

F.R.E.A.K.O.U.T.
Fast **R**oad-based **E**urope **A**nd **K**arting **O**dysey **U**nder **T**ime
Constraints

July 8, 2022–August 2, 2022

Day 1: Atlanta, GA–Athens, Greece

Friday, July 8, 2022

Overview and details

The trip begins via a nonstop flight from Atlanta to Athens (not the one in Georgia). If you sleep on a plane, you are likely to have a good time; if you don't, well, sorry.

Details for the flight:

- **DL0222**

Depart: 1730

Arrive: 1135 (Saturday)

Seats: 38A/38B

Flight time: 11h5m

Confirmation number (Ryan): G7UXPH

Confirmation number (Emily): G7UVRF

An upgrade is quite unlikely for this flight. The flight does include dinner service, so it is optional to get dinner in the terminal beforehand.

It would also be advisable not to sleep for the entire flight, as you will want to ensure that you are sufficiently tired to go to sleep probably around 10pm Greek time (CEST+1), since during this trip we will generally want to get started early on our days.

Days 2–5: Athens, Greece

Saturday, July 9, 2022–Tuesday, July 12, 2022

Overview

Welcome to Athens! The home of the university(sic) of georgia, Athens is generally best avoided and is known primarily for its pointless binge drinking culture and low average IQs.

Wait, sorry, wrong Athens—let’s try again. Welcome to Athens! Athens is where civilization was invented in Greece, and has existed since the dawn of time. Alexander created Athens in the Beginning using one settler, and unfortunately his accompanying warrior was destroyed by a tribal village that turned into three barbarian warriors; but, luckily, the city was able to produce another warrior before the barbarians came. And that’s how it all got started!

In part because it has existed forever, there is lots of history in Athens, and it’s tourist-friendly. So there are many things to see.

The general structure of days in Athens is like this:

- *Saturday, July 9*: land, get situated in Glyfada, explore on your own
- *Sunday, July 10*: group activity with RelationalAI: go to Hydra island, see a hydra
- *Monday, July 11*: MLDSCon during the working day; extremely long planned dinner
- *Tuesday, July 12*: MLDSCon during the working day; visit Acropolis in the evening

During the MLDSCon sessions, Emily will have no specified plans—and the sessions will not be interesting enough to attend—and therefore will need to find interesting activities in the area.

Lodging

RelationalAI will be providing lodging at the Congo Palace, which is not located in Congo, but instead in Glyfada, a southern suburb of Athens on the beach of the Saronic Gulf. The homepage for the hotel informs the viewer about the hotel: `Congo Palace opens its welcoming doors and immediately breathes new life`—this implies that the hotel is a good place for breathing.

The hotel’s address is 81 A, Leof. Poseidonos, Glifada 166 74 Greece, or in the local parlance, 81 A, Λεωφ. Ποσειδώνος, Γλυφάδα 166 74. This location is included as a waypoint in the accompanying KMZ file.

The hotel does offer breakfast; hours for breakfast are unknown at the time of this writing.

Airport Logistics

The Athens airport is located a good deal east of Athens itself, and is actually closer to Glyfada than Athens. Therefore, it makes sense to proceed immediately to Glyfada to drop bags. This can be done either via a bus, or by a taxi/Lyft along pretty much the same route.

Uber is available in Athens, but it does not appear that Lyft is. There is also the Taxibeat app. If you choose to take a regular taxi, be sure to negotiate the rate beforehand, and pay cash. (So, be sure to grab a bunch from an ATM after you land.) A price from the airport to Athens would typically be about 35€, so one could presumably expect the same for a ride to Glyfada. In general, based on sentiment from Reddit, it seems like Uber would be the preferable way to go, as it keeps drivers honest.

Alternately, one can take the bus from Athens Airport. There exists an app in the play store called *OASA Telematics*, which has real-time information for buses.

The **X97** bus route travels from Athens airport through Glyfada to Elliniko transport station. Details can be found here: <https://www.athensairportbus.com/en/timetable/x97athensairporttoelliniko.html>. The bus departs about every hour, and the full ride takes about 40 minutes to Elliniko, so, to get to Glyfada is likely to be something like 25 to 30 minutes. The cost is 6€ for a one-way ticket; however, note also that there is a Tourist Ticket for 22€, which is a special 3-day ticket that allows use of all public means of transport within Athens City (buses, metro, and tram). Catching the bus can be done from the designed area at the arrivals level (between Exit 4 and Exit 5). The website at <https://www.athensairportbus.com/en/> has more information if desired.

The Antheon bus stop is the correct one to disembark at to get to Glyfada. This stop is marked as a waypoint in the included KMZ file, so by combining GPS on your phone you should be able to track where you are. The previous stop is Nirvana (cue joke), and the Antheon bus stop can be recognized because you will pass a semi-large green open space on the left that looks like it could be a park if you were desperate.

Traveling Around Athens

Public transport in Athens is fairly comprehensive and can be used to get around town pretty well. The website is <https://www.athenstransport.com/english/> and has lots of information on it.

There are three rail lines: red, green, and blue; of these, the red line is most likely to be useful, though it does not extend all the way down to Glyfada, instead terminating at Elliniko. There are also three tram lines, one of which goes quite close to Congo Palace, with stops known at Agg. Metaxa (Αγγέλου Μεταξά) and Platia Katraki (Παλαιό Δημαρχείο) if you walk a little up the coastline.

If going into Athens, this is likely to take between 40 and 60 minutes, and there are basically three routes:

- Walk or take the 122 bus to Elliniko (Ελληνικό), then take the red line (M2) into town. If walking the full way, it is a 4km walk, so maybe it is better to try and take the bus.
- Take the A2 bus from right outside Congo Palace to Makrygiannē, then take the 230 bus into town.
- Take the T7 tram from Agg. Metaxa to Edem (Εδέμ), then the T6 tram to Syntagma Square or similar. This is estimated to take just about an hour, but it may be simpler than trying to navigate on buses.

Note that according to the Athens Transport website, strikes do happen regularly in Greece, and sometimes with short notice, so it's good to try and stay aware if a strike is currently happening.

To board a bus or a tram, there are blue card readers installed close to all doors. Place your ticket or card close to the contact point—so it's kind of like using a Clipper card—and a green message should show on the screen along with a noise, to let you know that things are valid. You must tap on **every** time you board a bus or tram. More information can be found in D. Using tickets and cards on <https://www.athenstransport.com/english/tickets/>.

On the metro and suburban railway, you just need to use the card reader to get through the gates. It's just like BART—no surprises here.

If you are not using a 3-day pass, you can buy a 24-hour pass (4.10€) or even a 90-minute pass (1.20€ with bulk discounts).

English And People In Athens

According to various online posts and similar, it seems like English proficiency in Greece will be typical of what we'll see on the rest of the trip: probably about half of people will speak some English, they'll be better at understanding than speaking, their accents may be bad, and it will be younger people who are more likely to speak English.

Note that the word for 'yes' in Greek is 'neh' (ναι), which is easy to mistake for no! 'No' is 'oh-hee' (όχι). Try not to confuse them!

Of course every city has its detractors, but general internet sentiment is that Athens can be a pretty grungy place, with graffiti everywhere and many homeless begging (often aggressively). Whether or not this is actually true in practice remains to be seen by us, but it's probably good to be aware of these things. It may be more desirable to travel in a group when going into Athens, and in any case being streetwise and aware that there could be pickpockets or other scammers around would be a good idea. Probably it is best to simply ignore everyone who approaches you.

Hydra Island

On Sunday, the RelationalAI group will be traveling to Hydra island, which will be via a ferry that leaves from Piraeus. From the AthensCon agenda:

In order to go from the hotel to Piraeus Airport, the best is to form groups of 4 people and take a taxi. The day before the trip you ask the help from the hotel reception to schedule a taxi to pick you up from the hotel. The drive time between the hotel and Piraeus airport is 30 mins. The boat leaves exactly at the scheduled time so please schedule to arrive at Gate E at least 20 mins before the departure. Pigi will provide people with the e-tickets 2 days before the trip to Hydra. Pigi has booked tickets for people that have noted here that they will be participating in the event.

For our stay in Hydra, we plan to go swimming (we may need to take an extra little boat to go to a beach), have lunch, and drink coffee greek style. Please make sure to bring with you:

- ID (we will need this for the boat ticket)
- Sunscreen
- Hat
- Towel and swimsuit (in case you would like to swim which is highly recommended for people that enjoy swimming!)
- Your good vibes!

Be sure not to forget the good vibes!

The ferry leaves Piraeus from Gate E8 at 10:00am, and returns to Piraeus at 9:25pm (leaving Hydra island at 8:15pm).

During the day, wandering around in the group should be sufficient to remain entertained.

