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Introduction

Finally, you're taking that long-awaited trip to Europe. Congratulations! You're about to embark on a great adventure, and, in addition to the excitement, you may feel a bit overwhelmed. You have lots of plans to make: where to stay, where to dine, how long to remain in each country, how to travel from place to place, and which attractions to see — but we're here to help you every step of the way. You already took a step in the right direction by buying *Europe For Dummies*, 6th Edition!

About This Book

You have in your possession a reference tool, not a guidebook that you have to read from cover to cover. Open up this book to any chapter to find the answers on how to make your European travel dreams come true. You *can* read *Europe For Dummies* from start to finish if you want, but if you're already familiar with some aspects of international travel, feel free to skip over the first two parts and jump right into the destination chapters.

Our goal throughout this book is to give you a really good selection of each country's highlights. That means we exclude places that exhaustive guidebooks routinely include. Brussels, Copenhagen, and Lisbon are important cities, but from the perspective of the first-time visitor to Europe, they can't compete with London, Paris, and Madrid. In addition, so much really is worth seeing in Europe that you don't need to waste your time with the second-rate, the overrated, or the boring.

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time — and this is especially true of prices. We, therefore, suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Conventions Used in This Book

If you've ever tried to extract some information from a guidebook and felt that you needed training in hieroglyphics to interpret all the different symbols, we're happy to report that you won't have that problem with user-friendly *Europe For Dummies*. We keep our use of symbols and abbreviations to a minimum.

The few conventions that we do use include the following:

- ✓ **Abbreviations for credit cards:** AE (American Express), DC (Diners Club), MC (MasterCard), and V (Visa).
- ✓ **Dollar-sign ratings for all hotels and restaurants:** The number of signs indicates the range of costs for one night in a double-occupancy hotel room or for a meal at a restaurant (excluding alcohol), from \$ (budget) to \$\$\$\$\$ (splurge). Because of the number of countries covered in this book, these ratings are relative, applied on a city-by-city basis. So a \$ hotel in pricey London may be a quirky bed-and-breakfast with shared bathrooms, but a \$ hotel in far-cheaper Athens may well be a centrally located, mid-range hotel. The same goes for restaurants: At a rustic \$\$\$\$ joint in Madrid, you may get a delicious, stick-to-your-ribs stew for about \$30, but a \$\$\$\$ restaurant in Paris dishes up fancy, haute-cuisine dishes that can cost as much as \$85 per course.
- ✓ **Two categories for hotels:** Our personal favorites (the tops) and those that don't quite make our preferred list but still get our hearty seal of approval (the runners-up). Don't be shy about considering those in the latter category, if you're unable to get a room at one of our favorites or if your preferences differ from ours. The amenities that the runner-up hotels offer and the services that they provide make them good choices to consider as you determine where to rest your head at night.
- ✓ **Cross-references to maps:** For those hotels, restaurants, and attractions that are plotted on maps, page references are provided in the listing information. If a hotel, restaurant, or attraction is outside the city limits or in an out-of-the-way area, it may not be mapped.

Foolish Assumptions

As we wrote this book, we made some assumptions about you and your needs as a traveler. Here's what we assumed about you:

- ✓ You may be an inexperienced traveler looking for guidance when determining whether to take a trip to Europe and how to plan for it.
- ✓ You may be an experienced traveler, but you don't have a lot of time to devote to trip planning or you don't have a lot of time to spend in Europe. You want expert advice on how to maximize your time and enjoy a hassle-free trip.
- ✓ You're not looking for a book that provides all the information available about Europe or that lists every hotel, restaurant, or attraction available to you. Instead, you're looking for a book that focuses on the places that will give you the best or most memorable experience in Europe.