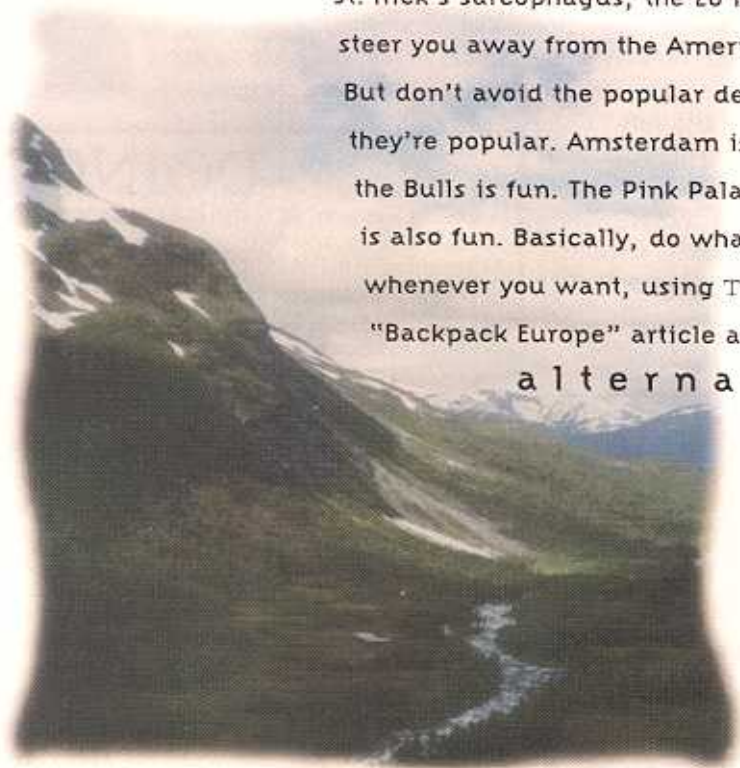


# Backpack Europe

SUMMER '96

The following is a collection of favorite summer spots off the London-to-Athens **backpacker** trail. Covering **everything** from camping in Corsica to St. Nick's sarcophagus, the 20 featured trips will help steer you away from the American crowds in Europe. But don't avoid the popular destinations just because they're popular. Amsterdam is fun. The Running of the Bulls is fun. The Pink Palace, though sickening, is also fun. Basically, do whatever you want whenever you want, using Trip's first annual "Backpack Europe" article as an **a l t e r n a t i v e** to the norm.



## 3 SPITAL OF GLEN MUICK, SCOTLAND

Who could resist visiting a place called the Spittal of Glen Muick? An unspoiled one-farmhouse town in the Scottish Highlands, the Spittal of Glen Muick (which rhymes with quick) is the gateway to the beautiful Glen Muick Wildlife Preserve. Start from Ballater in Scotland's Grampian region, go south across the River Dee and take a right, then a left, onto a harrowing one-lane mountain road.

As you climb in elevation through a thick conifer forest, the silver, serpentine water twisting through the trees to your right is the aptly named Coils of Muick. Park in a pull off on the left under the indifferent gaze of a flock of sheep and venture through a farmer's pasture to the edge of the waterfall. Look for the salmon jumping upstream as you walk along the banks and chat with the local fishermen.

Once the road sneaks above tree line, the scenery changes from dark greens and browns to muted tans and grays. If you visit in late August or early September, when the heather is blooming, the hills appear to be covered in soft purple velvet.

The road eventually ends at the parking lot for the wildlife preserve. There is no admission fee at Glen Muick, and camping is permitted near the entrance. Ambitious hikers can follow paths scattered with herds of roe deer, leading up to the Grampian Mountains or to Loch Muick and beyond. One thing is certain—you won't soon forget the desolate beauty of the Scottish Highlands or the unusual names of its landmarks.

—Celia Holmes & Greta Latzel

# 13 HERCULANEUM, ITALY



## HOTEL HINT

If you're traveling with a group of three or more people, skip the dormitory-style hostels and stay in hotels. Most hostels charge roughly \$10-\$20 per person, and you can usually find a hotel room with two double beds and a private bath for less than \$30—you do the math. You won't meet as many drunk Australians, but you'll save money and might even get some sleep.