Other Activity Possibilities

Given that Athens has a lot of history, there are many things to do. A few of these were suggested by the AthensCon plan:

- Beach evening in Yabanaki (20 minutes drive from the hotel)
- Visit Lake Vouliagmeni (15 minutes drive from the hotel)
- Visit Temple of Poseidon during the sunset (1 hour drive from the hotel)

Of course, there are also the touristy ancient Greek historical sites to see:

- **Acropolis of Athens**

Built in the fifth century BC under Pericles.

Has The Parthenon on the top.

Is already a part of the AthensCon plan, on Tuesday afternoon/evening.

Tons of ruins are located here, including other well-known historical buildings.

- **Acropolis Museum**

A museum full of ancient Greek artifacts.

Open from 9am-8pm on weekends, and 9am-5pm on Monday through Thursday.

Admission is 10€ during the summer season.

On the red (M2) line, the best stop would be Syntagma Square, then walk south a bit.

- **Ancient Agora of Athens**

Very close to the Thēseio subway station (on the green line).

Appears to be restored, not just ruins.

Has an associated museum.

- **National Museum of Contemporary Art**

<https://www.emst.gr/en/>

11am-7pm, closed Mondays

Next to Συγγρού - Φιξ metro station (on the red line).

General admission is 8€.

Restaurants

The AthensCon planning document has a handful of restaurants near Glyfada listed as possibilities:

- Sasmos (Greek/Cretan)

Σασμός Κρητικό Εστιατόριο

Grigoriou Lampraki 1, Glifada 166 75, Greece

Opens in the afternoon

<https://sasmosrestaurant.gr/>

- Boracay Philippine and Japanese Cuisine

Giannitsopoulou 6, Glifada 166 74, Greece

Opens at 1pm, closed Mondays

<https://boracay.gr/>

- Barbounaki Glyfada (Greek/mostly seafood)

Μπαρμπουνάκι Γλυφάδα

Leof. Dimarchou Aggelou Metaxa 48, Glifada 166 74, Greece

Opens at 1pm every day, open until midnight

<https://barbounaki.gr/>

- Amigos (Mexican)

Kiprou 65, Glifada 166 74, Greece

Mexican, Tex-Mex, and European

Opens at 12:30pm, open until 1am

<https://amigos.gr/>

- OPUS Inner Pleasure (Mediterranean)

Pandoras 9, Glifada 166 74, Greece

9am-3am

- The Greek (Greek)
Το Ελληνικό
1pm–12am
<https://ellinikomeze.gr/>

Searching Reddit for Athens food options (make sure to search for Greece not Georgia) gives some good results in the Athens area. Only names and general area are listed below; further searching can be done on Google.

- Romatella – Pizza al Taglio (just south of the Acropolis)
- LIONDI Traditional Greek Restaurant (just next to Acropoli station)
- Manouka Athens (north of the Acropolis)
- To Pikantiko (Greek, east of the Acropolis by a bit)
- O Kostas (Souvlaki, northeast of the Acropolis but close)

Day 6: Athens, Greece–Rome, Italy

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Overview and Details

Alas, for today is the last day that you are in Greece. It’s a busy one—at least in the beginning—so pay attention and don’t miss your flight to Rome!

A rough outline of the day is below.

Note that this section just covers traveling from Athens to Rome. See the next page for details on what to do in Rome (possibly referenced from the timeline below).

<i>Start time</i>	<i>End time</i>	<i>Event</i>
9:00am	9:30am	“Icebreaking”? at MLDSCon.
9:30am	10:30am	Ryan gives a talk on relational machine learning.
10:30am	11:00am	Taxi ride to the Athens airport.
11:00am	12:45pm	Clear security, kill time, and board flight AZ719.
12:45pm	1:50pm	<i>(time zone change to CEST)</i> Flight to Rome.

Table 1: Planned order of events and timeline.

Getting To Rome

At 10:30am, you need to be leaving the Congo Palace hotel for the Athens airport. It would be suggested to have the front desk book a taxi, unless you want to try and take the X93 bus. To be honest, giving timing concerns, the taxi is probably the better route—and it’s reasonable to reimburse it.

There is only one terminal in the ATH airport; the metro station is right next to it. Presumably the taxi driver should know where they are going, but in any case, there is only one terminal, so you aren’t going to go to the wrong place.

Security times may be up to half an hour, but if you’ve arrived around 11, this should leave you with more than enough time. Consider getting an airport snack, or perhaps even lunch. No effort has been put into finding which airport food is the best, because all airport food is the worst.

The flight details are below:

- Flight AZ719 (ITA Airways)
- ATH–FCO
- 11:50am–12:45pm
- Ryan’s ticket: 0552356598255
- Emily’s ticket: 0552356598256
- One checked bag allowed each; size maximum is 50cm x 70cm x 38cm.
- One hand baggage allowed each; size maximum is 55cm x 35cm x 25cm, weight maximum is 8kg.

Since both Greece and Italy are in the Schengen zone, customs should not be necessary when landing in Rome.

Fiumicino Airport to AirBnB

Once in Fiumicino Airport, find your way to the Leonardo Express to Roma Termini Train Station. Airport signage is in Italian and English. The train station seems to be in the center of the three terminals kinda out in the parking lot. Follow the Exit signs from baggage claim that say **TRAIN**. It's about a 500m walk with long corridors and escalators.

You can buy tickets in the train station at a booth or vending machine, which is what we're going to do. You can also buy them ahead of time online from any number of semi-shady websites that all quote different prices and make it really unclear what train you're booking.

These trains leave every 30 or 15 minutes during the afternoon and run non-stop to Termini station.

<https://www.rome-airport.info/leonardo-express.html>

The train ride is 32 minutes non-stop.

Once at Termini Station, it's a 2.5km walk (estimated at 30 min) on the most direct route to reach the AirBnB in the Palantine Hill area. The most direct route also takes you through Campidoglio plaza which was apparently designed by Michelangelo.

Lodging

Our AirBnB address is *Via dei Fienili, 95, 00186 Roma RM, Italy*. Host contact info:

Victor & Emma Manager Elegant Apartments Rome Mobile: +39 393 9402811 +39 347 0760221

They also provided this information about the Airbnb and neighborhood itself:

Our little neighborhood is just south of the Forum and Musei Capitolini. The Palantine Hill historical stuff outlines it to the north and east. We are two-ish blocks east of the Tiber River. The closest major road and cross street is Via Luigi Petroselli (major road) and Vico Jugario (cross street).

95 may or may not be our exact apartment, but that is where we're going to meet the AirBnB hosts.

Important: they are meeting us around 3:30pm, so if we're going to be late we need to communicate.

Now that you're at the AirBnB and checked in, time to go to the next page and begin your Roman adventure!

Days 6.5–8: Rome, Italy

Wednesday, July 13, 2022–Friday, July 15, 2022

Overview

Welcome to Rome! Rome is the largest city in and county seat of Floyd County. In 2013 it served as the filming location of House Hunters 78.08: "Nurse Makes Fresh Start on a Tiny Budget in Small Town Georgia."

Wait, sorry, wrong Rome—let's try again. Welcome to Rome! Rome is the capital city of the Roman civilization which was founded by Julius Casesar. Its first technologies were fishing and mining, which proved to be excellent choices for getting a fast start in the Classical Era. The Roman civilization was able to spread well into the modern era, because the leadership trait combo of Organized and Imperialistic really sets you up for good expansion.

Rome is pretty big and we will see not much of it, but we'll see the cool old stuff in the old city center.

Our schedule in Rome:

- *Wednesday, July 13*: travel from Athens, Greece to Rome, Italy. Take it easy, eat good food, see nice parks.
 - *Thursday, July 14*: TOURIST DAYYYYY see Roman stuff and the Vatican.
 - *Friday, July 15*: Leave really freakin' early and take a train to Zurich.
-

Wednesday, July 13 after check-in

This late afternoon and evening should be quite relaxed. This itinerary is a suggestion. There's a historically significant something on every single corner in this city and more good food than you can shake a stick at.

Hopefully we're checked into the AirBnB by 16:00. This is a very loose itinerary so if we're running late it's no big deal.

Head out with a water bottle in tow to go see the city. Suggested Counterclockwise route:

- Trevi Fountain
- Gagosian Art Museum (free admision, open 'til 7, pretty small)
- Gioia Mia (dinner, rave reviews on Reddit)
- Spanish Steps
- Villa Medici (just to see the exterior)
- Explore the Villa Borghese park
- Exit by Terrazza del Pincio
- Mausoleum of Augustus
- Gelato
- Piazza Navona
- Back to AirBnB

See also <https://goo.gl/maps/4FZsf4mqxsgyB2RT9>.

