

Green travel: 3.333,3 km from FHV (Austria) to Burgos (Spain) and back

Frauke Dobers is RUN-EU manager at FHV – Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences. In this report, she shares insights from her green travel journey from Dornbirn (Austria) to Burgos (Spain) in October 2024, which took place as part of her job working for the Regional University Network-European University (RUN-EU). The journey was funded by RUN-EU Erasmus+ funds.

As someone representing [FHV-Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences](#) in the [RUN-European University](#), face-to-face meetings, workshop and seminars are valuable to create a positive impact in our work and for those studying and working in our institutions or regions. However, it's also crucial to consider the environmental impact we are causing with our travels. Thus, in 2024, inspired by the work of the organisation "[Terran e.V.](#)", I decided to challenge myself by only travelling "green". While I managed to realise all RUN-EU business trips in 2024 in a sustainable way – among them to Brussels (BE) and Leeuwarden (NL), I will focus on the longest of the journeys in this report: 3.333,3 km (no joke!) from FHV (Austria) to Burgos (Spain) and back¹. My aim of the journey was to teach in a training programme for lecturers from all our 8 RUN-EU partners, the so-called [SAP 'Service Learning Programme for Lecturers' | RUN-EU](#) at the [University of Burgos](#).

Prejudices.

You might still be wondering: "Why is she doing this to herself when she could just get on a plane?" I must admit, I came across quite a few prejudices and surprised faces when telling others about my idea to reach Burgos (Spain) with green travel mode. Among the sentences I heard most often were:

- "It's impossible!"
- "It's too expensive!"
- "It's more expensive than taking the airplane!"
- "It takes forever!"

Planning the Journey.

Instead of being discouraged by the prejudices, I kept on planning my journey. In fact, in retrospective, planning the journey was the trickiest part of it all. Why? Because researching what kind of connections could be possible and how to book the tickets with various train/bus companies in various countries took a lot of time (and patience 😊). I have to say, Googlemaps' route planner "transit option" (that's the one with the train icon) helped a lot. However, my breakthrough moment was when I came across the new [Erasmus+ Interrail ticket](#) and [Interrail's Rail Planner App](#), which easily helped me to look for connections, and – most importantly – to book all train tickets and reservations in one place, not having to worry about each train provider. The App also makes available the journey's statistics, e.g. counting how many kilometers and hours you have spent on trains or how many countries you have passed.

For my journey, I have booked an Erasmus+ Interrail ticket for 4 travel days within 6 months in 1st class. This is currently available for 321,00€.

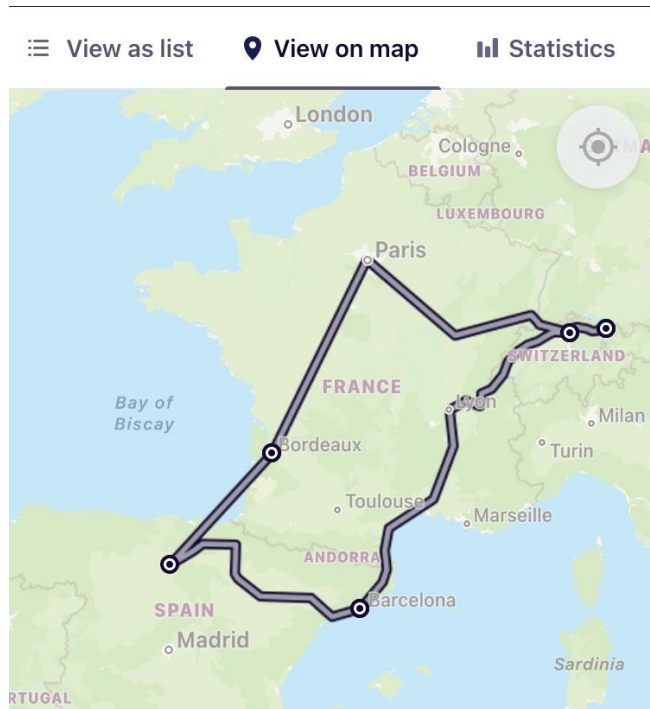
Off You Go! – Time to Travel.

