comparable to the US (\$8-10 for lunch, \$15-20 for dinner). Plan on approximately \$450.

- 1 -3 credit hours tuition for Travel Seminar 399
- Passport (\$110 + photo). Processing time approximately 8 weeks. Go to [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) for more information.
- Souvenirs and sundries (luggage, maps, phone cards, film)
- Entrance fees to sites you want to visit on your own.

**Q: Do I have to pay the full price at one time?**

A: No. The first deposit to reserve your spot is \$200. \$1500 is due December 1. \$1800 is due February 15.

**Q: Is money deposited refundable?**

A: The first \$200 deposit is refundable until Dec 1 when the 2nd payment is due. After that date, you are committed to the trip unless you can find a replacement for yourself. (There are usually a few people on the waitlist, so if you cannot travel for any reason there is usually someone who will take your place so you can get your money back, but there is no guarantee of this.)

**Q: Where will we be staying?**

A: We will be staying in youth hostels and discount hotels in each city. The rooms will be dormitory style, likely shared with 4-6 other members of our group. There will be separate dorms for men and women. Although only our group members will be in our rooms, you should not leave any valuables in your room when we go out. There are many people coming and going from these facilities daily and your valuables are most secure when they are with you.

**Q: Do I have to have travel insurance?**

A: Your payment includes the purchase of Global Emergency Medical Assistance. This will cover you if you have a severe medical condition and will include immediate return transportation to the US if necessary. It is NOT for non-emergency care. You should check with your own health insurance company to see what kind of coverage they offer when you are traveling abroad.

**Q: How do I get the right kind of currency for my expenses?**

A: We will be traveling to countries with 3 different currencies (zloty, krona, and euro). The easiest way to get the right currency at the lowest exchange rate is to use an ATM machine. ATMs are everywhere just as they are in the US. The bank will handle the exchange and the only fee will be for the ATM machine. To avoid too many ATM charges, I would get out enough money to cover your expenses for several days in each country. Make sure you have enough money in your account to cover your expected (and possibly unexpected) expenses.

**Q: Can I use my credit card to pay for purchases?**

A: The simplest way to pay for your purchases in Europe is with cash. Unless you are making a purchase over \$15, many merchants will not take a credit card. If you do need to charge a purchase, Mastercard and Visa are the most widely accepted cards. I would encourage you to set a specific budget for your souvenir purchases and to stick to it carefully. You don't want to run out of money before you get back home! Be sure to contact your credit card company in advance to let them know you will be traveling, otherwise they might freeze your account thinking your card has been stolen.

**Q: Where will we be eating?**

A: Breakfasts are included in the cost of the lodging and will be available at the hostel each morning. Lunch and dinner costs are not included, so you will need to budget for this (a reasonable amount would be \$30/day). You can eat cheap for some meals and save a bit for a nice meal occasionally. The meal estimate does NOT include the cost of any alcohol that you might consume.

**Q: How much do you tip in Europe?**

A: Wait staff are much better paid than in the US. The max tip is usually 5%. Just pocket change is acceptable.

**Q: What are the guidelines for alcohol consumption?**

A: We will observe the laws for whatever country we are in for legal drinking age. We are traveling to soak in the culture and a glass of wine is very much a part of the culture, so have a glass with your meal if you'd like. Several notes of caution: We will be very active throughout this trip and any actions that leave you incapacitated will make the trip much less enjoyable. If you are drunk, you are vulnerable, and you probably don't want to be vulnerable in a foreign country. Drinking can be costly and might result in running out of money.

**Q: Should I be worried about security concerns?**

A: I do not anticipate any serious security concerns, but urge everyone to use caution and common sense to avoid any potential problems. We will be traveling in several large cities. You should always be aware of your surroundings and look out for the other members of our group. Always travel with at least one other group member if you are going out on your own during your free time.

Pickpocketing is a serious problem in a number of places, particularly riding on public transportation. You MUST carry your passport and larger currency bills in a hidden waist pouch or neck pouch. These can be purchased for a few dollars in the travel section at Walmart, or online:

See for example: <http://www.caribou.com/PassportPouch.html>

You should have a small luggage lock for your suitcase and should not keep any valuables in your backpack. If you are bringing a digital camera, hold onto it tightly (a fanny pack worn on your front is fairly secure).

**Q: How will we be getting around?**

A: We will be traveling almost exclusively on public transportation (buses, trains, subways, etc). This means that you want to make sure that you can comfortably carry all of the things that you bring with you. No one else will be helping you to transport your luggage, so pack sensibly. We will also do a lot of WALKING, so you might want to take some laps on the treadmill before we leave town.

**Q: Will my electrical appliances work in Europe?**

A: European plugs and electric current vary from the US (and from country to country). Britain has 230 volt electricity at 50 Hz, meaning unless your appliance is dual voltage or designed for 230 volts, you will need a converter or transformer. Converters and adapter kits can be found many places for approximately \$30. (see: <http://www.walkabouttravelgear.com>) You might consider making this purchase with a travel mate and sharing it.

**Q: Is there internet connectivity available?**

A: Yes. Many hostels have internet service for a price (approx 1 euro = 10 mins) if you want to send messages home. Some will even have free Wifi. There are also quite a few internet cafes available.

**Q: How easy is it to call home?**

A: It is particularly challenging to find public pay phones and calling cards that work in Europe. Alert your family members that 'no news is good news' and that they may not hear from you regularly (except by email). Our days will be full and it may be difficult to take time out of the schedule to call home often (especially considering the time difference. Cell phones are omnipresent in Europe just as they are here, but you need a special chip (and an unlocked phone) to use their cellular network. If you'd like to check into the feasibility and cost of this, check with your own provider. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND "UNPLUGGING" DURING THIS TRIP. Previous travellers have found it extremely enjoyable NOT to be linked to the world by a cell phone. They could enjoy the company of the group and immerse themselves in the sights and experiences around them instead of being at the beck and call of an electronic device.

**Q: Can we do laundry there or do we need to pack for a full 2 weeks?**

A: There will be laundry facilities available in several of the locations where we are staying. You do NOT need to pack enough clothes to wear for 2 weeks. Pack the essentials.

**Q: What kind of weather might we expect?**

A: The weather can be quite variable in May and June. We may experience rain and 50 degrees, or sun and 80. You should have a flexible wardrobe that can accommodate these variations.