

BRISBANE · SINGAPORE · MILAN ... HELSINKI · AMSTERDAM

Europe *by Rail*

Lyndal's long way round · October to December 2026

This isn't a schedule. For each leg it shows when the trains actually run, the best time of day to leave, and the few trains worth booking ahead. Decide the rest as you go.

TURN UP AND GO

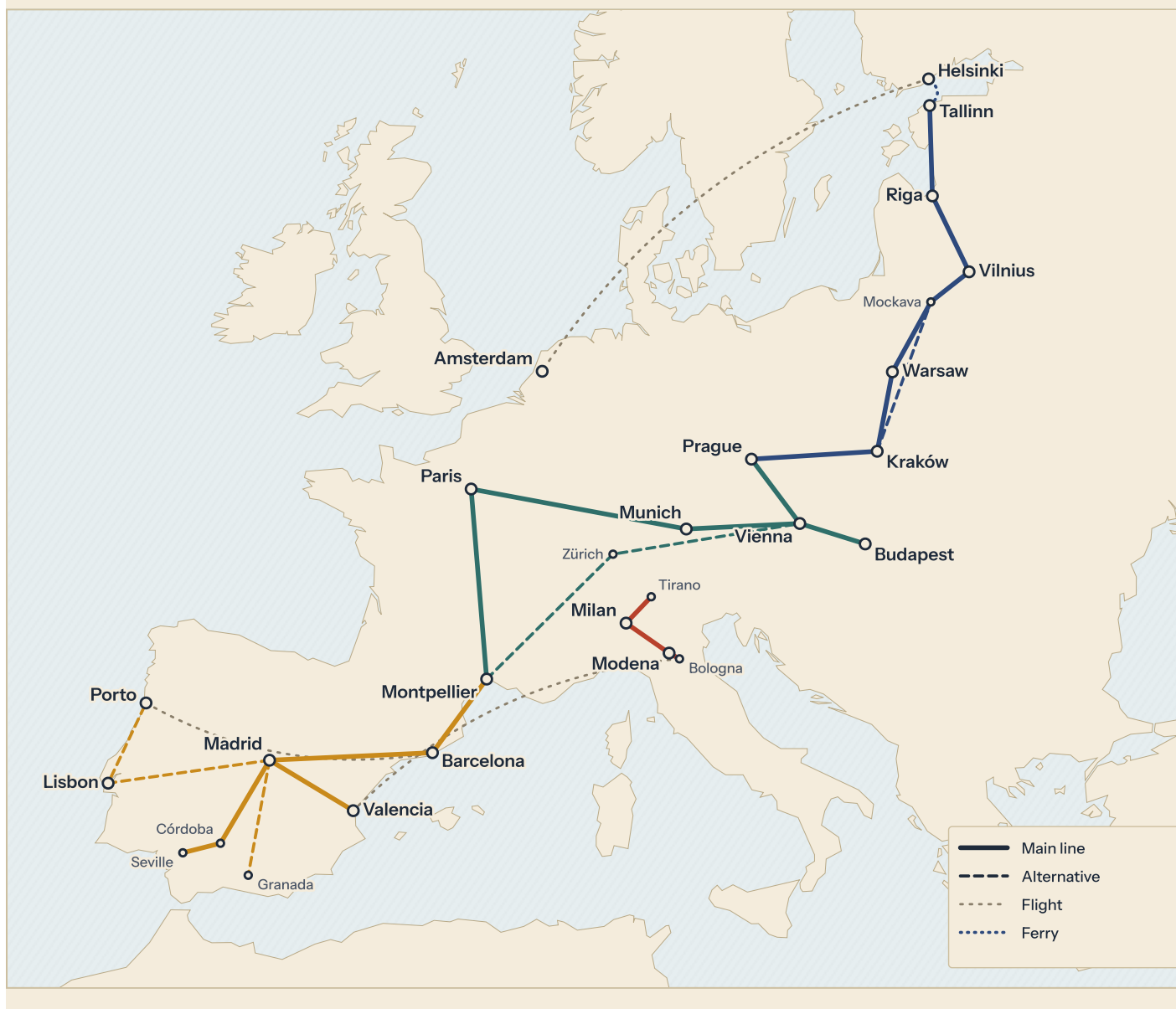
Trains at least hourly. Decide over breakfast.