Pompeii isn't the only Italian city that fell to Mount Vesuvius. The famous eruption of 79 AD also claimed its lesser-known neighbor, Herculaneum. While Pompeii has risen from its soft ash to fame, Herculaneum has languished in near obscurity under a tougher shell of volcanic mud turned to rock.

For about \$3 round trip, catch the crowded Circumvesuviana train from Naples to Pompeii. But escape the crushing mass of people by hopping off at the Ercolano stop. A five minute walk through this modern town plopped with questionable hindsight on top of its buried ancestor will lead you to the excavations at Herculaneum.

Herculaneum's hard volcanic stone preserved both noteworthy and not-so-noteworthy remains. The shops and villas of the ancient Roman resort town are fascinating, but it's worth the \$5 admission fee just to see somebody's 2000-year-old copper bathtub, a wooden bed

whose mattress has seen better days and a shelf loaded with cracked clay wine jars. On a sadder note, the mud-encrusted skeletons of the citizens who didn't escape still lie where the ancient town once met the bay, a timeless warning for visitors to beware the ominous peak above.

But don't let the grim remains dissuade you from scaling the still-active volcano and peeking into its maw. If it blows, standing at the top can't be much worse than standing at the bottom. Taxis at the Ercolano train station can shorten your hike by taking you partway, but the hot sweaty climb on a slippery cinder path will take you the better part of an hour. When the path narrows, you'll have to pay a guide \$3 to warn you (hopefully unnecessarily) against falling into the hissing, smoking fissures of the Forum-sized crater. While you catch your breath, enjoy the view out to the Bay of Naples and relax—the hike's a lot smoother on the way down.

—Celia Holmes & Greta Latzel

# 14 MJOLFJELL, NORWAY

Simply the most beautiful place I have ever been. There is no other way to describe it. A tiny village tucked between Oslo and Bergen in the

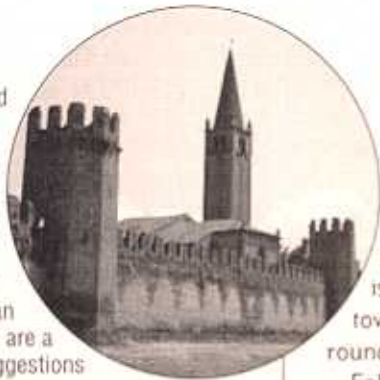
## CASH

Depending on where you are and how much you drink, expect to spend anything from \$10 to \$100 a day in Europe. That's about as good an estimate as we can manage, but here are a few monetary suggestions for your trip:

A) Always carry a couple of \$20 bills around. You never know when they might come in handy. For instance, Turkey charges a \$20 tourist visa fee to Americans (payable on arrival). Inflation rates are so high that the locals often prefer foreign currency, especially at the visa desk. A \$20 bill will eliminate any hassle.

B) Try to pick up some local currency before arriving at each destination.

C) Charge everything. You usually get a fair exchange rate and don't have to pay a service fee.



# 19

## MONTAGNANA, ITALY

Catch the \$4 bus from the main terminal in Padua, Italy, to the small walled town of Montagnana. After a meandering ride through the countryside, a five-minute walk from the station will take you back 500 years.

Despite what the clock above the double-arched entrance into town says, you'll realize you've entered a world where time has stopped. Your first clue is the moat (which may or may not be filled with water) dividing the old town from the new. The next giveaway is the crenelated stone wall that surrounds Montagnana on all four sides.

Follow the cobblestone streets to the town square and purchase a tasty gelato from the vendors. (Don't lose any scoops while dodging the cyclists.) After finishing your ice cream, take a minute to check out the painted murals in the old church. When you exit, don't be surprised if you find yourself in the middle of a religious pageant or a lively performance by brightly costumed Bavarian folk dancers from Montagnana's German sister city, Rothenburg.

While in Montagnana, there's no doubt about where to stay. Located in a 14th-century monastery just off the main square, the city's youth hostel offers the tired traveler a night for less than \$10. If the hostel's breakfast doesn't appeal to you, try the freshly squeezed orange juice and delicious pastries at Caffè Breda. Be sure to sit at an outdoor table, where you can watch the residents of Montagnana open their shutters and greet the beautiful day.

—Celia Holmes & Greta Latzel