After having booked the journey, the implementation (meaning: the travel itself) was much easier.

¹ My calculation is based on the Interrail App-kilometers for trains. For the bus journeys, I used Googlemaps.

In total, I traveled 3,333.3 km from FHV to Burgos and back, passing through 5 countries—Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, France, and Spain — and used 11 trains and 4 buses.

The screenshot I took from the Rail Planner App shows you the overall journey². On the way to Burgos, I stayed overnight in Zurich (due to the floods in Austria, trains were not running smoothly and I expected to miss trains, so I started my journey earlier) and Barcelona. On the way from Burgos back to Dornbirn, I stayed in Bordeaux for one night.



I could go into very much detail about my journey here because it was an interesting and positive experience. However, this will probably exceed the scope of this report. In short, the journey helped me to get a much better sense of the countries I travelled through and to get a feeling for them. How do the different dialects or languages sound? What is special about the trains and train stations? What are the “rules”? How does the landscape shift? I have seen parts of Spain which I would have otherwise not seen. Spending so many hours in the train was not only interesting, but also quite productive: I managed to get lots of work done without being distracted.

Here are a few items on my list of the things I will always remember:

- **Most beautiful train station on this journey:** Gare de Lyon in Paris.
- **Most comfortable train (seat):** 1st class train carriage from Barcelona to Burgos.
- **Fastest train:** Definitely the TGV from Bordeaux to Paris – it manages to take you 499km between those cities in just about 2 hours. When speeding up to 320 km/h, I almost felt like being pushed back in the seat as if I was in a rollercoaster.
- **Nicest stop-over:** Barcelona. The weather was fabulous, and so was my host.
- **Most beautiful train ride:** The journey from Lyon to Barcelona. During this journey, the train travelled along the sea for a while - I could see kitesurfers and flamingos, and as the sun slowly set towards the horizon, the Pyrenees (mountains) rose up in front of us. Beautiful!

² Please don't get confused by the impression that the trip Burgos-Bordeaux looks as if it included a ferry. That's because for this part of the journey, I travelled by busses, and the App could not exactly reproduce this.

- **Most unusual colour concept for interior design:** The first class carriage in the train from Geneva to Lyon. The seats were beige-yellow with splashes/stripes of orange, sky blue and a color which resembled the salmon fish. The luggage rack was also salmon-coloured.
- **Nicest co-traveller:** A person in the TGV from Paris to Zurich, who lent me his power bank so that I could work even though the socket had no power.

Green Travel Picture Proof(s).



Reality Check: Green Travel - Prejudices vs. My Experience.

Now let's have a look back at the prejudices and sentences I came across before starting my journey to Spain. What have I found out? These are my lessons learned:

- **"It's impossible!"** – Well, **I did it**, which means that it is in fact possible. It might take more effort to travel to Spain by trains and busses, but it's possible. Trains and buses made this journey smoother than expected, and the stunning landscapes were the perfect bonus.
- **"It's too expensive!"** or **"It's more expensive than taking the airplane"** – That has also proven to be wrong. My trip was **less expensive** than the journey of my colleagues who took the airplane, even including an overnight stay in a hotel Bordeaux. Using the **Interrail Erasmus+ ticket** was also helpful in terms of finances.
- **"It takes forever!"** – That depends! For my journey from Burgos to Dornbirn, for instance, my total travel time was **18 hours** —that might seem a lot. However, in comparison to my colleagues traveling with airplane, my total travel time was only 3 hours less. Nevertheless, it's true that a person wanting to travel from Dornbirn to Burgos by train/busses needs 2 travel days in total.

All in all, I can recommend this green travel journey from Dornbirn to Burgos.