

nitrous oxide, Roofies, GHB, LSD, and even cat tranquilizers). The idea is that you can cook these things up anywhere, transport them easily, and sell them for a big markup. Large rural areas guarded by armed men are being replaced with smaller labs in peaceful regions. This actually removes much of the danger associated with travel in dangerous places. Even the buying and selling of pharmaceutical-type pills makes it more difficult for travelers to be detected and put in jail. A dubious plus point in the world of travel.

Drugs 'n' the Hood

Okay, you sort of know the lay of the land when it comes to drugs, but how do you stay out of their cross hairs? Knowing the players and places can help.

Europe

Europe is a major consumer of illicit drugs. Lots of junkies live in Germany (150,000) and Russia (80,000), and plenty more are in port cities like Amsterdam, Marseilles, and the Baltics. Poland produces 20 percent of the amphetamines sold in Europe and is a major base for Chinese, Colombian, and other drug groups looking for safe, central places to process drugs. There are about 200,000 drug users in Europe and half of them are addicts.

- **England** has an estimated 100,000 heroin addicts and is a major consumer of soft and hard drugs. Most of the heroin comes from Afghanistan via Pakistani organizations. Marijuana comes from Morocco. Cocaine comes directly from South America via Amsterdam.
- **Italy** is home to three major criminal organizations: The Calabrian *ndrangheta*, the Neapolitan *camorra*, and the Sicilian mafia. All work directly with South American cartels to transport and sell cocaine in Europe. Most cocaine comes by sea into mafia-controlled ports. There are around 200,000 cocaine users and 150,000 addicts in Italy.
- **Germany** is the one place where cocaine costs more than in the United States and use is up. Its ports of Hamburg, Bremen, and Rostock are entry points for drugs, and Frankfurt is the main air terminal used by Europe-bound "mules" from Africa and Central Asia.
- **Greece** has 80,000 heroin users and is a major transshipment point into Europe from Turkey, by road, sea, and air.
- **Bulgaria's** lax airport security allows cocaine smugglers access to Europe. It is also a main route into Europe from Turkey for West Asian drugs.

- **Cyprus** is an important meeting ground and money laundering center for the Russian mafia. There are over 20,000 offshore companies, one-tenth of which are Russian. Its central, neutral location and business infrastructure make it the ideal meeting place for drug deals, payoffs, and discussions.

The Balkans

The well-maintained roads and compliant customs officials of the former Yugoslavia were the home leg of the long road from the poppy fields of Asia. The war messed up this convenient leg and now most heroin is smuggled through Albania, Macedonia, and Bulgaria. About 70 percent of heroin is smuggled under the direction of the Albanian mafia—stronger than its government—to customers in Germany and Switzerland. The Albanian mafia, primarily members of the Kosovar clan, are bosom buddies with the Italian mafia. Heroin is also processed in Albania by the mafia to increase profits.

Criminals control most major ports and entry areas, making it a free-trade zone for drugs. Cannabis and poppies are also grown domestically. Albanians from the Kosova region are the main smugglers, delivering their wares to retailers in Italy, Turkey, and along the Mediterranean.

Trans-Caucasus

The rough-and-ready base of Europe is a natural conduit for anything coming from the foggy mountains of Chechnya, Georgia, and other small states. The Chechen *mafia* backed the original war and provided inside military information from corrupt Russian intelligence officers and a flow of weapons or cash. The Chechen diaspora has criminal and business connections, from the greasy oil fields of Baku to Istanbul, Moscow, and the Middle East. Their only competition seems to be the Russian military, which has a bigger fleet of planes and trucks to move Central and South Asian goods directly to Moscow and sea ports beyond. There is a nasty rumor that after the late Chechen leader, Dudayev, unsuccessfully demanded a higher cut of drug monies (as well as oil) from Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, he then began to execute train conductors and confiscate all the drugs, prompting Grachev to invade Chechnya.

Colombia

Colombia is the world's leading producer and distributor of cocaine. Success in almost eradicating the cocaine business in Peru and Bolivia