

Good night Amsterdam – good morning St Anton

*Keen to cut the carbon footprint of her ski holidays,
Leslie Woit travels to Austria on the Alpen Express*

Lovers of all things white are not immune to the pressure to green up. So in the age of carbon-emission sensitivities, slashing my snowy footprint is clearly an idea worth exploring. Rather than flying or driving to Austria – excursions that reportedly belch out 245lb and 565lb of CO₂, respectively – I'm boarding the Eurostar from London to Amsterdam for the Friday-night sleeper to the Austrian Alps. My total carbon cost: a relative burp at 51lb.

Any opportunity to avoid airport aggro and long coach transfers is motivation enough, and I revel in sallying from pavement through passport control in nine minutes. We soon pull out at a civilised 11am and arrive into Amsterdam at 4pm – ample time for a cold Affligem and lunch in the high-ceilinged old-world atmosphere of the station's First Class Grand Café.

By 7pm, the *slaapwagen* – Dutch for sleeper train – snakes through the city. We are five in my couchette and each seat converts to a fold-down bed equipped with a cotton sleeping sheet, blanket and pillow. (There are also



six- and three-person berths.) It's rather weathered rolling stock and our compartment benefits from an open corridor window, cheerfully unlocked by an attendant.

There is a steady flow of people – mostly teens, 20-somethings and a handful of older couples – filing down towards the bar car.

My *slaap*-mates discuss the convenience of the train over a 10-hour drive. There's also chat and excitement about a full Saturday on the slopes. Inge is travelling with her husband on a ski break to St Johann's





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All aboard the Alpen Express

◆ The Alpen Express runs weekly from late December until mid-March (out Fridays; return Saturdays), serving nearly 100 Austrian ski resorts, including St Anton, Alpbach, Kitzbuhel, Soll, Mayrhofen, Ischgl, Sölden, Westendorf, Kirchberg in Tirol and Zell am See-Kaprun.

A ticket from Amsterdam to Austria in a six-berth sleeping car, costs from €179 (£150); from Cologne it is €169: [alpen.express/en/](#)
◆ Eurostar from London to Amsterdam costs from £70 return, while London to Cologne costs from £53 return: [eurostar.com](#)



ALL WHITE NOW After a night on the 'Slaapwagen', the Alps beckon

affordable, all inclusive hotels. Friendly stewards deliver snacks, alcoholic and soft drinks and take breakfast orders. With no dining car, many people bring their own food and drink. Around 9pm, I brave the bar car. With more than 500 passengers, the carriage is full of revellers gyrating to electronic dance music beneath

flashing club lights – a moving manifestation of rock'n'roll, which is in full swing at around 11pm as the train makes a stop at Cologne (you may prefer to join the train here). The party car closes at 12.30am, but we've folded down our sparingly padded billets long before. I'm equipped with ear plugs, eye mask, and sleeping pill with a G&T chaser

but slumber in a stuffy compartment is elusive and you don't take the train expecting a good night's kip. Come for the party, the companionship, or the extra time on the mountain. After a day on snow, when you encounter the fluffy feather bed that awaits in your charming Tirolean inn of choice, the righteous sleep of the carbon-light sustainable skier is deep indeed.