Stay On Track with Digital and Print Travel Aids

By Ron Bauman
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Train travel in Europe is world-renowned for its efficiency and reliability, connecting the continent from Portugal to Estonia. My husband, Phil, and I prefer train travel over driving or air travel. We use Eurail to access the railways (and ferries in some areas, too). This gives us both the opportunity to rest and take in the sweeping views of the countries we longed for.

We first traveled on the European rail network in 2019 during our honeymoon, with lots of research done the months leading up to our departure. Guides like *Europe by Eurail* were gold mines of information, answering questions like "how do we book seats on trains?" and "where can we find schedules?" However, surprises like train delays, strikes or track malfunctions are often skimmed over. There is an easy answer to this: keep on moving.

On this occasion, we were leaving Germany's Black Forest region and heading to Amsterdam, Netherlands, with a connection in Frankfurt. As we arrived in the city, I received a notification through the Eurail Rail Planner app that our connecting train route to Amsterdam was cancelled due to "track disruptions." An eruption of angry passengers engulfed the Deutsch Bahn ticketing office. That's where a sales agent told us that we would have to stay in Frankfurt overnight and take a train to Amsterdam in the morning.

Do not take no for an answer. Especially when you have dinner reservations for a seafood tower at The Seafood Bar – that was the motivation alone! Just use these two tools to help you find a way out: the yellow timetables around the train stations and a rail planner app.

The yellow timetables displayed throughout the train stations. They are easy to read, but you can ask a staff member or fellow traveler for help too. Phil and I scoured the boards and found a train to Brussels, Belgium, with a stop in Cologne, Germany, leaving in ten minutes. I was happy to leave the mess in Frankfurt.

Once on board, I used the Eurail Rail Planner and Deutsch Bahn apps, and Google Maps, to find a connection from Cologne to Amsterdam through two small towns on the Germany-Netherlands borders.

These tools, as well as decades of watching *The Amazing Race*, had us arriving in Amsterdam only 30 minutes later from our cancelled route. Pay attention to your resources, whether they be plastered on a wall or in the palm of your hand. They both have value in a digitally driven world.