



7 tips for eating out cheaply

Transcript 039

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Linda: Hi I'm Linda.

Craig: And I'm Craig.

Linda: And this is the Indie Travel Podcast at www.indietravelpodcast.com. This week it's episode 39 and it's coming to you from Vienna, Austria.

Craig: Where it is very, very, cold. We've been working, but on Tuesday night we went out with our colleagues to several of the winter markets. They're fantastic, all Christmas-themed, and the punch was incredibly tasty.

Linda: Well, on to the show then. We've been travelling around Europe for a while now, and the biggest expenses are accommodation, travel and food. This week we'd like to talk about the third one of these - eating. It's important, you know!

Craig: And delicious. Of course if you want to eat cheap it's best to head to the supermarket or - even better - a local market, but what about when it's time to eat out? You're going out with friends or you're just sick of bread and cheese.

Linda: It happens. So, this week we're talking about how to eat out cheaply in Europe.

Craig: Firstly, you need to find somewhere that doesn't charge through the roof. This should be obvious. Quite a lot of restaurants have their menus outside, so you can check them or ask inside before you sit down. Wander around a bit and check out the options, then choose one that serves something you'd like for a reasonable price. Don't let yourself get pulled in somewhere that you don't want to go.

Linda: Second, look for specials. Making lunch your main meal can save you a lot in countries like Austria, where we are, where there are cheap tagesmenus, which is a daily special, they're usually at lunchtime. But if you want a hot meal at night, there are sometimes specials then too. The other night we had a great bento box

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at a Japanese restaurant the other night - it included soup, tea, salad, sushi, a hot portion, a piece of fruit and a chocolate square for 7 euros 50. Which is really, really good value for Japanese. And it was tasty.

Craig: And, as we record, we've just come back from a cafe/restaurant on Mariahilferstrasse - which is one of Vienna's main shopping streets. We both ate a great meal and shared a glass of wine for 15 euros. It's not an earth-shattering deal, but believe me when I say it was one of the best Italian meals I've had since leaving Italy.

Linda: And it was a really flash-looking cafe.

Craig: I thought it was going to be a lot more.

Linda: Yeah, we just saw the menu board outside and went in, and it was still going, so we were quite happy about that. Third tip, think about your drinks. Asking for tap water is usually acceptable - as long as it's okay to drink tap water in the country that you're in! We've seen glasses of wine in restaurants anywhere between one euro and five euros. Might be a good idea to give booze a miss for the evening if it costs too much.

Craig: But I have to say, I'm a big fan of wine, an enthusiastic amateur as it is, so I want a glass with almost every meal. Especially a sit-down treat-yourself-a-bit kind of meal. One way to save is to buy one glass of wine between a couple - just a taste, like a condiment, with the meal is enough to indulge the senses when wine prices are out of reach.

Linda: Okay, fourth tip, sometimes restaurants will do small portions if you're not too hungry. Plus you get a bit of a discount. They're called kleinerportions in Austria. And it's really useful in some of the Germanic countries where the servings are enormous.

Craig: Yeah, you can imagine the biggest plate you own, piled with chips, and then with a Wiener schnitzel about three-quarters the size of the plate on top, and that's your typical serving in a guesthouse.

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Linda: Yeah, it might be worth splitting that if you're not too hungry.

Craig: Yeah, so, fifth tip, keep an eye out for extra charges. Don't assume the bread on the table is free. Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. It is best to ask. Other restaurants might include a cover charge of one or two euros (which is quite steep if you're only in for coffee), or a charge for music. You might want to refer back to our Venice episode. Check the menu before you order, and if you're not happy, walk on out.

Linda: Sixth, remember to leave a tip. In most of the places we've been to, rounding up the bill to the nearest euro or five euros, depending on the price, is acceptable - you don't have to leave 15%! There's a useful info sheet on tipping culture in many countries that we found recently; we'll have a link to it at www.indietravelpodcast.com

Craig: And finally, it might help to set a budget before you go out. A good way to do this is just to take that amount of cash with you. First get an idea of the prices of food in the area, and set a realistic budget. Then if you find a cheap meal, you might have some extra for dessert.

Linda: We don't advise constantly being miserly; that's just as stupid as constantly being decadent, but when you do want to save I trust these tips will help you out.

Craig: Well, that's pretty much us for this week. Don't forget the "Vagabonding" book giveaway - we've only had three entries so far, so you have a good chance of winning if you're interested in a copy. It closes December first, and more details at www.indietravelpodcast.com

Linda: And until next week, travel well.

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