PICK YOUR TRAIN

A handful a day. Look the night before.

BOOK AHEAD

One or two a day, or limited pass seats. Lock it in once the date is set.



Three rules for the whole trip

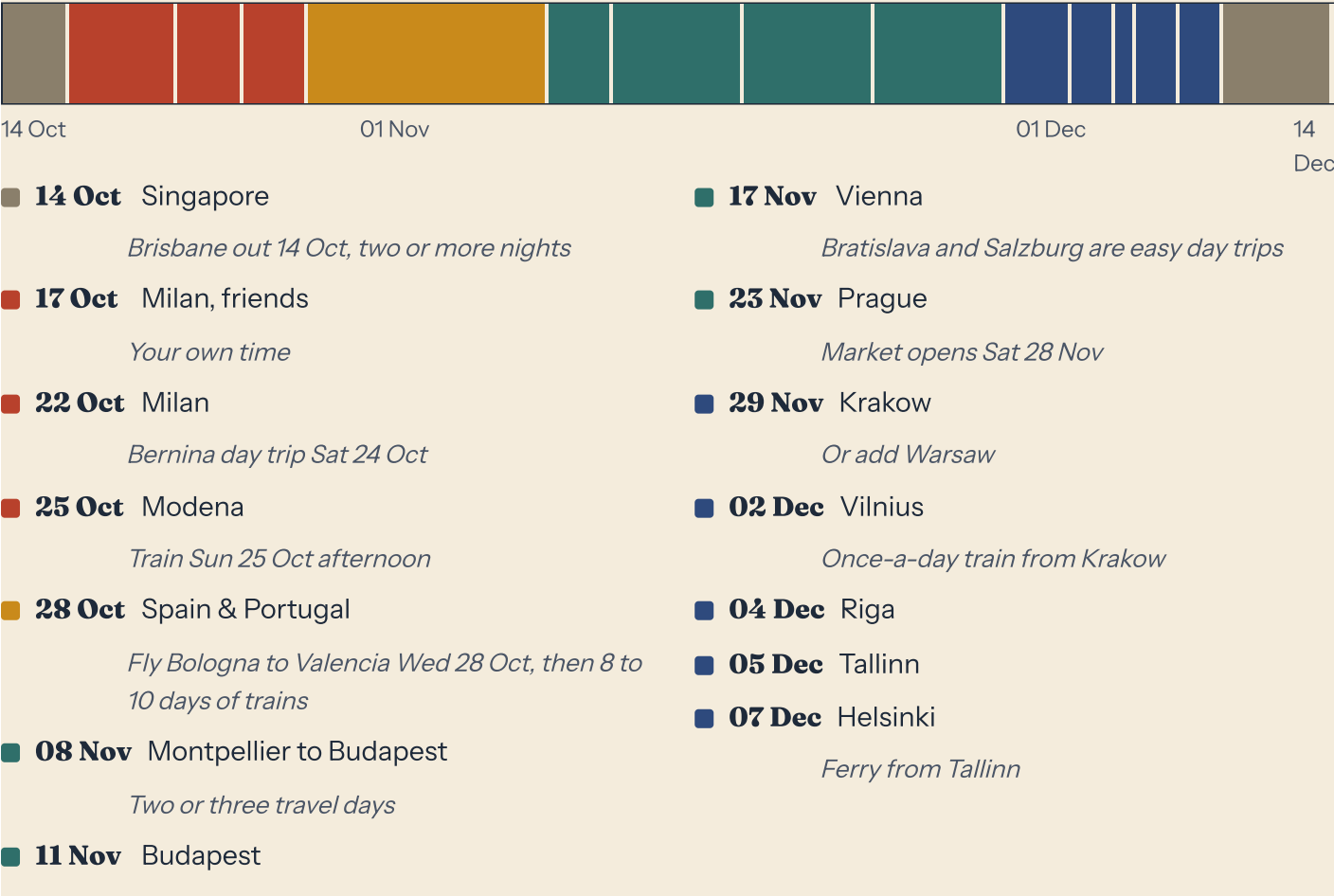
- 1. **Busy lines, stay loose.** Milan to Modena, Spain's AVE lines, Lisbon to Porto, Budapest to Vienna, Krakow to Warsaw. Trains run all day. No need to plan.
- 2. **Thin lines, go early.** Barcelona to Montpellier, Madrid to Lisbon, Poland to Lithuania and Riga to Tallinn have few trains and the last good one leaves early.
- 3. **North in December, travel in the morning.** The sun sets around 15:15 in Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki in early December. Morning trains arrive in daylight.

