

Interrail

The rail bible is the website Man in Seat 61 – guru for all things train travel (not just interrail passes).

<https://www.seat61.com/how-to-use-an-interrail-pass.htm>

Interrail pass

There is usually a sale a couple of times a year giving 10-25% reduction. Sign up for emails from the site to be notified of upcoming sale periods. <https://www.interrail.eu/en/interrail-passes>

- A travel day is any number of journeys on the same day.
- Overnight journeys only use 1 travel day – the day the journey commences.
- You get 1 travel day out of your home country and 1 back in; you can't use the other days within the UK.
- Some (but very few) trains aren't included in the Eurail pass – e.g. France some TGVs & Italy Italo high-speed trains. Seat 61 gives hints & tips for each country:

<https://www.seat61.com/interrail-and-eurail-reservations.htm>

First class – First class passes cost very little more. As well as often more comfortable seats, the first class areas are usually less crowded and quieter. Access to first class lounges with the pass varies from country to country; check Seat 61 for specifics. Euston does allow access and provides snacks and drinks.

Seat reservations – These are made completely separately from the interrail ticket. They are often not compulsory but we made as many as we could to ensure we got a seat. Usually a minimal charge – c €5 or so, except Eurostar which is quite a bit dearer but compulsory.

- You can often make reservations through the Interrail app, but it's better to do it via the country's own website like Tren Italia or Deutsch Bahn, as the IR site sometimes isn't up to date.
- The most popular journeys book up well in advance: Eurostar have a limited number of interrail pass seats, so it's best to reserve these as soon as you know your dates. Bernina Express, Glacier Express and Rhine scenic routes are also very popular. Man in Seat 61 will often have a note of how early things open up.
- You need a printout of the seat reservation on the train, technically – we only needed to show it a couple of times. (Except Switzerland, which asked for sight of the seat reservation document, your interrail pass & passport every journey.)
- Intercity fast trains in most countries always need reservations – e.g. train numbers beginning IC (InnerCity) and EC (EuroCity), Frecciarossa and Frecciabianca.
- Italy (as often is the case) is a law unto itself:
 - Local (regional) trains in Italy (beginning RE & RV) can't be reserved, although many still have a first class section which is often quieter and more spacious.

- Treinitalia won't let you reserve a seat without buying a seat ticket as well. However another site – https://partners.italiarail.com/default?force_pass=true&aff=S61 – will. For this you need a “pass cover number” (different from your interrail pass number) which you can obtain via this link: https://www.eurail.com/en/book-reservations?fbclid=IwAR1FcXlnmocXG_aLoE_ZtB2BBjPXbPtM8rAQeEPdjMSWZw94WFeQx4YnjXw_aem_AbeGlyloHtKRlWQhg7X7iqTnD5pwliVmPDLwSRzFZUKrDUz1kVc-h5W1oURve5skdws#/generatePassCoverNumber Again Seat 61 will give up to date details.

Copies of travel passes etc. – You may not have a good internet connection on the train, so having copies in your phone works well.

- Keep a screenshot of your pass's QR code handy.
- Each morning when you activate your day's travel, the ticket will generate a QR code; take a screenshot of it.

Useful sites & apps

Country's own train apps are best for up to date information & seat reservations. I made a folder on my phone with all these apps:

Germany - Deutsch Bahn <https://int.bahn.de/en>

Austria – OBB <https://www.oebb.at/en/>

France - <https://www.sncf-connect.com/en-en/>

Switzerland SBB mobile <https://www.sbb.ch/en>

Belgium SNCB <https://www.belgiantrain.be/en>

Italy Treinitalia <https://www.treinitalia.com/it.html>

- For Italy seat reservations use the Italiarail site & “pass cover number” above.

UK – UK seat reservations are a bit trickier as most companies require the purchase of a ticket as well; however you can go to any station where they will reserve a seat for free on any train in the country.

While travelling - If you have a journey of multiple connections on the same day, it is useful to keep an eye via the train apps above as you travel, to check if your train is still on time to allow the connection. Most show real-time status and if there is an issue you can replan your route & connections as you go.

Hints & tips

Luggage - Plan on taking the absolute minimum possible, as travel often includes plenty of dragging cases over cobbled streets, climbing up & down stairs, and lifting luggage onto racks. If you can, keep the total weight to 10-12kg and plan on washing a few things every few days. Only down side is that you'll look the same in all the holiday snaps!

Splitwise is an excellent app to share costs if you are travelling with friends. You just each add expenses as they arise and it keeps a record & total of who owes what.

Atlas Obscura <https://www.atlasobscura.com/> is a site listing all sorts of little interesting things in or near cities.

Citymapper app is very useful for real-time city transport options.

Google maps reviews were good for more honest restaurant & attraction reviews.

Facebook "Interrailing for Oldies" is v useful with recommendations for sights, hotels & restaurants, as well as general interrail advice.

Washing clothing by hand every couple of days worked – we used these travel sheets of detergent. I found ¼ sheet was enough for a few things. https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dr-Beckmann-Original-Laundry-Detergent/dp/B0B1HXXLLL/ref=sr_1_6_mod_primary_new?crid=24V3SIP454KNI&keywords=travel+detergent+sheets+for+hand+washing+clothes&qid=1690903802&sbo=RZvfv%2F%2FHxDF%2BO5021pAnSA%3D%3D&sprefix=travel+detergent+sheets%2Caps%2C68&sr=8-6

Luggage stores – almost all stations have left luggage lockers; Google will tell you. There are also apps (e.g. Bounce, Stasher) which give local hotels, bars etc which will mind your luggage for a few euros. Your accommodation will also often let you drop it off early or hold it for you on the day you check out.

Downloading books, programmes & music on a phone &/or iPad was really useful for travelling & downtime. If you want to access live UK TV or radio you can also use a VPN to let your device think it's still in the UK.

Useful items:

- Small wheeled suitcase which converts to a rucksack
- Torch – so your phone isn't exposed if you need a light
- Small sandwich box or food bags & clips for packed lunches & leftovers
- Water & coffee flasks
- Corkscrew & small Leatherman-style folding knife (Eurostar security allows non-locking blades up to 3 inches)
- Sporks – combined knife, fork & spoon

- Portable power bank chargers – Google maps in particular uses a lot of power.
- Conditioner – everywhere had ample shampoo & shower gel, but seldom had conditioner.
- Small travel towel.
- Small carabiner clips on your rucksack / bags to deter pickpockets.
- Light bicycle cable & padlock for securing cases on train journeys when using racks.
- EU plug converters – Check what style plug your countries use, as they vary from place to place, and sometimes whether a property has old or new outlets.
https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B0BTYV7VPF/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1
- Universal plug - as basins & baths very often don't have a plug.
https://www.amazon.co.uk/kuou-Silicone-Universal-Bathroom-Laundries/dp/B08YX9F9Z1/ref=sr_1_6?crid=2NLXIBADL82I5&keywords=universal%2Bsink%2Bplug&qid=1699796292&srefix=universal%2Bsink%2Bplug%2Caps%2C62&sr=8-6&th=1
- Mini Bluetooth speaker
- Headphones / ear buds
- Eye mask & ear plugs

What we didn't need:

- Umbrellas – often too windy and never a spare hand to hold it.
- Hair dryers - We found everywhere (including Airbnbs) had them either in the room or on request at the desk.
- Spare shoes – they're heavy & bulky; one very comfortable pair was fine.

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