Thursday, July 14

Pack:

- Water bottles that can be refilled at public fountains
- A hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- A mask as it's not clear if the Vatican still requires them
- Make note of the dress code for the Vatican as detailed below

Breakfast: see the Places to Eat section.

Guided Tour: Roman Stuff hosted by Colin from London 9:30am–12:30pm.

- **Meeting Location:** Arch of Constantine. This is on the southwest corner of the Colosseum.
- **Time:** Tour starts at 9:30, try to be there by about 9:10 or 9:15 cause we'll probably be in an ocean of people looking for their respective tour guides. Runs three hours, we should expect to be done at 12:30.
- **From the tour guide:**

You will find me waiting for you at the Arch of Constantine ready to welcome you to this wonder of the world. You will find us at the meeting point holding a yellow Carpe Diem Rome flag. Please keep your phone on you as we may need to contact you.

First, we enter the Colosseum through a priority reservation entrance. Inside the Amphitheater, you will discover the amazing past of the Colosseum & the mystery behind the notorious Gladiators from one of my handpicked expert guides. You will then have 20-30 minutes of free time inside to take photos and process your awe! The Palatine Hill and Roman Forum is where my expertise lies. I doubt I've spent more time in another location in Rome during the 20 years I've called it home. I'll share with you my expert knowledge and bring back to life the heart of a once bustling capital of the Romans! Finish by exploring the ruins of the Palaces of the Emperors and the birthplace of Rome.

Lunch: see the Places to Eat section for ideas. We'll have 2.5 hours to eat lunch and walk to the guided tour meeting place next to the Vatican museum. It's gonna be really hot, consider getting a granita while you're out.

Guided Tour: Vatican Stuff hosted by Slob 3:00pm–5:30pm

- **Meeting Location:** Via Germanico, 67 00192 Roma RM. Two blocks from Vatican Museum.
- **Dress code:** <https://selectitaly.com/blog/rome/dress-visit-vatican/>

Emily needs to wear a midi skirt that covers her knees and a shirt that's not a sleeveless top.

It seems like Ryan's shorts should be fine because they come down to the knee.

Ryan will want to wear a shirt with no graphics or just a shirt lacking in sarcasm in case the graphic is deemed "offensive."

You can (and probably should) bring a hat for the heat but you'll have to carry it through The Vatican.

Bring a mask because it's not clear if The Vatican still requires them.

- **From the tour guide:**

We will meet 10 minutes before departure time in our office in 67 Germanico street. Closest metro stop is Ottaviano on red line and the office is only 3 minutes walking from Vatican Museums entrance. Please note that in order to enter Vatican you will have to have your shoulders and knees covered (shorts are fine as long as they are reaching knees)

You will join small group of maximum 10 participants and head towards Vatican Museums Priority Access Line. After security check we will take you through most important galleries of the Vatican Museums. A place where Cardinals elect new Pope, Sistine Chapel, will be next to visit. You will hear details about the election process called Conclave which ends up with white smoke from the chimney installed in the Chapel. See original "Last Judgement" and try to find Michaelangelo's face in between more than 300 painted characters. Leave the best for the last, St. Peter's Basilica and famous La Pietà statue. Tour ends inside the Tombs of the Popes (when open), venue missed by most of visitors. Please note that due to Covid pandemic we won't be able to take you to St. Peter's Basilica since passage between Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica, reserved for tour guides, will remain closed until further notice. St. Peter's Basilica is free of charge, open to the public but accessible from St. Peter's square only (security line is a must). Thank you for understanding.

Dinner and Afterward: see the Places to Eat section for food. This time is specifically unplanned. If you want to wander the Vatican area more, do it! If you want to stroll along the Tiber, do it! Keep in mind we're leaving really early the next morning so you should probably go to bed pretty early.

Traveling Around Rome

<https://www.rome.net/> is a surprisingly helpful site.

On Foot: realistically, we will probably just be walking. Most everything we want to do is reachable by foot from the AirBnB.

Public Transit [*Train Subtype*]: the Metro is the best option for getting to common tourist destinations if you don't want to walk.

Public Transit [*Bus Subtype*]: traffic in Rome has been described as "awful", "horrible", and "not for tourists". Buses do exist but are subject to the insanity that is Roman car traffic.

Taxis: travel guides for Rome of all shapes and sizes universally note that taxis in Rome are scammy and make a sport of overcharging tourists. If you can avoid it, plz do. Taxis licensed by Rome City Council are white and have a sign with the word TAXI on their roofs.

English in Rome

Being one of the top tourist cities anywhere ever, Rome generally has more English fluency than your standard Italian town. Most guides agree that it's not a problem to get around in Rome without speaking Italian. Most places will at least have transactional English skills (e.g. ordering at a restaurant).

Weather

From Reddit:

Those of us who have to stay in town for work, wear light weight clothing, try to stay in the shade, don't go anywhere from 1 pm to 5 pm—the hottest part of the day—and have lots of granita, gelato and spritzes. Children are encouraged to nap during the day and are sent out to play in the evening after it starts cooling down, not unusual to see piazzas filled with young children playing at 10 pm or even later.

As a tourist, museums, churches and catacombs are the coolest options. The shaded grass in Villa Borghese or a nice long nap in your hotel room are also options.

Places to Eat

Rome is a food city. At any given point, if you're hungry and it looks good, give it a quick Google search to make sure it's got above a 4.0 rating and go for it!

Hallmarks of tourist traps:

- Salt and pepper on the tables
- Laminated menus
- Pictures of food on the menu (why would locals need pictures)
- Annoying people standing out there yelling at tourist to come in.

Dinner Spots:

List from Reddit:

- **Gioia Mia**

Via degli Avignonesi, 34, 00187 Roma RM, Italy

Near-ish to Villa Borghese, might be good possibility for Wednesday night

Highly recommended on Reddit, this is our Wednesday night plan.

- **Hostaria Constanza**

Piazza del Paradiso, 65, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

12:30pm–3:00pm, 7:30pm–11:30pm

Recommended classic Roman place from Reddit

Coffee and Breakfast:

- **Bar dei Cerchi**

Via dei Cerchi, 49, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

Very close to AirBnB just south

- **Caffe Antica Roma**

Via Marco Aurelio, 28, 00184 Roma RM, Italy

Close to Colosseum

Excellent Espresso Bar

6:00am–6:00pm

- **Baker Boss**

Via di S. Giovanni in Laterano, 64/66, 00184 Roma RM, Italy

7:30am–4:30pm

Eastern side of the Colosseum

- **Pascucci**

Via di Torre Argentina, 20, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

6:00am–6:30pm

More towards city center

Pizza:

- **Trieste Pizza**

Via Urbana, 112, 00184 Roma RM, Italy

11:00am–10:30pm

Reddit recommendation for places along the Via Urbana as being less touristy

12 minute walk north from Colosseum

Miniature round pizzas or bigger, shareable pizzas. Looks fabulous from pics.

- **Dar Poeta**

Vicolo del Bologna, 45, 00153 Roma RM, Italy

12:00pm–12:00am

Neopolitan pizza, noted as being one of the best sit down pizza places in Rome

A little out of the way from other stuff but only a 19 minute walk from AirBnB

- **Alice Pizza**

Many locations including one by Vatican city

Noted as being classic and good Roman pizza by the slice/square

Hours vary by location, many are 10am–10pm, the one by the Vatican is 8:30am–5:30pm

- **Pizza Florida**

Via Florida, 25, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

Very highly rated by the slice/square place.

10am–10pm

- **O’Pazzariello**

Via del Banco di Santo Spirito, 19, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

Neopolitan pizza (as opposed to Roman pizza)

12:00pm–12:00am

- **Cicoletto Roma**

Via dei Cerchi, 55, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

6:00pm–12:00am

Sandwiches, natural wines

Very close to AirBnB

Gelato:

Beware tourist trap places that advertise 2€ for a small and then charge highway robbery prices for anything beyond that. Don’t be afraid of chains. Do be afraid of anything that has brightly colored ice cream. There’s a ton of these. Here’s a random one that was recommended.

- **Fatamorgana Chiavari**

Via dei Chiavari, 37A, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

12:00pm–11:00pm

Also try a granita, something of an Italian ice that’s recommended as refreshing on a hot day.

- **Sora Mirella**

VFQG+VQ Rome, Metropolitan City of Rome, Italy

9:00am–1:30am (yes 1:30am, not pm)

Just across the Tiber from our AirBnB in a little outdoor stand.

Day 8: Rome, Italy–Zürich, Switzerland

Friday, July 15, 2022

Overview and Details

I hope that you enjoyed Rome! Now that you have seen how civilization was invented a second time (it was invented the first time in Athens), you can now head to the most expensive city in all of Europe. Or, at least, I heard someone say that once about Zürich.