The fixed points

Sat 24 Oct	Bernina day trip from Milan, 06:20 departure
Sun 25 Oct	Milan to Modena, afternoon
Wed 28 Oct	Bologna to Valencia flight (Ryanair 09:35 on this date)
Sat 28 Nov	Prague Christmas market opens. Be in Prague on or after this date
~9 Dec	Leave Helsinki to reach Brisbane on 14 Dec with two Singapore nights

One way the dates could fall

A sample, not a plan. It shows the trip fits comfortably, with slack, and lands you in each Christmas city after its market opens.



■ **09 Dec** Amsterdam, Singapore, home

Fly out ~9 Dec, land Brisbane 14 Dec

Book these ahead. Everything else, decide on the day.

Barcelona to Montpellier

Only 3 to 5 direct fast trains a day, the last around mid-afternoon, and a limited number of pass seats. Reserve as soon as the date is set (about €25 to €35 each). If sold out, local trains via Portbou and Cerbère need no reservation.

Madrid to Lisbon (if you do Portugal)

No direct train. Two departures a day, three trains, about 11 hours. Pick the day and treat it as the day's outing. Or take the 1h15 flight.

Poland to Lithuania

One train a day: Krakow 06:13 or Warsaw 08:57, change at Mockava for Vilnius. The Lithuanian leg needs a €5 reservation on Itglink.lt, which opens about 30 days ahead.

Paris to Munich (Route A)

One direct train a day until the December timetable change. The fallback is a change at Stuttgart or Karlsruhe.

Any night train

Nightjet couchettes and sleepers sell out, and pass prices rise as they fill. Book the moment you decide.

Flights

Bologna to Valencia on 28 Oct. Helsinki to Amsterdam and home. Not covered by the pass.

Italy & the Bernina

The Bernina day · Saturday 24 October

Your 06:20 plan works. Going to Alp Grüm and back is smart and you'll see the best of it. If you're feeling good at Alp Grüm, the summit is only about 15 minutes further.

Plan A: turn at Alp Grüm

06:20 Leave Milano Centrale

08:50 Arrive Tirano. Coffee

09:41 Red train up the mountain

~11:10 Alp Grüm. Glacier view, lunch at the station restaurant (open 07:00 to 17:00 until 8 Nov)

~14:00 to Train back down

15:00

16:00 to Leave Tirano for Milan

18:00

18:30 to Back in Milan

20:30

Plan B: go on to the summit

06:20 Leave Milano Centrale

09:41 Red train from Tirano

~11:25 Ospizio Bernina (2,253 m) and Lago Bianco. Nothing to eat here, so bring a snack

~13:00 Drop back to Alp Grüm for lunch

16:00 to Leave Tirano for Milan

18:00

- 24 Oct is still on the summer timetable (it runs until 25 Oct), so you get the full service.
- No works on the Tirano side in October. The Albula closure starts 29 Oct, further north.
- Switzerland is in Schengen but carry passports anyway.
- No connection in either plan is under 20 minutes.

Sit on the left going up from Tirano for the Brusio spiral viaduct and Lago Bianco. Sit on the right coming down.

SAT 24 OCT

Milan → Tirano

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

2h30

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

~15 a day

RESERVATION

None. On the pass



Best time to leave About hourly, illustrative

Best window. The 06:20 from Milano Centrale arrives Tirano about 08:50.

Trenord regional trains are fully on the pass. No reservation, no fee.

[Source](#)

SAT 24 OCT

Tirano → Alp Grüm / Ospizio Bernina

TURN UP AND GO

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

~1h30 to Alp Grüm, ~15 min more to the summit

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

About hourly

RESERVATION

None on the red trains



Best time to leave Departures

Best window. Take the 09:41, not the 08:58. The 08:58 leaves only about 8 minutes after you arrive from Milan. The 09:41 gives you a relaxed 50 minutes.

