

Planning a Genealogy Trip

The key is to Plan as much as possible ahead of time. (The following emphasizes European travel)

Start planning about nine months ahead of your trip.

- Purchase a travel guide ie: Rick Steves, Lonely Planet etc.
- If passport expiration is within 6 months of return date - Renew
- Starting in 2021 - Must register with European Travel Information and Authorization System. ETIAS www.schengenvisainfo.com/etias
- Make copies of Passport, Credit Cards, Travel Tickets
- Have an itinerary
 - Date, Town, Address & Contact number for accommodations, Travel Plans with photo of tickets
 - Save to a place that you don't need WIFI such as Notes
- Check your Medical Insurance coverage for travel outside USA
- Medicare doesn't cover outside the USA, purchase Medical Insurance

Accommodations - Book each night with a little wiggle room

- Airbnb, Vacation By Owner, Booking.com - Ability to cancel with little fee (high flexibility)
- Inform owner - Genealogy trip, names and birthdates of ancestors
- Take a gift from USA for hosts / Small gifts, keychains, postcards, etc.
 - Kids love US dollar bills
- WIFI available - hopefully free

Travel Arrangements

- Email hosts for best travel between towns, countries etc.
- Purchase tickets online ahead of time
- Rent a car - Most are Stick Shift
 - Get an International Drivers License from AAA, no test just pay small fee
 - Purchase the car rental insurance - less headache if there is an accident
 - If driver is 69 or above, may charge higher rates
 - Take pictures before and after of car to prove condition
 - It's expensive to take a rented car across borders
 - Drivers can be hired to drive across to another country

Trains - Different kinds of trains, high speed or slower trains - less expensive

- Check out Rail Pass

Air - Sometimes flying between countries in Europe is less expensive than train renting a car

Money

- Check currency
 - Euro / Peso / Kuna etc.
 - Can exchange beforehand at bank or wait until arrive at airport at ATM which may save you money
 - European ATMs will withdraw funds only from Checking not Savings
 - Avoid exchanging money in Europe there are high exchange fees
 - Several means of payment
 - US dollars / Country's currency / Debit Card (for ATM) and two Credit Cards with No or Low Transaction Fee (in case card isn't accepted such as American Express)
- Notify bank of travel dates and countries
Have a secure way to carry money, passport, cards ie: Money Belt

Cell Phone

- Check Provider for availability
- Sign up for International Plan or rely on WIFI
- Download Apps - Maps / Translation (Google Translate) / Train Schedules
 - Download Google Maps or City Maps 2Go while online, then go offline and navigate without having roaming charges but you won't be able to search for an address or get real time walking directions. The International Plan allows for address search and turn by turn walking directions.
- Use cell phone for self-guided walking tours - GuruWalk, Free Spirit Walking Tours (google "free walking tour *city*" to find). Guided tours are free but they'll ask for tips afterward so bring cash
- Need an adaptor plug with two round prongs for charger

Research

- Prepare to visit local communities by researching the town, history, current population, weather, etc.
- Where records are kept
 - Capital, County, Town, Church
 - Get as local as possible
 - If unsure where to find records, search for a local genealogy society or go to the closest municipal building you can find to the town where your ancestor lived
- Check for days and hours and plan your itinerary accordingly
- Check for Holidays when buildings might be closed (most closed on weekends)
- Go on a Walking Tour to learn history (may be free) or pull up an App
- Learn some phrases in the language
 - "Thank you"
- Carry hardcopies of family tree and have the written last name to show and communicate what you are doing

- Local library, church, government building - employees might be able to help
- The town might have published a book on local genealogy
- People get excited when they see that you are interested in Genealogy from their area. They'll help you find the library or municipal building where you find records
- Visit graveyards - be prepared for possible unstable ground
 - You might see names of families who immigrated and were neighbors in the US

Keep in mind that, in our experience, people are kind and will want to help you with your research. Have fun and be prepared to meet lots of interesting people!