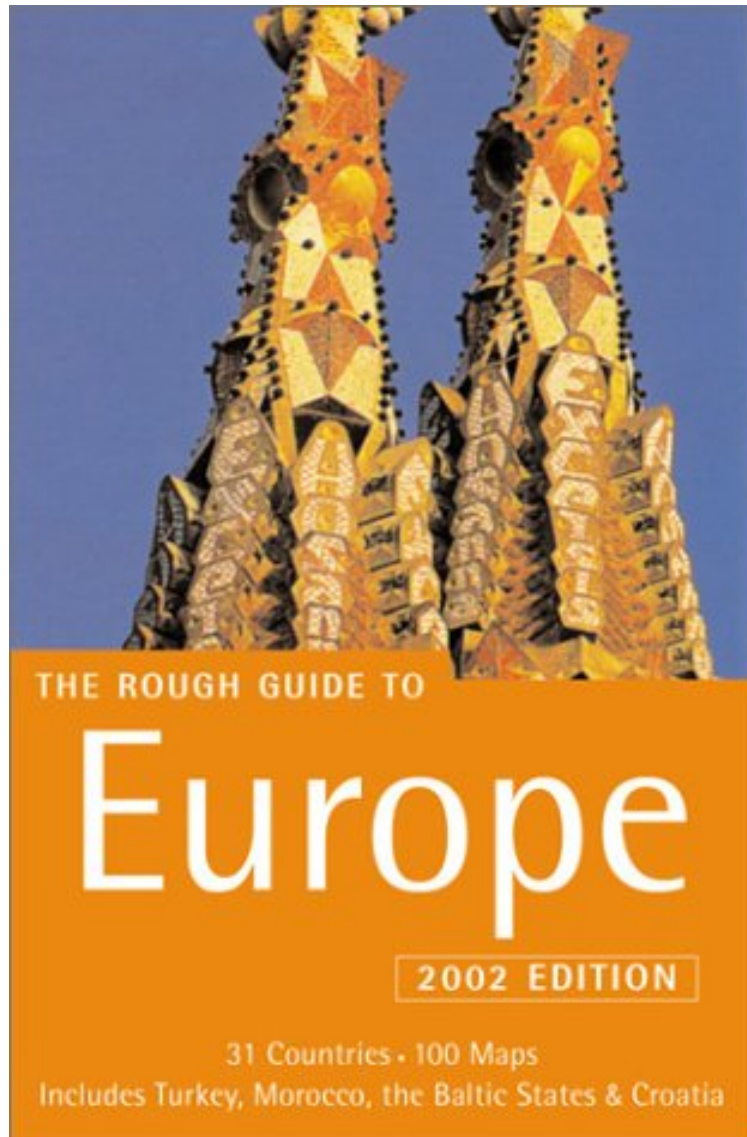


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Rough Guides : The Rough Guide to Europe 2002 (Rough Guide to Europe on a Budget) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rough Guide to Europe 2002 (Rough Guide to Europe on a Budget):

The ultimate budget handbook to the continent, giving comprehensive coverage of all of Europe's top cities, towns and sights, with up-to-date listings of the best accommodation, restaurants and clubs and the latest information on cultural events. Includes practical guidance on getting around the continent as well as tips on how to adapt to each country's culture.

About the AuthorWritten by a team of researchers, many of whom are the authors to separate Rough Guide city and country guides.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.**CLIMATE AND WHEN TO GO** Europe's climate is as variable as everything else about the Continent. In northwestern Europe Benelux, Denmark, southwestern Norway, most of France and parts of Germany, as well as the British Isles the climate is basically a cool temperate one, with the chance of rain all year round and no great extremes of either cold or hot weather. There is no bad time to travel in most of this part of the Continent, although the winter months between November and March can be damp and miserable especially in the upland regions and obviously the summer period between May and September sees the most reliable and driest weather. In eastern Europe, on the other hand, basically to the right of a north-south line drawn roughly through the heart of Germany and extending down as far as the western edge of Bulgaria (taking in eastern Germany, Poland, central Russia, the Baltic states, southern Sweden, the Czech and Slovak republics, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary and Romania), the climatic conditions are more extreme, with freezing winters and sometimes sweltering summers. Here the transitional spring and autumn seasons are the most pleasant time to travel; deep midwinter, especially, can be very unpleasant, although it doesn't have the dampness you associate with the northwestern European climate. Southern Europe, principally the countries that border the Mediterranean and associated seas southern France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and western Turkey has the most hospitable climate in Europe, with a general pattern of warm, dry summers and mild winters. Travel is possible at any time of year here, although the peak summer months can be very hot and very busy and the deep winter ones can see some rain. There are, too, marked regional variations within these three broad groupings. As they're such large countries, inland Spain and France can, for example, see a continental type of weather as extreme as any in central Europe, and the Alpine areas of Italy, Austria and Switzerland and other mountain areas like the Pyrenees, Apennines and parts of the Balkans have a climate mainly influenced by altitude, which means extremes of cold, short summers, and long winters that always see snow. There are also, of course, the northern regions of Russia and Scandinavia, which have an Arctic climate again, bitterly cold, though with some surprisingly warm temperatures during the short summer when much of the region is warmed by the Gulf Stream. Winter sees the sun barely rise at all in these areas, while high summer can mean almost perpetual daylight. There are obviously other considerations when deciding when to go. If you're planning to visit fairly touristed areas, especially beach resorts in the Mediterranean, avoid July and August, when the weather can be too hot and the crowds at their most congested. Bear in mind, also, that in a number of countries in Europe everyone takes their vacation at the same time (this is certainly true in France, Spain and Italy where everyone goes away in August). Find out the holiday month beforehand for the countries where you intend to travel, since you can expect the crush to be especially bad in the resorts; in the cities the only other people around will be fellow tourists, which can be miserable. In northern Scandinavia the climatic extremes are such that you'll find opening times severely restricted, even road and rail lines closed, outside the May-September period, making travel futile and sometimes impossible outside these months. In mountainous areas things stay open for the winter sports season, which lasts from December through to April, though outside the main resorts you'll again find many things closed. Mid-April to mid-June can be a quiet period in many mountain resorts, and you may have much of the mountains to yourselves.