Use the ordinary red regional trains, not the Bernina Express. Same line and views, windows that open, no CHF 32 to 44 panorama fee.

[Source](#)

SAT 24 OCT

Tirano → Milan

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

2h30

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

About hourly

RESERVATION

None



Best window. Leave Tirano between 16:00 and 18:00 to be back in Milan by about 18:30 to 20:30. The last train is 20:08, arriving about 22:40.

Back in Tirano with time to spare? The café by the station watches the red train run down the main street.

[Source](#)

SUN 25 OCT

Milan → Modena

TURN UP AND GO

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

1h45 to 2h15

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

About hourly

RESERVATION

None on Regionale Veloce



Best window. Any direct Regionale Veloce between 14:00 and 16:00. You'll be in Modena by late afternoon.

Skip the Frecciarossa. It means a change at Bologna and a €13 reservation for no real time saved. Italo isn't on the pass.

[Source](#)

WED 28 OCT

Modena → Valencia (fly from Bologna)

BOOK AHEAD

Checked

JOURNEY

Train 25 min + monorail 7 min + flight 2h05

CHANGES

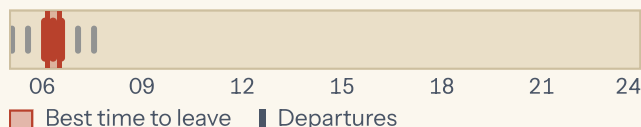
Bologna Centrale, then Marconi Express

HOW OFTEN

Trains every few minutes

RESERVATION

Flight booked separately. Marconi Express €12.80, not on pass



Best window. Ryanair flies Bologna to Valencia at 09:35 on Wed 28 Oct. Leave Modena 06:00 to 06:30.

Florence has no Wednesday flight to Valencia and Milan means backtracking. Bologna is the one.

[Source](#)

28 OCT TO ~8 NOV

Spain & Portugal

Loop 1 • Andalucía, all rail

Valencia → Madrid → Córdoba → Seville → Granada → Madrid → Barcelona → Montpellier

Everything is frequent AVE except Granada. You can decide it all on the day. The easiest option on the legs.

Loop 2 • Portugal

Valencia → Madrid → (the 11-hour day) → Lisbon → Porto → fly → Barcelona → Montpellier

One big rail day, one short flight. Lisbon and Porto in exchange. Doing it all by rail means the 11-hour day twice.

Both loops end in Barcelona. The Barcelona to Montpellier train is the one to reserve early.

FROM 28 OCT

Valencia → Madrid

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

1h40 to 2h

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

16 to 25 a day

RESERVATION

AVE ~€10 each



Best time to leave About hourly, illustrative

Best window. Anything mid-morning.

Plenty of choice all day.

Choose Renfe AVE. Ouigo and Avlo trains on the same line are not on the pass.

[Source](#)

LOOP 1

Madrid → Córdoba /
Seville

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

1h45 Córdoba, 2h20
Seville

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

40+ a day

RESERVATION

AVE ~€10 each



Best time to leave About hourly, illustrative

Best window. Whenever suits. Córdoba to Seville is only 45 minutes, so it's easy to do both.

Granada is the exception: only about three direct trains a day from Madrid (3h05). Check the evening before.

[Source](#)

LOOP 2

Madrid → Lisbon

BOOK AHEAD

Checked

JOURNEY

~11 hours

CHANGES

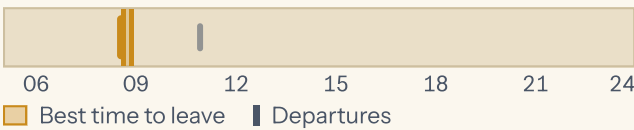
2: Badajoz and
Entroncamento

HOW OFTEN

2 a day

RESERVATION

Book Spanish and
Portuguese legs
separately. Badajoz
railcar: pay on board



Best window. Madrid Chamartín 08:30 (arrives Lisbon about 19:45) or Atocha 10:55 (arrives about 22:25). The 08:30 is the kinder choice. Coming back, Lisbon has departures at 08:00 and 12:30.

The overnight sleeper ended in 2020 and isn't coming back. The middle leg is a single 1950s-style railcar through the Alentejo, part of the charm. Or fly in 1h15.

