

counter, ask the proprietor for a cheap room (and a bath, we always insisted), and indicate exactly where you would like to be located.

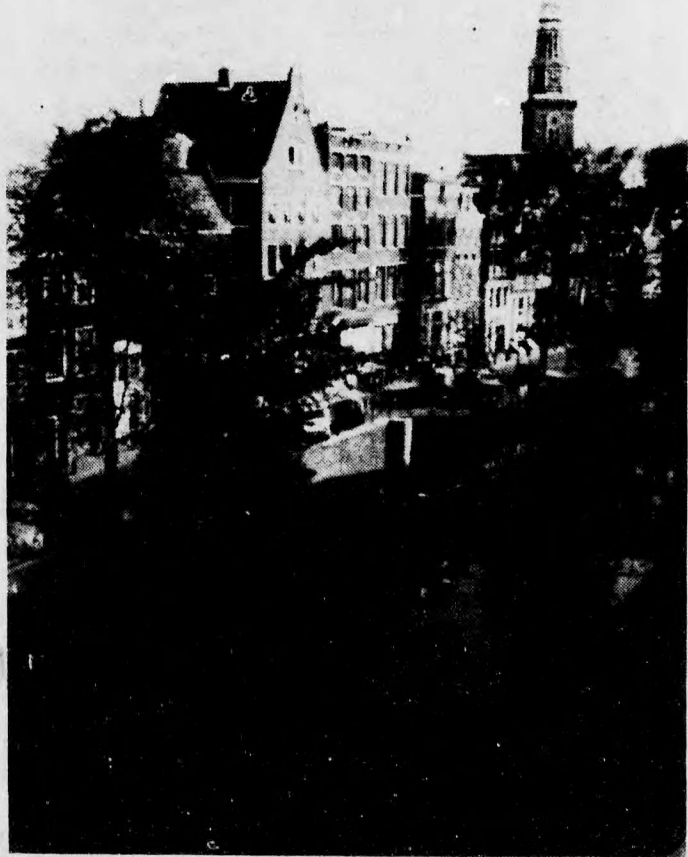
In addition to having very reasonable prices, these pensiones usually offer breakfast, were close to the centers of attraction, offered privacy as opposed to the dormitories common in hostels, and were generally very comfortable. With the exception of Athens the pensiones we stayed in were nice enough, clean enough and reasonable enough that we would have no compunction about recommending them to our parents.

Another point the traveller should remember, and this is very important, is to ensure that you are not only at the right train station (the larger centres often have two and sometimes three large stations), but are also to ensure that you are on the right carriage. European trains have the disconcerting habit of uncoupling in the middle of the night. It is not unheard of for a traveller to wake in the morning expecting to see Rome and gaze instead on the whitewashed façades of Spanish homes.

For those who plan to travel in either Spain or Italy it is always advisable to reserve a seat on the train. These trains can get incredibly crowded, which can be fun, but if you are one of the unlucky ones (and there are quite a few) without a seat, also very uncomfortable. It is not unusual to take a 14-hour train journey and the heat coupled with the crush of close packed, somewhat odorous humanity can be very disconcerting to the unprepared. For a nominal fee you can book a seat and at least sit in discomfort rather than stand.

Now as beautiful as the scenery is, as fascinating as the architecture, there are still the problems of eating and drinking. Mir and I did meet travellers who drank the local water (and usually suffered for it) but we would not advise it. A dose of "Montezuma's revenge" or the runs can effectily ruin a few precious days of sightseeing or travelling.

We bought the bottled water which can be found in most food stores and bars. It is relatively cheap and you can be assured that it is cleared of those nasty little creatures which lurk unseen just waiting to pounce on unsuspecting foreign flesh. Although the plastic bottles are somewhat awkward it is also advisable to carry one with you wherever you go. That way you can sip at it when thirsty and avoid paying the exorbitant prices for some other liquid refreshment. These water bottles are especially welcome on both train and ferry.



Madrid - a canal



Paris - the Eiffel Tower

In both cases if you are a really needful there are usually small concessions where you can buy something to eat or drink, but neither their quality nor their price recommend them to the student traveller. We would make a point of picking up a bottle or two along with cheap, local produce, often bread, fruit and cheese.

Europe abound in wonderful open-air markets, many of which are open to barter, so don't pay the price asked immediately but bargain. You can tell at a glance which produce is locally grown as it is usually plentiful and cheaper in price than the other items. If you run across a bargain (such as brown bread in Germany) stock up, although by the time we reached Amsterdam we never wanted to see another loaf of brown bread again. To compensate for the somewhat erratic diet my cousin and I usually treated ourselves to one good meal a week. By asking the patron of your pension for advice, you can usually be directed to a good quality, inexpensive restaurant.

A word of warning to female travellers, women don't really go out without a male escort after dark in either Spain or Italy. You can circumvent this problem by meeting up with fellow travellers and going about in a group. Don't be shy, initiate conversations, most people we met were terrific, friendly, open and eager to explore new friendships. I myself was glad of the company of my cousin, not only for herself but for her cheerful Irish friendliness which overshadowed my own Canadian reserve and allowed us to meet and at times travel with interesting and valuable companions.

The most important thing to remember is to keep an open mind and a sense of humour. By treating everything like the big adventure it is you are guaranteed to enjoy every minute of your trip. The trip is within anyone's means if you use common sense and plan your trip carefully. Including airfare, Eurorail pass, food and incidental expenses my cousin and I spent four and a half months of pure bliss travelling across that great continent for less than \$2,000 each. The trains are marvelous and we used them extensively in all countries except England and Ireland, the former because we spent very little time there, and the latter because we hitchiked around to various relatives.

So plan ahead, keep an open mind and enjoy...