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Rick Steves' Best Of Europe 2012



Synopsis

You can count on Rick Steves to tell you what you really need to know when planning a Grand Tour of Europe. In this guide, Rick covers the best of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland. You'll find a healthy mix of big cities, small towns, and exciting regions, including: London, Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, Prague, and Barcelona. Rothenberg, Siena, Toledo, Hallstatt, and Gimmelwald. Provence, the French Riviera, the Romantic Road, the Berner Oberland, and the Cinque Terre. Rick's candid, humorous advice will guide you to good-value hotels and restaurants. You'll learn how to find the right bus in Rome, an inexpensive cr  f  pe in Paris, and which museums and sights are worth your time and money. More than just reviews and directions, a Rick Steves guidebook is a tour guide in your pocket.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At first I was a little cautious about buying a travel book for my Kindle touch. I was especially concerned that the maps and diagrams would not interpret well. As soon as it downloaded though, my worries were expelled. The maps and all the pictures are clear and can even be enlarged for easier viewing. And of course, this is a Rick Steve's book so all the information and travel tips are there, now he just comes in a smaller size.

We took our first trip to Europe this May, so naturally I wanted a guide to help plan the trip. So who

better than Rick Steves? Well, maybe there is no one better, but I must say some of his advice can be misleading. For example, after reading his suggestions, we were totally paranoid about going anywhere because of his constant warnings about pickpockets and thugs lurking around almost every dark corner. So we ordered theft-proof backpacks and money belts, you name it. Well, I'm telling you, it was all overkill. We never encountered any such shady characters, and the money belts are a big hassle. Just keep your wallet in your front pocket and exercise normal precautions. I think Rick Steves overstates the dangers of London, Paris, and Rome. They didn't seem any worse than New York or LA to me. Some of his advice on restaurants is also shaky. He recommended several places in Florence and Rome that are actually just barely okay. He gives good advice on sites to see (for the most part), but his other advice should be taken with a grain of salt. It's also kind of funny to see every other American tourist in Europe toting around a Rick Steves guide. I started hiding mine (tearing out sections of the book rather than lugging around those weighty tomes) because carrying his guide in your hand is a dead giveaway that you are an "out-to-lunch" tourist, just like a camera around the neck. And oh by the way, Europeans wear jeans just as much as Americans do, even though Rick says that Europeans have a different style of dress. Yes, to some extent, not that many shorts, for example, but jeans? Hey, they're everywhere, although he makes a good point that they can be too heavy for packing. So remember, Rick Steves is not the final word on European travel, but he is a good place to start. Get some second opinions.

I own this e-book, used it extensively on a solo six-week backpacking tour of seven countries, and was torn between giving it a five-star rating for content or a two-star rating for utility as an e-book. Since these comments are essentially negative, I'll go with the lower rating. The negative comments concern the general efficacy of e-guidebooks like this one versus their paper alternatives and aren't specific to Best of Europe 2012. I'll never bring an e-guidebook on another trip; they're too tedious and cumbersome in actual use during sightseeing. When consulting a paper guidebook while taking a self-guided walking tour of a town or a museum, referring to a map on a different page of the book is so simple one is barely conscious of doing it. If one is really organized, he might put post-it flags on reference pages, or even tear out the pages of interest for that day and bring just those. But I normally bring the whole book and just use my fingers as bookmarks, flipping back and forth between the current map, for instance, and the narrative for that spot on the tour. With the Kindle, and I suspect other readers and reader apps for tablets and laptops, the process of moving to non-contiguous and continually changing points of current interest in a book is so tedious and frustrating that it diminishes the touring experience. The process of navigating around such a book

would be bad enough if one were sitting at a desk with a pen and paper on which to note each new "location" (five-digit number associated with a point in the book) in which one is currently interested. Each transfer to a different location requires ten or fifteen cursor movements and menu selections and that's assuming you remember or have written down the location in which you're interested. Otherwise, it's back to the table of contents, searching the book electronically (assuming your search word is reasonably unique and doesn't generate fifty hits), or moving through the book a screen at a time. I find paying attention to what I'm looking at more difficult when using an annoying and distracting e-book. Some possible work-arounds with e-guidebooks used for self-guided tours:*

- * Using the alt-qwerty undocumented feature on the Kindle Keyboard for number input instead of the symbol menu makes the jumping process physically easier because it requires many fewer key presses.*
- * Some may find electronic bookmarks of benefit, especially if they're willing to input all the needed bookmarks ahead of time and if their total of bookmarks for that book isn't itself cumbersome.*
- * Using an independent paper map in addition to the reader may help, but the guidebook map is keyed to the book's descriptions and may include quirky or otherwise interesting minor sights and commercial establishments such as ice cream, pastry, and chocolate shops that are attractions mentioned only in the book. These minor things are presumably why one bothered to bring a guidebook, which isn't required to find the Eiffel Tower or Mona Lisa. Also, it's easier to find one's way through the hodgepodge of some old cities by following the trail marked on the guidebook map. Plus, the guidebook has maps for restaurants and hotels. So one finds he still needs the book maps. Trying to look at and interpret a paper map on the fly, while standing on a crowded sidewalk and not dropping the kindle, is a challenge some professional jugglers may relish. For the rest of us, four hands are helpful; bring someone else to handle the map in the event you aren't a mutant.

All that said, linear e-books such as novels were enjoyable and convenient reading on my trip. No other way I could have brought five recreational books as I did.

My wife and I always take Risk Steves with us to Europe. He is our personal tour guide, telling us stories and histories of the places we visit. I remember sitting on the bench inside the Sistine Chapel, listening to Steves tell us how Michelangelo created the master piece for 40 minutes! What I like most about his guide is his practical advices with a personal touch. Unlike many other guide books that plainly describe the destinations like listing a menu, he always tries to give you some practical suggestions as to what to do and what NOT to do. He has written extensively about Europe and we used to weigh the merit of a particular guide book against the size of our backpack. Now with Kindle, we can load up as many as we think would help. In short, his books, along with

those wonderful free audio guides, are the best companion to Europe.

I liked this book before I left for my trip, but absolutely LOVED it once I got to Europe! I carried it with me every day, and in a group of 48 people from all over the world on my tour, I became the go to person for advice and day planning, with lots of "What does your book say?" Rick is awesome, gives a great amount of historical backgrounds, walking tours, tips and tricks, etc. Combined with his free audio guides you can download from his website, this book really cannot be beat. I did a good amount of shopping around trying to pick the right guidebook to buy and take with me, and I am SO glad I chose Rick Steves! HIGHLY recommend!

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