[Source](#)

LOOP 2

Lisbon → Porto

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

2h45 to 3h

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

15+ a day

RESERVATION

Required, small fee



Best window. Any Alfa Pendular or Intercidades from mid-morning.

Until 1 Nov, engineering works put a bus between Aveiro and Porto. After 1 Nov you are clear.

[Source](#)

LOOP 2

Porto → Barcelona

PICK YOUR TRAIN

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

~2h flight, or 2 long rail days

CHANGES

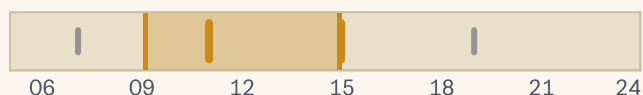
n/a

HOW OFTEN

Direct flights most days

RESERVATION

Flight, not on pass



Best time to leave | Departures

Best window. Short flight. The all-rail way back is the 11-hour Lisbon to Madrid day again, then Madrid to Barcelona.

Don't go back via Vigo. Buses replace the train on the Spanish side until April 2027.

[Source](#)

LOOP 1

Madrid → Barcelona

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

2h30

CHANGES

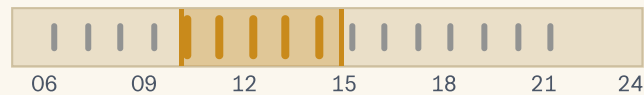
Direct

HOW OFTEN

~30 a day

RESERVATION

AVE ~€10 each



Best time to leave | About hourly, illustrative

Best window. Mid-morning or early afternoon. Avoid 07:00 to 10:00 and 16:30 to 19:30 when pass seats go first.

Iryo trains also take the pass (with a fee). Ouigo does not.

[Source](#)

~7 OR 8 NOV

Barcelona → Montpellier

BOOK AHEAD

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

3h05 to 3h30

CHANGES

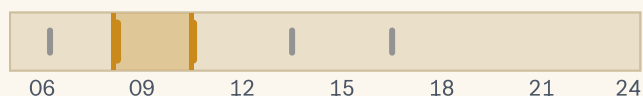
Direct

HOW OFTEN

3 to 5 a day

RESERVATION

Required, ~€25 to €35, limited pass seats



Best time to leave | Departures

Best window. Morning. The last direct train leaves Barcelona around 16:30.

If the fast trains are full: local train to Portbou, walk across to Cerbère, French TER to Montpellier. No reservations, all on the pass.

[Source](#)

~8 NOV TO ~29 NOV

Into Central Europe

Route A • Day trains via Paris and Munich

Montpellier → Paris (night) → Munich (night) → Budapest

Three easy days, all in daylight. Paris to Munich has only one direct train.

Route B • Zurich and a night train

Montpellier → Zurich (night) → Nightjet 21:40 → Budapest 09:30

One long day, then a sleeper. Saves a hotel night. Book the Nightjet early.

Markets open in this order: Vienna 13 Nov, Budapest mid-Nov, Salzburg 19 Nov, then Prague on 28 Nov. So Budapest, then Vienna, then Prague lines up nicely. Use spare days on Bratislava, Salzburg or Brno.

ROUTE A, DAY 1

Montpellier → Paris

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

3h15 to 3h40

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

~21 a day

RESERVATION

TGV €10 to €20



Best window. Leave 08:00 to 10:00. You arrive at Gare de Lyon early afternoon with time to cross to Gare de l'Est for tomorrow.

TGV pass seats are rationed. Reserve once you know the day.

[Source](#)

ROUTE A, DAY 2

Paris → Munich

BOOK AHEAD

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

~5h35

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

1 direct a day

RESERVATION

~€19



Best window. There is one direct train, usually early morning. Otherwise change at Stuttgart or Karlsruhe.

Munich's own Christmas market opens 20 Nov, a bit late for this route.

[Source](#)

ROUTE A, DAY 3

Munich → Budapest

PICK YOUR TRAIN

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

~7h by day, ~10h overnight

CHANGES

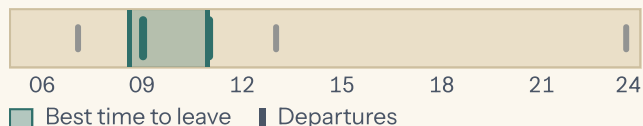
0 to 1

HOW OFTEN

Several by day, 1 night train

RESERVATION

Night train: couchette or sleeper fee



Best window. Leave mid-morning and arrive in the evening. Or take the 23:35 night train and wake up in Budapest.