The vast majority of the day is spent on a train, so while it may not be the most exciting day in the world, it should provide a nice opportunity to take a little bit of a breather.

<i>Start time</i>	<i>End time</i>	<i>Event</i>
6:30am	7:00am	Get from the Airbnb to Roma Termini (train station).
7:00am	7:20am	Buy a coffee.
7:20am	10:35am	Take Frecciarossa 9610 to Milano Centrale.
10:35am	11:10am	Mill about in Milano Centrale.
11:10am	2:27pm	Take EuroCity 316 to Zürich Hauptbahnhof.

Table 2: Planned order of events and timeline.

The rest of the day is up to you! It’s likely that you will run into Niko and Malte and other RelationalAI people for dinner, and there will be many possibilities of things to do. It is a workday for Ryan, so the afternoon may actually include primarily coding (maybe at Niko and Malte’s?).

Other activity possibilities are contained in the next section. Food possibilities are not detailed, since they are pretty much “ask Niko or Malte or someone”.

Getting To Zürich

Unfortunately, the easiest train to take is also basically the earliest train. This means you have to get up early. The Roma Termini train station is relatively straightforward; it looks like roughly 12 platforms, all accessible from the same main area (think 4th and King in San Francisco), but you have to show a ticket to get past security of some sort.

You will be boarding the **Frecciarossa 9610**, bound for Milano Centrale. Ticket details below:

- Frecciarossa 9610
- Roma Termini–Milano Centrale
- 7:20am–10:35am
- Coach 7, seats 1C/1D, 2nd class standard
- CP Code for Ryan: 460202
- CP Code for Emily: 460201

Hopefully everything is running on time! (If it is not, and you missed the connection train, you should be entitled to ride the next available train. I think they leave for Zürich every hour.)

Once you get to Milano Centrale, you have roughly 35 minutes to poke around and explore Milan. That’s enough time to explore a city, right? Milano Centrale looks to be set up the same way as Roma Termini, so it should be easy to find the next train.

Consider stepping outside of the train station, to the big plaza outside (you'll have to walk through the shopping plaza to get there). However, the area looks too spread out to be able to actually get somewhere and get some coffee or a snack outside the station. You should probably stick with food in the station for that.

Details for the train to Zürich are below:

- EuroCity 316
- Milano Centrale–Zürich HB
- 11:10am–2:27pm
- Coach 3, seats 61/62, 2nd class
- Booking ID for Ryan: 459703
- Booking ID for Emily: 459704

During this train trip, note that you will be going through the Gotthard Base Tunnel, once you get north of Lugano. This tunnel is 57km (35 miles) long, and is the world's longest railway tunnel and deepest traffic tunnel—as well as the first flat, low-level route through the Alps. The tunnel is relatively recent, opening in December 2016. Note that Wikipedia includes a detailed table of fatalities (including date, nationality, and details) during construction of the tunnel. (There were nine deaths.)

Once you get to Zürich, you are free to do whatever! Check-in time for the Airbnb is 3pm, and should not be a far walk from the train station. If you want to kill a little time because it is too early, consider walking to the Platzspitz park, finding your way to the northernmost tip where the rivers Sihl and Limmat converge.

Lodging

While in Zürich, you'll be staying close to the train station. Details are not currently available at the time of this writing, so refer to the Airbnb website for more details.

Days 9–10: Zürich, Switzerland

Saturday, July 16, 2022–Sunday, July 17, 2022

Overview

Welcome to Zürich! It is one of a few select cities in the world with an umlaut in its name. According to Wikipedia, it is the largest city in Switzerland, with roughly 430k inhabitants in the city, and 2 million in the metropolitan area. Zürich was originally settled by the Romans, who called it *Turicum*. They also took the train up—it was a quick trip.

Zürich was also an important location of the Protestant Reformation; this is where Ulrich Zwingli operated, but not where John Calvin was—he was in Geneva (where you will unfortunately not be going on this trip). Anyway, it’s also where Zwingli died in battle in 1531.

In only two days, you aren’t likely to see everything that Zürich has to offer, but you have locals at your disposal and a number of exciting possibilities below.

Hiking: Schilt and Siwellen

One of the objectives of this trip is to hike up an Alp. After some amount of digging and research, it seems that the most likely candidate for this is **Schilt** and **Siwellen**, at 7543ft and 7566ft, respectively. These are not particularly tall Alps (for instance the Matterhorn is 14,692ft), but they are taller than Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina, and that’s what matters—after hiking this peak, on any hike on the east coast, you can trot out this story to demonstrate your worldliness (and superiority).

This hike was chosen for its proximity and accessibility from Zürich, and also because the hike begins with a ride up a chairlift (another trip objective).

The first step is to get to the trailhead. Google Maps suggests multiple options, but the quickest appears to be to take the IR35 (inter-regional) train to Ziegelbrücke (5 intermediate stops, roughly 45 minutes), then transfer to the S6 heading southbound to Ennenda, taking a total of about 1h5m. Alternately, you can do the trip entirely on the S-Bahn, taking the S5/S7/S17 to Rapperswil SG, then transferring to the S6 and taking that to Ennenda. This simpler route takes about 1h23m.

Paying for the S-Bahn probably consists of two single 1-2 zone tickets (since you will be taking two S-Bahn lines), at 4.40CHF each. Tickets can be purchased at ticket machines, or with the ZVV app on your phone. Taking the IR35 will cost roughly 13.90CHF per person (plus a single ticket for the S-Bahn), and it looks like the right way to book this ticket is on <https://www.sbb.ch/>.

Now that you have gotten to Ennenda, you need to find your way to the Aeugstenbahn, which is the chairlift. This is just a short walk from the station. On weekends, the chairlift operates from 7am to 7pm. A roundtrip ticket appears to cost 19CHF, but it’s not clear to me whether we pay for the entire cabin, or we pay per person.

Once you make it to the top, you will be at the Äugstenhütten! Great work. There might be something to buy here. There might not. So hopefully you have packed some food. Anyway, you are now at roughly 4500 feet (Ennenda is at 1600ft), and you can begin your hike!

The AllTrails route called **Bärenboden-Schilt-Siwellen-Schwarzstöckli-Hächlenstock** is a good suggested route, at a total length of 8.1 miles, with 3,400ft of elevation gain. It actually summits far more than just Schilt and Siwellen, but it would be too long a title to put all of the summits in.

Another possibility is to take the **Bärenboden-Siwellen-Schilt-Tristli-Ennenda** trail, which actually goes back down the side of the mountain to get back to Ennenda (so there would be no return trip on the Aeugstenbahn (sad!)).

Given the number of trails in the area, it's also possible to make your own adventure. If you are feeling good, you could go as far as Gufelstock (7993ft).

As you climb, on the other side of the valley that Ennenda is in is Vorder Glarnisch, one of the other possibilities for hiking (however, unfortunately, probably a bit too extreme).

Alternate Hikes

A number of other hikes were briefly researched, and could be pulled out if desired. Breadcrumbs sufficient to get you started are below:

- Vorder Glärnisch
 - 2327m summit
 - 1300m elevation gain
 - Maybe a little crazy (trail rated T3, maybe not often hiked)
 - Stunning views, but maybe this one is a bit too much.
 - Report 1, Report 2, Report 3
 - Rautispitz
 - 2283m
 - 1300m elevation gain
 - 13.8km hike
 - Route
 - Report 1, Report 2, Gallery
 - Gufelstock
 - 2436m
 - 1000-1500m elevation gain depending on route
 - Maybe adapting this route to just go up and back is sufficient: route
 - This might be a bit much on the elevation gain side of things, though
 - Klingenstock and Fronalpstock
 - 1921m (so not higher than Mt. Mitchell!)
 - Includes a funicular ride to Stoos: details
 - Adaptable route: link
 - Hagelstock
 - 2181m
 - 19.3km from Buerglen
 - Route
 - That route is too long, maybe we can take a lift up to Eggberge and adapt from there or something.
 - One example to adapt is this route: link
 - Maybe we can use the starting point and most of that route to just hike up Hagelstock
-

Parks In The City

Zurich, like many cities, contains parks. These parks could be considered to be a pleasing place to relax and/or walk around at a slow pace. Alternately, during a walk through the city, one could divert through these parks for an increased amount of nature viewing.

Each park detailed briefly below has a corresponding waypoint in the accompanying KMZ file.

