

Traveling through Europe by train

This trip we traveled through Europe using the Euro rail all the way. We started in Paris. Although I have been to **Paris** several times before, this time I saw it in the spring. There were colorful flower displays everywhere, each bloom bursting open for both rain and sunshine. I had never seen the Eiffel tower before when lit from within against the rain. It glistens and begs for lovers to stop and kiss. For sure, there was love in the air. We continued our journey on an overnight train in a sleeping cabin that gently rocked us to sleep all the way to Florence. The sun was shining in Florence and promised unending chances to see some of the world's finest art. That is until there was a strike that closed most of the museums sending thousands of tourists into the streets looking confused and walking around in circles. But **Florence** is a museum in itself. Art dominates every corner and every wall in this beautiful old city. The views from atop the bell tower still ring out with a rich history of ancient times when artists gathered and produced some of the greatest masterpieces in the world. The churches are marvels of architecture, each adding more glory to the religious world of the past. There could never be enough time to study or totally understand all the treasures in this city. We took a day trip to Siena. It's a small town hidden between steep mountains and saturated in Tuscan charm. Oh ... **Siena**. One day is not enough. She makes me feel at home with my Italian heritage. The next day we rolled through more of Italy and on to our next destination. Venice is unlike any other city in the world. St. Marks Cathedral still boasts of a time when **Venice** dominated the world. The ceilings are covered with 6000 square feet of gold inlay mosaics. The main square has orchestras playing classical music for all to hear and feel the splendor of its past. But Venice is also a city that is sinking. We were there when they had the rain storm of the season. The sirens warned of an impending flood, and we watched as St. Marks Square overflowed with almost three feet of water. It actually hurt to watch the water climb right up the steps and into the cathedral. We then had a crash course of "umbrella etiquette" as thousands of tourists tried to make their way through the narrow alleys and on the raised platforms handily ready for such a need. That was an experience indeed. This city was built in a golden age when people had a desire to create beauty. And now the world has a need to preserve it. Another overnight train had us entering **Switzerland** at sunrise when the tops of snow peaked mountains turned the color of soft pink. We stayed in Lausanne at the edge of Lake Geneva. It's a city steeper than it is wide. Surrounded by mountains, the metro goes vertical. Our hotel was at the third stop up. We did some touring through the country and found more rain. The scenery was beautiful. It looks strong and yet peaceful dotted with black and white cows. Although extremely expensive, the Swiss offer clean and efficient services and are proud of their cheese. Fondue is the entree of choice. Traveling on, our next stop was **Southern Germany** Bavaria is a land of Shirley Temple cities and fairy tale castles. Here we had sunshine and saw majestic hillsides that were covered with yellow flowers that looked as if they were poured out from the mountains. King Ludwig couldn't have been too "mad". He underestimated right in beauty and it must have been king. From Versailles in dominance to the capitol to heaven sprinkled in teaches the



ered with yellow tops of the mountain stood good real his castle was situated the middle of endless views. Oh, been good to be the glory of Versailles France, to the of world powers; the cathedrals reaching up and the castles

amongst the hills Europe is a country that history of our past. I want more.