Connectivity Report
Sustainable Student Mobility (Zurich)

From 2021 to 2023, the top student exchange destinations[1] for those traveling to or from Zurich were Copenhagen, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, and Madrid. All of these cities are easily accessible through eco-friendly transportation options. This connectivity report will explain how.

	Train			Bus		
City pairs	**Duration[2]**	**Night train**	**Possible stopovers**	**Duration[2]**	**Night bus**	**Possible stopovers**
Zurich ↕ Berlin	Direct: ~9–12 h	~12 h	• Freiburg & Black Forest* • Frankfurt • Constance • Nuremberg	Direct: ~12.5–14 h	Direct to Berlin Wannsee: ~12 h	• Constance • Munich • Nuremberg
Zurich ↕ Copenhagen	2 changes: ~14–15.5 h	Only to Hamburg	• Strasbourg • Frankfurt • Hamburg • Island Odense*	2 changes: ~22.5–24.5 h	Only to Hamburg	• Munich • Hamburg
Zurich ↕ Madrid	3 changes: ~14 h	–	• Geneva • Dijon • Lyon • Montpellier • Beaches of Southern France* • Barcelona	1 change: ~28 h	–	• Lyon • Bordeaux • Beaches & city of San Sebastian*
Zurich ↕ Munich	Direct: ~3.5–5 h	–	–	Direct: ~4 h	–	–
Zurich ↕ Vienna	Direct: ~8 h	~9–11 h	• Alps/ Vorarlberg* • Innsbruck • Salzburg	Direct: ~7.5–12 h	Direct to Vienna Erdberg: ~10–11.5 h	• Alps/Vorarlberg* • Innsbruck • Salzburg

* Nature /Landscape

The table above provides detailed information on the availability of direct bus and train connections, including night services. The focus is specifically on train and bus travel, as these are generally the most sustainable modes of transport. Interested in learning more about the climate impact of these routes? Be sure to check out the Factsheet Sustainable Student Mobility Zurich[3] (see Resources > Factsheets: (↗).

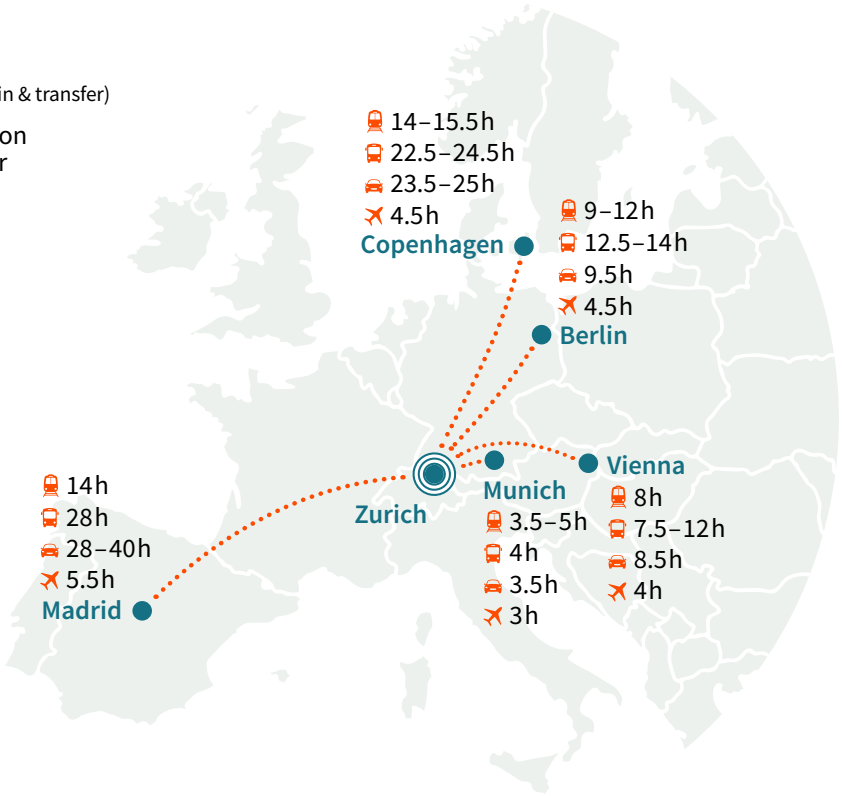
Trains offer a comfortable and efficient way to travel across Europe. Buses can be a particularly eco-conscious and budget-friendly option for longer journeys, such as those from Zurich to Berlin or Madrid.