- **Alter Botanischer Garten** (old botanical garden)
 - south of the train station
 - not particularly large
- **Zürichhorn**
 - Large shoreline park on the east side of Lake Zürich
 - Contains *Chinagarten Zürich* also
 - Also contains *Le Corbusier House*
- **Arboretum**
 - Medium-size park on the west shore of Lake Zürich
 - Contains *Voliere*, a historic bird sanctuary
 - Contains a memorial to Dr. Arnold Bürkli, a municipal engineer
- **Üetliberg**
 - Mountain/hill overlooking Zürich, roughly 2850ft altitude
 - You can take the Üetlibergbahn (S10) right to the top
 - The S10 has the steepest gradient (7.9%) of any standard gauge adhesion railway in Europe
 - Once at the top, you can quickly get to an overlook of all of Zürich

Naturally, there may also be other recommendations from Niko or Malte.

Museums

Unsurprisingly, Zürich also has quite a few museums that could be visited, with lots of art and history. Below a handful of these museums and basic details about them are listed. The museums are also waypoints in the accompanying KMZ file.

- **Kunsthaus Zürich** (Museum of Art)
 - 10am–6pm on Friday/Saturday/Sunday
 - 23CHF admission to Collection PLUS (everything except ‘Art and Medicine’)
 - Highlights include not only the largest collection of Munch paintings outside Norway and the most comprehensive collection of works by Alberto Giacometti but also Impressionist and Classical Modernist paintings from Monet, Picasso and Chagall to Kokoschka, Beckmann and Corinth.*
 - Pop Art from Warhol and Hamilton appears alongside artists including Rothko, Twombly, Beuys and Baselitz. Video installations and photographs by Fischli/Weiss, Pipilotti Rist and others bring the story into the 21st century.*
- **Landesmuseum** (National Museum)
 - 10am–5pm Friday/Saturday/Sunday
 - 10CHF admission

Current exhibitions: *Anne Frank and Switzerland*, *In the Forest*, *History of Switzerland*, *A magic carpet ride through history*, *The collection* (Swiss artistry and craftsmanship), *Simply Zurich*

The exhibition tour takes the visitor from prehistory through ancient times and the Middle Ages to the 20th century (classic modern art and art of the 16th, 17th and 18th century is settled mainly in the Kunsthau Museum in a different part of the city of Zurich). There is a very rich section with gothic art, chivalry and a comprehensive collection of liturgical wooden sculptures, panel paintings and carved altars. Zunfthaus zur Meisen near Fraumünster church houses the porcelain and faience collection of the Swiss National Museum. There are also: a Collections Gallery, a place where there are Swiss furnishings being exhibited, an Armoury Tower, a diorama of the Battle of Murten, and a Coin Cabinet showing 14th, 15th, 16th century Swiss coins and even some coins from the Middle Ages.

- **Urania Observatory**

9pm–10:15pm Friday/Saturday

20CHF admission

Tours start at 9pm; the entrance at Uraniastrasse opens 30 minutes before the start of the visit

In the heart of central Zurich, astronomy fans can reach for the stars. In the 50m (164ft) high round tower of the Urania observatory, visitors can observe the heavenly bodies through a telescope that allows magnifications of up to 600 times. Whether you want to take a closer look at the craters on the moon, the bands of clouds surrounding Jupiter, or the church tower of the Fraumünster: a guided tour to the non-profit public observatory is always a memorable experience.

The Urania observatory, which opened in 1907, was the first building in Zurich to be made from concrete. It is still one of the most distinctive buildings in the historical Old Town, and has been listed as a protected monument since 1989. The 12-ton Zeiss telescope underwent extensive renovation on the occasion of the observatory's centenary in 2007.

- **Urbansidegallery**

1–6pm Friday, closed weekends

Price unknown (maybe free)

At the URBANSIDE Gallery we are passionately pursuing the goal of creating great exhibition opportunities for emerging artists and helping them to make their art visible and accessible to everyone. Wrapped in the unmistakable urban flair of the city of Zurich, our gallery offers a unique backdrop for varied contemporary works of art from all over the world.

- **Grossmünster**

10am–6pm Friday/Saturday, 12:30pm–6pm Sunday

Either free or 5CHF to get to the top of the towers (unclear)

This is the church where Zwingli initiated the Swiss Reformation

Zwingli won a series of debates presided over by the magistrate in 1523 which ultimately led local civil authorities to sanction the severance of the church from the papacy. The reforms initiated by Zwingli and continued by his successor, Heinrich Bullinger, account for the plain interior of the church. The iconoclastic reformers removed the organ and religious statuary in 1524. These changes, accompanied by abandonment of Lent, replacement of the Mass, disavowal of celibacy, eating meat on fast days, replacement of the lectionary with a seven-year New Testament cycle, a ban on church music, and other significant reforms make this church one of the most important sites in the history of the reformation and the birthplace of the Swiss-German reformation.

Of course, there are also tons of other things to do in Zürich if nothing above sounds interesting, but that should at least be a pretty good start.

Requirements For Tomorrow

By the end of Sunday, there are two things that you need to have for Monday:

- 'Vignette' for driving on the motorways in Switzerland.
- Supplies for a picnic lunch on top of a mountain!

Day 11: Zürich, Switzerland–Aosta, Italy

Monday, July 18, 2022

Overview and Details

Today is an intense day. You will be leaving Zürich pretty early, renting a car, and then driving through Switzerland. You'll start in the German-speaking area (and if you really want you can drive your car over into Germany just to say that you did), then you'll head south to the Italy via the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

Be ready to improvise and make changes to the plan below. There are many unknowns: traffic conditions cannot be predicted, and some things may take longer (or maybe shorter) than expected. Hopefully the schedule below is relatively easy to stick to, but if not, that's okay! Options for making cuts are given in this section too. You'll just have to come back some other time.

<i>Start time</i>	<i>End time</i>	<i>Event</i>
5:15am	5:59am	Wake up, vacate Airbnb, get to train station.
5:59am	6:57am	Train from Zürich HB to Basel SBB.
6:57am	7:30am	Take bus line 50 to EuroAirport.
7:30am	9:00am	Car rental process.
9:00am	10:15am	Drive from EuroAirport to Bern.
10:15am	10:45am	Get coffee in Bern.
10:45am	11:20am	Drive to Niesenbahn AG.
11:20am	12:00pm	Get to Neisen Kulm (the top of the mountain) on the funicular.
12:00pm	1:15pm	Have a picnic on the top!
1:15pm	1:45pm	Get back to car via the funicular.
1:45pm	4:00pm	Drive to Martigny.
4:00pm	4:45pm	Get a snack and see the ancient Roman amphitheatre.
4:45pm	7:00pm	Drive to Aosta, Italy via the Great St. Bernard Pass.
7:00pm	9:00pm	Dinner in Aosta.

Table 3: Planned order of events and timeline.

The following simple modifications are possible to recover some time, if things are running behind:

- Skip Bern (30m)
- Skip Martigny stop (30m)
- Faster dinner in Aosta (30m)
- Optimize Aosta–Grenoble route (30m)
- Skip the funicular (130m)
- Optimize Great St. Bernard Pass route (15-20m)

Honestly, it is not a big deal if things run late here, because the only thing you have to do in Aosta is get dinner—and dinner in Italy happens late. Most places aren't even open until 7pm.

Step 1: Getting The Rental Car

The first step is to get to Basel SBB. You have train tickets for this that allow you to take any SBB train there. It is probably best to take the ICE train from 5:59am–6:57am, but there are also other options if things are turning out differently:

- **IR37**, *Direction Basel SBB*, 5:08am–6:18am
- **IR36**, *Direction Basel SBB*, 5:35am–6:50am
- **ICE**, *Direction Hamburg-Altona*, 5:59am–6:57am
- **IR37**, *Direction Basel SBB*, 6:08am–7:20am
- **IR36**, *Direction Basel SBB*, 6:35am–7:49am

The ride should be relatively quick, though there may be something like 4 intermediate stops on the way (depending on which train you took).

- Ticket-ID (Ryan): 409585589933
- Ticket-ID (Emily): 123392436401

Basel is a slightly less organized train station than the other three you have been through so far. Once you get here, you will need to get to the 50 bus, which comes every 10 minutes and takes 23 minutes (or less) to get to the airport. Tickets for the bus are sold at the train station—you will have to take a look around to try and find them. They appear to be 6.10CHF apiece for a one-way journey.

The bus itself will board out front of the station (walk past platforms 2 and 1 and then down the escalators and out the front door). The 50 bus should be just outside to the right.

The 50 bus goes directly to the EuroAirport main terminal. Your car rental is with Avis/Budget, in the French sector of the airport (hall 1, level 2). This is on the north side of the terminal building (the bus will drop you off on a road that is on the east side of the terminal building).

Now, get the rental car! Note that the rental car desk does not open until 8am, and you may not be able to get the car until one hour before the scheduled pickup time of 10am. In any case, here are pertinent details about the car rental:

- Reservation #34918353US1
- Pickup MLH, French side
- Dropoff OPO (Porto Airport)
- Refer to the receipt for details, and expect attempts to pointlessly upsell insurance and other unecessaries.