Both go through Vienna. You could stop there first and do Budapest after.

[Source](#)

ROUTE B

Montpellier via Zurich → Budapest (night train)

BOOK AHEAD

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

~7h30 to Zurich, then 1h50 overnight

CHANGES

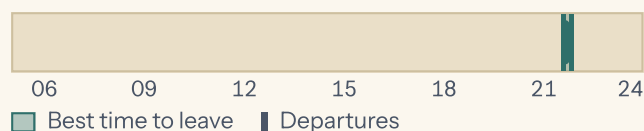
1 to 2 to Zurich

HOW OFTEN

1 night train

RESERVATION

Nightjet: couchette from ~€30, sleeper more



Best window. Day 1: Montpellier to Zurich, stay the night. Day 2: explore Zurich, board the 21:40 Nightjet, arrive Budapest Keleti about 09:30.

The Paris to Vienna sleeper ended in December 2025. Zurich is now the best way to get a night train into Central Europe.

[Source](#)

~17 NOV

Budapest → Vienna

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

2h20 to 2h40

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

Hourly

RESERVATION

Optional, recommended



Best window. Around 10:00 to 11:00 for a midday arrival and the afternoon free.

RegioJet also runs this route but needs its own ticket. Stick to the ÖBB and MÁV railjets.

[Source](#)

DAY TRIPS

Vienna → Bratislava or Salzburg

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

56 min Bratislava, ~2h30 Salzburg

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

Twice hourly / hourly

RESERVATION

None



Best window. Any morning. Salzburg's market opens 19 Nov, so a night there works well.

These are the ideal way to use spare days before Prague's market opens on 28 Nov.

[Source](#)

~23 NOV

Vienna → Prague

TURN UP AND GO

Checked

JOURNEY

~4h

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

Every 2 hours

RESERVATION

Optional,
recommended



Best window. A mid-morning railjet arrives Prague early afternoon.

Brno is on the way and worth a night if you have days to fill.

[Source](#)

~29 NOV TO ~9 DEC

North to Helsinki

In December, go north in the morning. Every leg here has a good early train that arrives before the 15:15 sunset. The only train with no backup is Kraków to Vilnius, which runs once a day, so leave a spare day around it.

Option A • Kraków straight to Vilnius

Prague → Kraków → Vilnius → Riga → Tallinn → Helsinki

The simplest. Board the 06:13 in Kraków.

Option B • Add Warsaw

Prague → Kraków → Warsaw → Vilnius → ...

One more market (opens 28 Nov). Same train, boarded at 08:57 in Warsaw, a gentler start.

~29 NOV

Prague → Krakow

PICK YOUR TRAIN

Checked

JOURNEY

~6h by day, ~9h overnight

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

2 day trains, 1 night train

RESERVATION

~€7 by day, couchette
~€18 to €25



Best window. The 10:08 'Cracovia' arrives 16:41. The 06:08 'Silesia' arrives 12:10 if you're early risers. The 22:16 sleeper arrives 07:25.

Krakow's market on the Main Square opens 27 Nov.

[Source](#)

~2 DEC

Krakow (or Warsaw) → Vilnius

BOOK AHEAD

Checked

JOURNEY

~9 to 10h (8h from Warsaw)

CHANGES

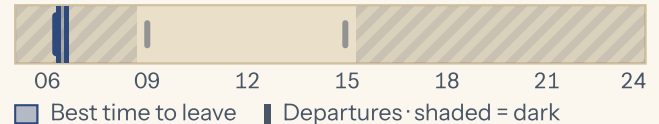
1, at Mockava (same platform)

HOW OFTEN

1 a day from Krakow

RESERVATION

€5 on the Lithuanian leg (Itglink.It)



Best window. Krakow 06:13, or Warsaw 08:57 if you stop in Warsaw. The Warsaw 14:57 gets to Vilnius near midnight.

This is the one train with no backup. Book the LTG Link reservation as soon as it opens, about 30 days out.