Although buses may take longer than other modes of transport, they are among the most energy-efficient ways to travel long distances. Larger cities in Europe generally provide easy access to public transport upon arrival. If you book early, ticket prices can be significantly lower. Please note that for some trains and buses, e.g. night trains or high-speed trains in certain countries, reservations are mandatory. Do you want to see all the night-trains[5] in Europe currently available? Here is an overview for you (↗).

Note: The table above provides suggestions for such stopovers, focusing on larger cities or well-known natural areas. However, other cities or scenic spots may also be worth exploring. Stopover options vary depending on the different possible routes chosen for a city pair.

Estimated travel times for the five most popular Student Exchange Routes[1]

Train (incl. transfer)
Bus (incl. transfer)
Car (incl. rest periods)
Plane (incl. check-in & transfer)
Main station city center



Notes: Travel times were calculated using Rome2Rio2 for two randomly selected dates: Monday, October 24, 2024, and Monday, October 20, 2025. Calculations assume travelers take the fastest routes and direct flights where available. Travel times were rounded to the nearest half hour. Where the variation was an hour or less, average times are reported; otherwise, ranges are shown. Direct flight times show little variation, while travel by train, bus, or car may vary due to new routes or road traffic. Times incorporate real-time data, travel time estimates, and average transit times. For car travel, a 30-minute break was added every 3 hours, plus a 10-hour overnight rest every 8.5 hours. For train and bus travel, it was assumed travelers sleep while en route. The dotted route on the map does not represent the exact travel route.

You can also choose to stop along your route and spend a few nights exploring the places you pass through. In Denmark, for instance, the island of Fyn offers picturesque coastal landscapes, historic castles, and charming villages where you can enjoy cycling. Traveling by train or bus also gives you a unique opportunity to explore Europe from your train/bus seat. For example, on your way to Madrid, you'll pass through the stunning beach landscapes of Southern France, and if you're lucky, you might even spot flamingos from your train window. Alternatively, if you're traveling to Copenhagen by bus, part of the journey includes a ferry ride, where your bus is loaded onto the boat as well.

While the map above shows that traveling by train or bus takes more time than flying or driving, you can use that time productively. You can read, work, play games, or simply connect with other travelers on the train or bus. Most long-distance trains even have a bistro on board, where you can relax and enjoy a meal. Through these interactions, you might learn something new about Europe or pick up ideas for things to do in the city you're traveling to.

Travelling by train or bus to your exchange destination in Europe

- reduces your climate impact compared to other transport modes,
- gives you a great opportunity to explore Europe, its natural and urban environments, people, and cultural diversity,
- enables you to make productive use of travel time, to reconnect with yourself and / or other people.

1 Travel routes from exchange students collected by the Charles University of Prague (2021–2023), University of Porto (2021–2023), University of Zurich (2018–2024) and EU Data Collection of student exchanges (2021–2023)
2 Connections: Rome2Rio.com (↗): retrieved Sept 24 – Jan 2025 and Jul – Aug 2025
3 Factsheet: set-project.eu > Resources (↗): retrieved Sept 2025
4 Night trains: eurail.com (↗): retrieved Jan 2025

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Authorship: Nadine Wolf with contributions from Linde Warland, Youngseo Kim and Somara Gantenbein, Version September 2025,
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