Make sure that you have the toll sticker (vignette) so that you can use the Autobahn. (Sadly the cost is 40 CHF.)

Step 2: Coffee in Bern

Hopefully you are enjoying your little shitbox so far. Also, make sure you took pictures of any potential damage or anything like this and let the attendants know if so.

The drive to Bern will be almost entirely on motorways. Sadly, if you dip into Germany, the small section of the Autobahn you will be on is not unlimited speed. The trip will be just over 100km. When you get to Bern, you will park at Bern Rathaus. You may need to navigate paying for parking a little bit, but surely you can figure it out.

The parking lot is close to the medieval city. Your job is to quickly grab some coffee! You might try the following locations:

- Adrianos Kaffeeladen
- Jusq'a
- Beans & Nuts

There's not much time to spare, so get your coffee to go and get back to your car and continue your journey. If you choose to spend a little longer here, that's okay—consider spending a little less time on top of Niesen to compensate.

Step 3: Onwards To Neisenbahn

The next thing on your journey is to go to Mulenen, the starting point of the Neisenbahn, and ride up to the top of Neisen. The mountain is about the same altitude (2300m) as Schilt and Siwellen.

The Neisen Funicular is serviced by what Guinness understands as the longest stairway, with 11,674 steps. It runs every 30 minutes, and costs 38CHF per roundtrip ticket. That's a little bit expensive, but you want to ride a funicular, right?

The Niesenbahn has a big parking lot, which hopefully is not too full. The parking lot extends to both sides of the funicular station.

Once you ride to the top, walk around a little bit, and find a nice place for a picnic with the picnic supplies that you picked up yesterday. Up top, you have a budgeted 45 minutes to eat lunch, which should be sufficient.

It will take 30 minutes to get down from the top, and then you can continue your journey!

Step 4: To Martigny

Next up is a 2 hour drive to Martigny that includes a trip on the Lötschberg Tunnel train. That's a train that you drive your car onto, and then the train goes, with you in your car on top of the train. It's hard to get better than that.

The train runs several times per hour. For a single ticket, you should buy it online, and it costs 25 CHF. You should not book this until you are sure that you will be going this way!

Once you get to Martigny, be sure to fill up on 'petrol', if you haven't already. Find a snack in the center of town. For parking, there appears to be a paid lot on the south side of the city center. It is labeled **Parcometre collectif**, which means that you pay and register either the plate number or the space number. If that lot is full or otherwise problematic, there is another lot referred to as 'Parking Neuvilles' that should suffice and appears to operate the same way.

On the way out of town, stop by the ancient Roman amphitheatre! You can just park across the street at the parking lot that has a charging station and then walk over to the amphitheatre.

Step 5: Great St. Bernard Pass to Aosta

Now, you'll go over the Great St. Bernard Pass. There is a shortcut you can take here that goes through a tunnel (the Traforo del Gran San Bernardo, or Grand-Saint-Bernard-Le-Tunnel), but why would you want to do that? Take the long way around!

The end of this pass will basically drop you right into Aosta, where it's time to get dinner. There are a number of parking lots, but Parcheggio near the north side of town looks like a good possibility. Failing that, aim for the Parcheggio near the stadium, which looks a lot larger.

Some possibilities for a nice dinner are below:

- Trattoria Praetoria
7:00pm–10:30pm
Will be somewhat expensive, this is a bit fancy, but not extreme
 - Saule Re - Ristorante Pizzeria Bar
7:00pm–12:00am
Pizza Napoletana
 - Cavallo Bianco
6:30pm–12:00am
Another pizza place
 - Trattoria Genzianella
7:15pm–10:30pm
Another pizza place!
Parking right out front (not near Aosta city)
 - Sapori di Casa
7:00pm–10:00pm
Italian, relatively nice place
Try Parcheggio Piazza della Repubblica
 - Moderno
6:30pm–11:00pm
Classic fare and ‘rustic’ pizza
 - Pizzeria Ristorante Lido
7:00pm–11:00pm
On a lake a little outside Aosta
Has an attached parking lot
-

Lodging

Tonight, you’ll be staying on the northeast side of Aosta. Here are the details:

Via Mont Velan, Aosta, Vall d’Aosta 11100, Italy

The house has a parking garage, so parking there should be straightforward.

Once you are at your Airbnb, it’s time to register for the tolls in Portugal. (I know that is far away, but doing it here has no extra cost and you know that you will be prepared. If something doesn’t work, you’ll now have a bunch of extra time to figure it out.) Go to <https://www.portugaltolls.com/en/> and register your car’s plate with EasyToll. There is a 0.74€ sign-up fee, and you will provide card information directly. Then, when you go through tolls, the account will be directly debited.

Day 12: Aosta to Lourdes

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Overview

Good morning and welcome to Italy! Again! We're going to be in the car A LOT today. This is, like, "finish a whole hardcore history series" level of driving.

Itinerary

<i>Start time</i>	<i>End time</i>	<i>Event</i>
5:00am	5:30am	Wake up, vacate Airbnb, have a quick breakfast or car snacks.
5:30am	9:45am	Drive to Grenoble via N90, 3.5–4 hours.
9:45am	11:45am	Grenoble cable cars, possible lunch
11:45am	7:30pm	Blast on down to Lourdes, 7.5 hrs.
7:30pm	9:00pm	Dinner in Lourdes.

Table 4: Planned order of events and timeline.

Wake Up In Aosta

Wake up **EARLY** in Aosta. Our host may or may not provide some croissants for breakfast. The goal here is to be in the car by 5:30.

There are two options for quick breakfast in Aosta if we so choose.

- **Caffetteria 0165**
Coffee shop / Cafeteria
Via Ginevra, 10, 11100 Aosta AO, Italy
6:00am–8:30pm
- **Cafe Rue de Paris**
Authentic Italian Gas Station Coffee
Via Parigi, 154/A, 11100 Aosta AO, Italy
5:00am–8:00pm

The drive for Aosta doesn't leave a lot of room for deviations as the choices are going through the Mont Blanc tunnel, which we're not going to do because time and cost, or follow the N90.

Drive times with possible deviations are as follows:

- **3h35m** via N90 through Bourg-Stain Maurice on fastest route
 - **3h39m** on same route going up all the switchbacks on D190 by Bourg-Saint-Maurice
 - **3h49m** on same route with diversion through Arpy on SR39
 - **3h53m** with both diversions
-

Cable Cars in Grenoble

Welcome to Grenoble! We're here basically to do the cable cars, see the Bastille, and leave. It's possible that this will be *swarmed* with people, in which case we can turn around and just hit the road.

The cable cars run from 9:15am - midnight. Even with getting on the road at 5:30, it's unlikely we'll be there right at 9:15. But that's cool, we've budgeted 2 hours here. Cable cars run every 5 to 7 minutes.

There are two lots on the north side of the river along the tram line that are advertised as free.

- **Bd de l'Esplanade, 38000 Grenoble, France**

Large lot, reportedly a mix of paid and free.

1.0km / 13 minute walk

- **70 Rte de Lyon, 38000 Grenoble, France**

Definitely free, a little further of a walk.

1.2km / 15 minute walk to cable car station

Once you are done with the Bastille, you'll be parked right next to an Intermarche grocery store. Sorry, not grocery store, "hypermarket." This is a great place to pick up car snacks and possible picnic supplies. We're doing picnics on roadtrip day 1 and 3, so maybe skip the picnic today.

The Bastille is a military fort built in the 19th century on a hill which also gives it its name. There are several attractions up top, all with entrance fees in the 1-5€ range.

- Bastille Art Center: "The Cab" (1€ entry)
- Museum of French Mountain Troops (3€ entry)
- Salle des Gardes restaurant and snack bar

Once you're back to the car, it's time to crank some French highway driving music (likely just Tom Petty) and hit the road!

Grenoble to Lourdes

The drive from Grenoble to Lourdes is estimated at about 7 hours depending on traffic. Routing wise, we'll be on the A roads the whole time except for a section where we cut a triangle at Toulouse.

At some point, if you didn't get lunch at the cafe at the top of the Bastille, you'll get to experience the joys of French motorway food.

The A-roads in France are privately owned and operated. At regular intervals, there are Aires or Areas of Service. These are by no means created equal. They may have just a non-flushing pit toilet and some picnic tables, or a gas station and flushing toilets, or a whole giant New Jersey style service area with fast food and maybe even a Starbucks.

One TripAdvisor commenter said:

"French motorway food is absolute garbage. There is usually a shop with terrible pre-packed sandwiches, crisps, drinks etc. Sometimes there is an extremely mediocre restaurant, usually queue up with a tray type, expect to move very slowly if there is more than one person ahead of you."

