



Flight-free adventures

With millennials and Gen Z leading the charge on no-fly travel, Yolanda Zappaterra looks at some of the best rail trips for younger travellers



1 here's been growing evidence over the past few years that clients of all ages are concerned about the impact of their travel on the planet. Abta's 2023 travel trends report shows that 61% are determined to travel more sustainably and 36% plan to fly less.

But the trend towards no-fly trips increases among millennials and Generation Z, and according to a 2023 trends report from sustainable travel specialist Byway, once people have holidayed flight-free, they're much more likely to do it a second time, with 87% of Byway's customers saying they'd book a Byway trip again.

Founder and chief executive Cat Jones says: "So many people think of flying as the default mode of transport, but opting for the train or ferry is not only simple, but also a much more meaningful and fulfilling way to travel, while cutting CO2 emissions per passenger by up to 90%."

RAIL ALL-ROUNDER
Last month, Byway launched a collection of imaginative Sustainable European itineraries aimed at Gen Z travellers, ➤

Fisherman's Bastion, Budapest
PICTURE: Damien Raggatt - Intrepid Travel

DESTINATIONS

MILLENNIAL & GEN Z TRAVEL | NO-FLY TRIPS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Canoeing in Sweden; Sargan Eight heritage railway in Serbia; the ferry from Spain to Morocco PICTURES: Shutterstock/Mikael Damkier, Mikhail Berkut

such as Scandinavian Odyssey; Through Switzerland to Italy; and Discover Istria. It also has flight-free trips for all ages: from budget options to the French Riviera, trips to Vienna via the new Nightjet sleeper train, and dog-friendly itineraries.

Northern lights to Southern

Med's delights: If young clients are looking for something truly memorable, steer them towards the Gen Z-focused 22-day Europe to Africa package (starting from £1,930), which crosses the Mediterranean by ferry from Spain to Morocco, or try the 19-day Nordic Nights, which includes one of the world's most scenic rail journeys, the Arctic Circle sleeper from Stockholm to Narvik.

Book it: Byway's Nordic Nights package starts from £2,461 and includes accommodation, train travel, on-demand WhatsApp support and a guide to local activities. byway.travel

“You're able to enjoy the changing landscapes – journeys become part of the holiday

THE ROAD TO LOW-CARBON

Responsible Travel is targeting a 55% reduction in carbon dioxide per passenger by 2030 via a slew of low-carbon holidays, including 125 flight-free itineraries, some of them multi-country. Trips available to agents include walking holidays in France and yoga retreats in Valencia, Spain. Responsible Travel's partners can help with rail bookings, with commission split between Responsible Travel and the agent.

“Selling flight-free as an experience is about more than getting from A to B, it's part of the

adventure itself. You're able to enjoy the changing landscapes you're passing through – journeys become part of the holiday,” says customer director Tim Williamson.

Wellness express: Travel to a six-day Yoga Retreat in Valencia on a leisurely Eurostar journey through the Kent countryside, France and Spain. Journey time is 14 hours, and once there, twice-daily yoga sessions; organic, vegan food; meditation workshops; and guided hikes are on offer in La Vall de Laguar and the Pego Valley.

Book it: From £681, excluding train travel, which can be arranged (from €261). responsibletravel.com

EURO STARS

Explore's London2 rail tours allow passengers to travel by Eurostar and onto several European itineraries, including routes to Malaga via Bordeaux and the Basque country, ➤

ASK THE experts



Cat Jones, founder, Byway

“Give travellers an understanding of the benefits of choosing train over plane: no complicated journey to the airport, security queues, liquid restrictions or baggage limitations.”



Tim Williamson, customer director, Responsible Travel

“Cost is obviously a huge factor for people, so if there are savings to be had, highlight them. For a start, customers won't be forking out for things like extra legroom or luggage fees.”



Daniel Elkan, founder, Snowcarbon

“Door to door, flying can take as long as rail travel, which is composed of longer blocks of quality time and is much less stop-start. It means clients can ditch a gas-guzzling boring journey for a sustainable, fun, social one.”



ABOVE: Cross-country skiing in Mösern

top tip

Advise clients to book early: at least two months in advance where possible. Booking in advance will guarantee better prices and seat reservations, plus a good choice of sleeper cabins.

and to Athens via Rome, with a ferry crossing. Note that these rail tours are one way (and don't include flights back) so the client can choose how they return home.

Old-school glamour: One of Explore's trips that goes to town on train travel – indeed, many towns, including Paris, Venice, Zagreb, Belgrade, Sofia, Plovdiv and Istanbul – is the 15-day London to Istanbul Rail Adventure package. Explore's sales and customer service manager Adam Ringer, who recently did the trip, says: "The best thing was getting up close to countries, especially lesser-known ones such as Serbia and Bulgaria – travelling on the narrow-gauge train through the Serbian mountains will stay with me for a long time."

Book it: From £3,185 including rail travel to Istanbul, B&B accommodation and all excursions and activities, departing September 24. Return rail travel from Istanbul, booked separately, costs from £260. [explore.co.uk](https://www.explore.co.uk)

“Using public transport, like locals do, gives travellers an authentic look at daily life

GO SLOW

"We've seen real growth to Alpine regions this year, with sales up by, 35%," says Simon Wrench, Inntravel's senior brand manager.

"There is a particular draw to the Bavarian and Austrian Alps, fuelled by more people travelling by train."

Inntravel offers 58 flight-free holidays from London to Europe that can be reached in a day, and is focused on encouraging clients to travel slowly and, once at their destination, fully immerse themselves in the local culture.

Winter wonderland: From their base at Mösern's Hotel Inntalerhof in the heart of Tyrol, clients have

access to an idyllic Inn Valley base and the winter playground of Seefeld, perfect for downhill pistes, cross-country skiing, walking, snowshoeing, ice-skating or a horse-drawn sleigh ride. The four-star hotel has a spa with an indoor pool too.

Book it: Seven nights' half-board starts from £1,695 per person based on two sharing, including afternoon snacks, Eurostar and onward rail services from London St Pancras, plus transfers. [inntravel.co.uk](https://www.inntravel.co.uk)

PERFECT PARTNERS

Last year Intrepid partnered with Byway to offer customers a range of flight-free packages, and the company is working to remove all the "non-essential" flights from its trips where possible, and replace them with alternatives such as trains or other public transport. "This has already resulted in thousands of our customers taking fewer flights," says Joanna Reeve, head of business development and partnerships at

Intrepid. Its dedicated section on the website for Generation Z travellers offers a great range of adventurous packages, but older clients can get in on the act too, with no-fly trips such as the Best of Central Europe covering similar destinations to the package detailed below but with a higher level of comfort.

Gen Z Grand Tour: Intrepid's Real Central Europe package, for 18-29-year-olds, takes in seven countries from Germany to Italy using trains, metros, buses and even bikes. Reeve says: "Using public transport lets travellers experience the destination like locals do, gives an authentic look at daily life and is better for the environment. It gives them two days in almost every destination while adventuring with a group of like-minded people."

Book it: From £1,796, including accommodation, ground transport and selected meals and activities, for departures in September 2023 and February to September 2024. [intrepidtravel.com](https://www.intrepidtravel.com) **TW**