[Source](#)

~4 DEC (FRI)

Vilnius → Riga

PICK YOUR TRAIN

Checked

JOURNEY

4h40

CHANGES

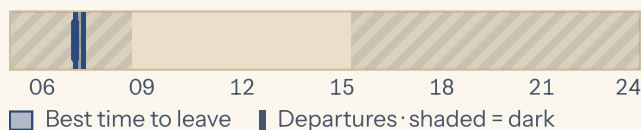
Direct

HOW OFTEN

Daily

RESERVATION

€5 (Itglink.It)



Best window. 06:55, arriving Riga 11:33 with the afternoon for Dome Square.

On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays this train carries on to Tallinn.

[Source](#)

~5 DEC

Riga → Tallinn

PICK YOUR TRAIN

Checked

JOURNEY

5h50 to 6h40

CHANGES

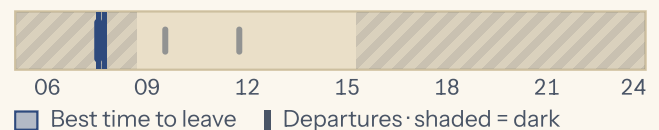
1, at Valga

HOW OFTEN

3 a day

RESERVATION

~€5 on the Latvian leg



Best window. The 07:30 reaches Tallinn at 13:18, in daylight. The 11:45 gets in after dark.

To be fair to the bus: the coach takes 4.5 hours with no change. The train works fine and is more comfortable.

[Source](#)

~7 DEC

Tallinn → Helsinki
(ferry)

TURN UP AND GO

Typical, confirm

JOURNEY

2h to 2h40

CHANGES

Direct

HOW OFTEN

Up to ~13 sailings

RESERVATION

Pass gives a discount
(Tallink code EURAIL)



About hourly, illustrative · shaded = dark

Best window. A morning or midday sailing puts you into Helsinki before dark.

Book direct on tallink.com with the EURAIL code rather than through a ferry website.

[Source](#)

~9 DEC

Helsinki → Amsterdam (fly)

PICK YOUR TRAIN

Checked

JOURNEY

2h35 flight + 30 min
airport train

CHANGES

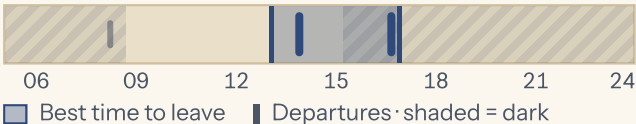
n/a

HOW OFTEN

Finnair 2, KLM 1

RESERVATION

Flight, and HSL airport
ticket (not on pass)