Note that one difference between Aires and New Jersey is that these do not sit over the highway. There's a separate set of services on the Northbound and Southbound sides and no crossover without going down to the next exit and back.

A lot of the roadside food in the guide is not in the New Jersey pull-offs, however, but rather juuust off the exit. This is class of establishment called Les Routiers and it has a distinctive half red half blue sign underneath the restaurant's main sign. See this page as an example.

It's more logical to look at lunch options on a map rather than list them here since this will be a decision made on the fly depending on how far down the road you are. Do note that both Les Routiers and Aires with food get fewer and further between after the Avignon area, but we'll probably be starving if we wait until Avignon anyway. Some are also closed between 2–5pm or something like that.

Tolls in France

Holy crap we're gonna pay a lot in tolls. Looks like the toll estimate from Aosta to Lourdes is 83€!! source

The A roads are private and operate a lot like the New Jersey Turnpike where you get a ticket at the start and then pay for how far you go. There are automated toll devices from Emovis called "Liber-T" that we will not be able to get unless we happen to be able to get it from the rental car company. Apparently they have to hook up to a French bank account and ship to a home address, etc.

People say that a contactless credit card (Emily has one) is just as easy and not to stress about cash or card at the booths.

The toll-device-only lanes are denoted by a lowercase "t" and say "Reserve Telepeage."

Lodging and Dinner in Lourdes

We do not have an assigned spot. There is street parking that was noted by other reviewers as being "free and easy." Places that I can see to park in order of distance from our stay:

- On the north side (parallel spots) and south side (perpendicular spots) of Pl. Jeanne d'Arc right in front of our stay.
- On the north and south sides of Bd du Lapacca (continuation of Pl. Jeanne d'Arc under archway)
- Lot alongside Rue du Challat and by the Hotel Helios. Height restricted for some reason even though it's all outdoors, but appears to be free.
- Small free lot in the curve of Av. Helios, denoted as "Parking Lurdas" on Google Maps.
- Free 24 hour parking at the train station lot where Av. Helios t-bones into Av. del la Gare.
- Some street spots and a small lot on the other end of Av. Helios near the t-bone with Av. General Baron Maransin

The plan is to push, push, push to get to Lourdes for dinner. Lourdes has a permanent population of 14,000 but sees 4 million tourists a year and that means the restaurant options here are quite varied because they cater to a massive crowd of foreign visitors. If you're tired of European food, this is actually not a bad time to get some Asian food.

- **Restaurant Le Comptoir**, French brasserie; 7AM - midnight; steak and potatoes
- **Black Pepper Lourdes**, French fast food; 11:30am–2:30pm, 6:30pm–9:30pm; burgers and salads, highly rated
- **Restaurant Tibétain Lung ta**, Tibetan; noon–2pm, 7pm–10pm; curries, dumplings, highly rated
- **Ganapathy Restaurant**, Indian; 11:30am–3:30pm, 6:30pm–10:30pm;
- **Chez Ly Restaurant Asiatique Ly**, Vietnamese; noon–2pm, 7–9:30;

Now it's time to go collapse cause we've got another early morning tomorrow. Congrats! You did it!

Possible Grenoble to Lourdes Modifications

Stopover in Rochemaure (1.5 hours):

Rochemaure is a little bitty town across the Rhone from Montelimar. An adventure in Rochemaure would consist of parking at the elementary school and walking through the paths in the city (well mapped on AllTrails) up to the ruins of the castle, which happen to only be open in July and August. Alternately, there is a pedestrian bridge connecting Rochemaure to the island in the middle of the Rhone, for which the elementary school is also a good option for parking.

The A7 passes on the East side of Montelimar which itself is on the East bank of the Rhone, and Rochemaure is on the west bank of the Rhone. So although this is pretty close to the highway as the crow flies, it could be costly in time to divert from the highway.

There's a bakery called Le Fournil du Château that could be a good lunch choice if we choose to do this adventure.

Stopover in Carcassone (1.5 hours):

Cité de Carcassonne of board game fame is just off the highway on our journey. We will certainly at least see it as we drive by. If we choose to stop, this is a major tourist destination off the highway and there is infrastructure to accomodate that fact, including a Talladega style *massive* parking lot. This is a medieval city much like Conwy in Wales. It's also a *tourist trap* full of kitschy crap to buy. Lots of people in bad bucket hats with backpacks buying bad fudge. TBH it seems fun, I'm not against a tourist destination!

Driving In France: Appendix

Here's a small selection of driving rules to be aware of:

- Signs which read: “Vous n’avez pas la priorite” or “Cédez le passage” indicate that traffic currently circling the roundabout has the right of way. If these signs aren't present, vehicles entering the roundabout have the right of way.
- In villages and cities when you see a “priorite a droite” sign you must yield to traffic coming from the right—they have the right of way.
- Drivers in France should be aware that there are over 2,000 stationary speed cameras monitoring France's roadways and motorways. While many of these are marked with warnings, some cameras are unmarked.
- Phone use is a major no-no
- In certain parts of France the use of traffic signals can often feel like an afterthought. Brake lights may be the only signal you'll receive when the driver in front of you is planning to turn.
- Technically all drivers in France are supposed to carry a working breathalyser. If we don't get this from the rental car company, I'm not bothering with it cause I can't imagine the cops at a sobriety stop are gonna be pissed at two obvious Americans for not knowing that.
- Traffic violations in France carry an on-the-spot fine due in either Euros or Travelers Checks. You may be in the habit of using your credit card for most purchases but it's a good idea to keep some cash or travelers checks on hand in case you are stopped by the police and fined.
- Headlights must be used during poor visibility—including during daylight hours. Auto Europe recommends that drivers use their headlights whether driving during the day or night.

(source)

Day 12: Lourdes, France—Aviles, Spain

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Overview and Details

Today is day 3 of your roadtrip. Hopefully you got some good sleep, because just like the last two days, today also includes a lot of driving and a handful of stops to see various places. An outline of the day is given below.

<i>Start time</i>	<i>End time</i>	<i>Event</i>
7:00am	8:30am	Coffee walk around Lourdes.
8:30am	10:30am	Drive to Holzarte Footbridge.
10:30am	1:00pm	Hike to Holzarte Footbridge, have a picnic lunch.
1:00pm	5:00pm	Drive to Bilbao.
5:00pm	6:30pm	Dinner in Bilbao, do the suspension bridge.
6:30pm	9:30pm	Drive to Aviles and check in to Airbnb.

Table 5: Planned order of events and timeline.

Lots of slack time is left in the hike, so that should be easy to cut short if things are taking longer than expected. The drives are not the most direct route, so it's likely that about an hour can be reclaimed that way. (The last drive, to Aviles from Bilbao, is direct.)

Lourdes Coffee Walk

Your Airbnb is on the east side of Lourdes, but the ‘cool stuff’, like the Basilique and other things related to the Virgin Mary are on the east side. Perfect for a morning coffee exploration! Unfortunately, the French wake up late, so it is a little difficult to find a coffee shop that is open at 7am. Here are some options:

- Café Le Cantegril (opens 6:30am)
- Café Le Genève (opens 7:00am)
- Café Brasserie Les Brancardiers (opens 7:00am)

It's unlikely that the coffee at any of these places is going to be life-changing—or even good. Also, be prepared to end up with something that's *not* to-go, and drink it there. If you order **un café**, basically this is espresso. If you're trying to get an American filtered coffee, try **un café Américain**.

Then, wander over across the river Ousse to check out the Basilique Notre Dame du Rosaire and all of the crazy Catholicism contained therein. The backstory here is that in 1858, some peasant girl named Bernadette claimed that she saw some apparitions of the Virgin Mary, a total of eighteen times. The rest is history. According to Wikipedia: *Today Lourdes has a population of around 15,000, but it is able to take in some 5,000,000 pilgrims and tourists every season.* Also note that the spring water from the grotto is considered to have healing properties, so if you are feeling under the weather, you may consider splashing some on yourself (or however it is that one becomes miraculously healed via water).

Also a fun fact is that we have now progressed far enough to the west that we are in territory that was conquered by Muslims in the Middle Ages: from 732 to 778, Lourdes was possessed by Al-Andalus.

Holzarte Footbridge Hike

Once you leave Lourdes, be sure to see the Talladega-style parking field that lets millions visit. In fact, it may or may not be peak season and so that field might be full, if you are lucky.

Once you get close to Larrau, where there is parking for the footbridge, you'll pass *Auberge Logibar*, which is a lonely building on the right hand side of the road. There should be parking lots on either side of it. If you continue around the next left-hand corner, you should be able to turn left and drive up a small gravel road for parking closer to the trailhead—but Google currently reports that this parking lot is temporarily closed (without any reason). It's worth driving up and checking it out either way.