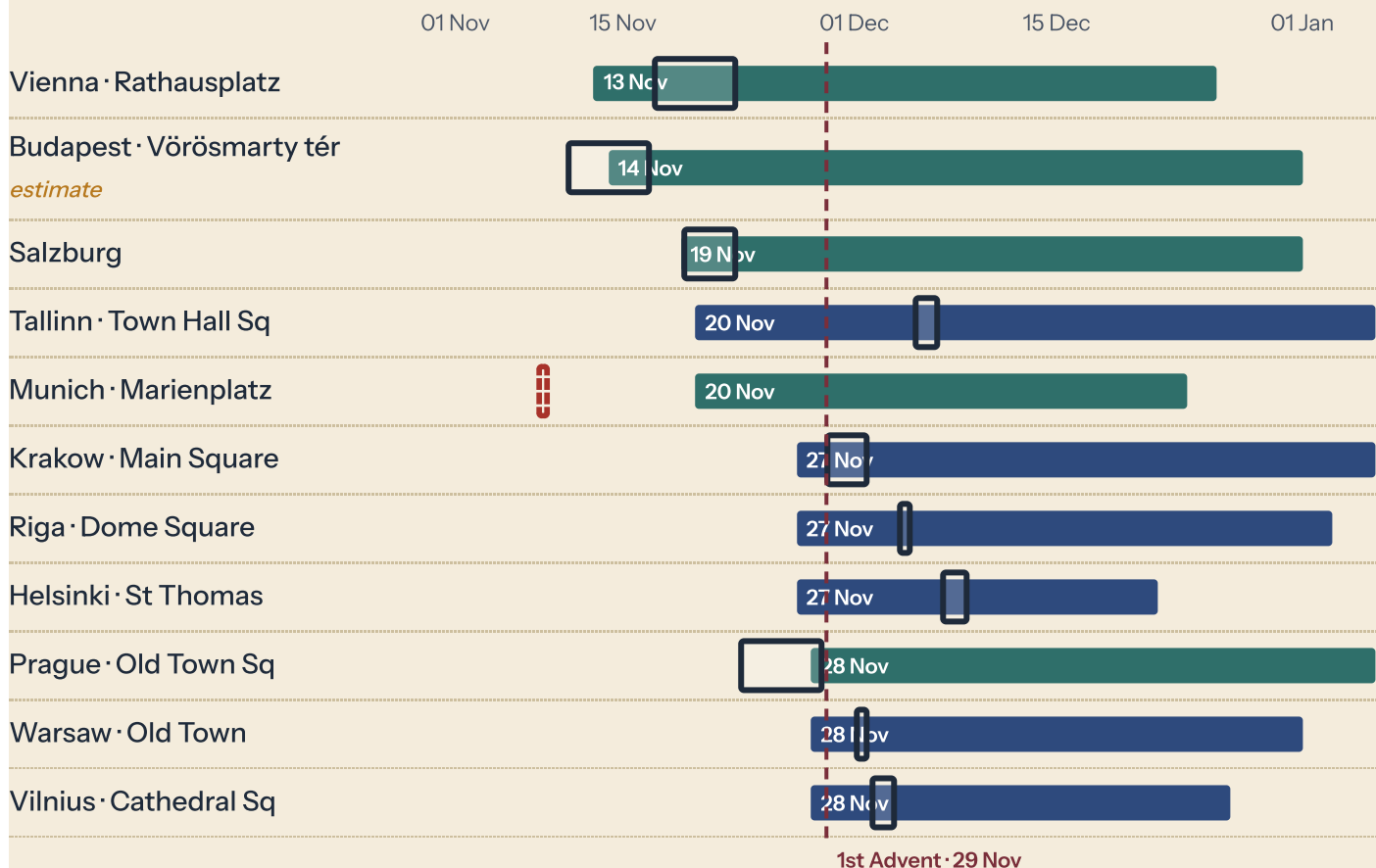
Best window. Pick the flight that fits your Amsterdam to Singapore connection. Finnair ~08:10 and ~16:40, KLM ~13:55.

The airport train from Helsinki Central runs every 10 to 20 minutes and takes about 30 minutes.

[Source](#)

Christmas markets

Coloured bars show when each market is open. The dark marker shows when the sample plan has you in town. Munich isn't open yet on Route A, but Tallinn, Helsinki, Vienna and Salzburg are.



Your pass, in one minute

On the pass, no extra

Regional trains everywhere: Trenord, the red Bernina trains, Italian Regionale, Czech and Austrian railjets (reservation optional), Estonian Elron.

On the pass, plus a seat fee

Frecciarossa €13 · Spanish AVE ~€10 · Portuguese Alfa Pendular small fee · French TGV €10 to €20 · Spain to France €25 to €35 · Baltic LTG Link €5 · night trains vary.

Not on the pass

Italo, Ouigo, Avlo, Bologna's Marconi Express monorail, Helsinki airport train, all flights. Ferries get a discount only.

Where to reserve

The Rail Planner app or eurail.com, or a station ticket counter. Station counters in Spain and Italy are quick and friendly.

Handy links

[Rail Planner app \(Eurail\)](#)

[Italy strikes \(scioperi\)](#)

[Trenitalia](#)

[Swiss & RhB times \(SBB\)](#)

[Renfe \(Spain\)](#)

[CP \(Portugal\) notices](#)

[SNCF Connect \(France\)](#)

[ÖBB & Nightjet](#)

[České dráhy \(Czech\)](#)

[PKP Intercity \(Poland\)](#)

[LTG Link \(Lithuania\)](#)

[Elron \(Estonia\)](#)

[Tallink ferries](#)

[The Man in Seat 61](#)

Italy's rail strikes are usually announced only about 10 days ahead. Check the scioperi page the week before each Italian travel day. Europe's timetables change on Sun 13 Dec 2026, after you've left.

Researched 28 September 2026 from operator timetables and Seat 61. **Checked** means seen on an official page for autumn 2026. **Typical, confirm** means the current pattern, so look it up the day before. Times are local.

Made with love for Lyndal. Buon viaggio.