Hiking to the Holzarte Footbridge is really quite simple—head up the trail about 1.5 miles (45 minutes?), and then you'll be there. Consider heading some ways past the footbridge to get some lunch; after a climb in the trail, there is a fork you could take either way on. Below are links to AllTrails routes.

- Passerelle d'Holzarte
- Holzarté and Olhadubi Canyons; longer, maybe 5 hours, certainly too long
- The Holzarté Gorges via the Holzarté Footbridge

Some brief information on the gorge itself: the word *Holzarté* means *between walls*, which is pretty accurate in this case. The bridge itself is roughly 450 feet above the canyon floor, and is about 210 feet long. It was first built in 1920.

Tolls in Spain

Unfortunately for you, some of your driving while in Spain is going to involve tolls. Specifically, the AP-9 and AP-8 motorways will incur tolls. The magic word in Spanish for 'toll' is '**peaje**'.

When paying a toll, it is pretty similar to a US toll. Some roads work where you take a ticket when you start and pay when you get off; others are just tolls for a section. Sometimes there are specific lanes that take credit cards, but not always.

Your expected tolls for the AP-8 route into Bilbao are about 12,35€.

Bilbao and the Vizcaya Bridge

Now that you've finished hiking, it's time to go see a very unique suspension bridge. There are two direct routes from Auberge-Logibar; one cuts into Spain and goes around Pamplona, and the other goes by Bayonne and Biarritz. Both of those are on highways, will take about 3h15m to 3h30m, and probably will be boring.

Instead, a scenic route through the Pyrenees has been routed! It continues basically due west along the mountains, and at the France/Spain border you should stop for pictures. (*Alto de Izpegi-ko Gaina*.) If you are doing well on time, consider routing through Lesaka to go by Hamalau Lake (or at least that's what I'm calling the lake because the word Hamalau is graffitied onto the bridge (the bridge is nothing special)).

Technically, you are not going to Bilbao but instead down the Estuary of Bilbao a little bit, to a suburb (or separate town that is no longer separate?) called Getxo. The area you are aiming for is an affluent residential area, and the interesting thing here is the Vizcaya Bridge.

The Vizcaya Bridge is a *true* suspension bridge: the way to cross the bridge is to get on a suspended gondola, which then ferries you (and your car!) across the river. This bridge was originally built in 1893, and Alberto Palacio, the designer, had the good fortune to watch the upper part of his bridge being blown up from his house, during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). I suppose that it must have been rebuilt at some point, since it's there now. It operates every 8 minutes during the day.

However, dinner is probably first on your mind. But before that we have to park. Unfortunately it will be a little bit of a complicated operation: park in the free parking next to the Lamiako Metro stop. Then, walk

into the station and find a way to buy yourself a Creditrans Barik pass. You will be taking two one-zone rides (in fact, one stop rides!), each of which will cost 0.96€; so, put 2€ on each card.

Now, get on the train (which comes every 10 minutes) heading westbound to Areeta station. The westbound track is the farther one away from the parking lot—it's headed towards the ocean, not towards Bilbao city center. The ride itself should take two minutes once you're on the train.

Here are some dinner options:

- **Bar Galea**, steakhouse/bar/cafe; 7:30am–10:30pm; pintxos
- **Glass Grill Urbano**, steakhouse/Mediterranean/Spanish; 6:30am–1:00am; 'brassiere-style meal'
- **Jai Alai**, bar/Mediterranean/European; 9:00am–11:00pm; pintxos 1€ each, cheap drinks
- **El Bar de Rafa**, Spanish/Basque; 7:30am–9:30pm; 'best meat in Getxo'

Note that the restaurant here may not be open, just the bar.

Now, you don't have to go to just one place. Andoni Luis Aduriz, from San Sebastian, who is a chef-owner and presumably knows about food, advises to eat only one pintxo per bar. Apparently, each bar is famous for some particular pintxo, so you should ask about what that is, get it, eat it, and move on. The classic pintxo is *tortilla de patatas*. Also, pintxos can apparently spark life-long memories, so get to it!

After you've eaten some pintxos, check out the bridge. Does it look like you can get across it with a car? How does that work? If it looks like you can do it that way, go get the car and drive it over. If not, maybe hop a ride across it and then just go back to the car.

Driving To Aviles

The route to Aviles is a straight shot. There is nothing interesting about the route, other than that it overlooks the ocean and should be incredibly beautiful. So, enjoy it before the sun sets—and try not to think about how much you have to miss because of the tight schedule.

Lodging

Technically, your Airbnb is not in Aviles, but a little past that in Raíces Nuevo, which is next to a town called Salinas, which is where literature was invented and written about if I understand correctly. I believe the book was called either "Gone With The Wind", or "The Great Escape"—not 100% sure (you should ask locals).

- Calle Juan de Austria, 30, Raíces Nuevo
- Principado de Asturias 33400, Spain
- Parking is free and on the street

There is a huge amount of street parking in the main strip of Raíces Nuevo, so there should hopefully not be much worry. You may consider just double-checking with the host that it is free parking, depending on your level of paranoia.

Day 13: Aviles, Spain—Porto, Portugal

Thursday, July 21, 2022

Overview and Details

Finally! The last day of your roadtrip. You probably agree that it has been far too short—and maybe far too packed. Today is pretty simple though. Wake up and drive to the track, stopping a couple times on the way.

<i>Start time</i>	<i>End time</i>	<i>Event</i>
7:00am	7:30am	Morning walk to the beach.
7:30am	9:30am	Drive to Vilalba.
9:30am	10:00am	Coffee in Vilalba.
10:00am	12:00pm	Drive to Pontevedra.
12:00pm	1:30pm	Lunch in Pontevedra.
1:30pm	3:00pm	Drive to Karting Viana.
3:00pm	7:00pm	Practice at the track!
7:00pm	8:00pm	Drive to Porto.
8:00pm	9:30pm	Dinner in Porto (maybe with others?).

Table 6: Planned order of events and timeline.

If you are tired, skip the morning walk—and the morning coffee—and leave at 8am.

Before you leave, did you remember to register for EasyToll a few days ago? If you didn't, now is when it's going to bite you, so you better do that: <https://www.portugaltolls.com/en>. Some of the routes today are optimized to avoid tolls (also because they are prettier), but there will still be some tolls, including tomorrow when you drive to the airport.

Coffee In Vilalba

On the way to Vilalba, be sure to stop at the Miradoiro de Santa Cruz overlook to see some pretty scenery for a minute or two.

Vilalba has a main drag with a bunch of parking along it, and at least one coffee shop called *Café Centro*. Grab some coffee and a snack! Then hit the road again.

Lunch In Pontevedra

When driving into Pontevedra, you will encounter tolls on the AP-9 route; these tolls (which will go all the way into Portugal) are 5.25€, 1.75€, 2.90€, and 2.80€.

There is a huge parking lot outside Pontevedra, on the north side of the river (Lérez), that looks to be free. (It's called *Av. Compostela, 1 Parking.*) Park there, then walk across the bridge into town to grab some lunch. You have some options:

- **La Estafeta Taperia**, 12:00pm–12:00am, Mediterranean/European/Spanish, 'typical Galician tapas'
- **Casa Fidel – O Pulpeiro**, 12:00pm–4:00pm, Spanish/Healthy, get the 'Pulpo a Feieira'
- **Bar Estrella**, 12:00pm–4:00pm, Spanish, strange seafood, 'Patatas estrella' and 'Jarette'

- **Restaurante Nonna Clara Trattoria**, 12:30pm–4:00pm, Italian/Pizza/Mediterranean, pasta looks alright too
-

To The Track!

Now drive into Portugal. Your day will immediately slow down, because tracks are pointlessly slow. It's time to practice until the track closes...

Lodging

After the track closes, head to Porto. Your Airbnb is there.

note: the airbnb is not fully booked yet

For once, for dinner, you're on your own! Use Tripadvisor or Google, find something that looks good, and go get it. You have all the time in the world now. Until tomorrow, at least.

Apparently, in Porto, important dishes to eat include *francesinha* (a sandwich), *cachorrinho* (Porto-style hot dog), *alheira* (delicious Portuguese sausage), *tripas à Moda do Porto* (traditional pork stew), *bacalhau à Gomes de Sà* (codfish casserole).

Day 14: Onwards!

Friday, July 22, 2022

Overview

It's sadly time to part ways. Emily goes home early in the morning. Flight details are below:

- DL8259
OPO–CDG
9:15am–12:30pm
- DL8606
CDG–ATL
1:40pm–5:05pm
- *(both flights operated by Air France)*

Past this point, this document is no longer useful! You can figure it out from here.