



Share the Experience

June 2011

## **BRUGGE CHRISTMAS PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION 2011**

Thank you for choosing to holiday with Topdeck. We certainly appreciate your decision to travel with us and rest assured everyone at Topdeck will be doing their utmost to ensure you have the holiday of a lifetime.

We have prepared the following information for you which we trust will assist you in planning for your trip. Some points should be taken as a guide only such as personal spending money, which can vary greatly between individuals but we are sure you will find the information in general very useful.

Get ready for a fantastic holiday!

*From all the Crew at Topdeck Travel*

### **Baggage**

We recommend frameless backpacks, plus a small day pack or carry bag. Remember, if you take too much, you have to carry it around before and after the trip! **Please limit your baggage allowance to a maximum of 20kgs.** Maximum allowable size for all bags must not exceed 70cm x 50cm x 25cm. Please note that due to space and weight restrictions on our coaches, passengers with too much luggage on departure morning in London may be told that they cannot take their entire luggage with them. Luggage storage facilities are available at the Clink hostel. Any luggage left behind will be at your own risk and you will be required to pay any cost that is incurred. Please keep in mind you are staying in multi-share hostel accommodation, and luggage space in the dorm rooms is not extensive

### **Suggested Clothing List**

The following clothing list is suggested based on our experience. The basic rule however is "pack light". Our passengers invariably state they wished they had brought half the amount of clothes and remember you are bound to find items to purchase on your trip so leave room for additional purchases during your holiday. Please ensure your bag weight doesn't go over 20kg at the end of the trip not the beginning!!

- Smart casual evening wear
- 1 pairs of jeans / trousers
- 1 pair of walking shoes
- 1 sweater / jumper
- 1 warm jacket / coat
- 2 shirts / t-shirts / long-sleeved shirts
- 1 rainproof jacket
- 1 pair of shoes (smart/casual)
- Underwear and socks
- Hat, scarf, gloves

### **General**

- Basic medical kit (inc. aspirins, plasters)
- Towel
- Sewing kit
- Toiletries

### **Visa and Passport Information**

Please make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months after the last day of your trip. Some countries will refuse entry if there is not at least 6 months validity on passports after your departure date from their country. Depending on your nationality, you may require a visa to enter certain countries. **It is your responsibility to obtain these prior to the departure of the trip.** Consult your agent to determine which visas you will require.

We also have a visa chart on our website listing the visas required by some nationalities travelling on our trips. To check go to our website [www.topdecktravel.co.uk](http://www.topdecktravel.co.uk), click on to Travelling with Topdeck and then Visa Information.

Remember that some visas can take up to six weeks to obtain, so do not leave it until the last minute. Also bear in mind that the validity of the visa often runs from the date of issue rather than date of entry into the country. Please check with the appropriate embassies prior to departure as requirements do change periodically.

### **Multiple Entry Visas**

Certain trips or your personal travel arrangements may require multiple entry visas. Please check your itinerary for the correct port of entry / exit for your trip.

## **SCHENGEN AGREEMENT:**

France, Italy, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Luxembourg, Greece, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden are all part of the Schengen Agreement, which means that one visa can be used to cover all of these countries. If you need a visa for any of these countries that your trip visits, **you may require a multi-entry Schengen visa**. The country you will be spending the most time in usually issues the Schengen visa.

Note that all trips departing and returning to London; under normal circumstances, **enter and exit continental Europe and the Schengen area through Calais in France**. Please check your itinerary for the correct port of entry / exit for your trip.

## **Insurance**

It is **compulsory** for all passengers to take out comprehensive travel insurance before the trip departs covering cancellation, medical expenses including repatriation, loss or damage to baggage and personal belongings, money and public liability. Topdeck can issue travel insurance, please refer to our website [www.topdeck.travel](http://www.topdeck.travel), click on 'Travelling with Topdeck' and then 'Travel Advice' for more information. You must bring a copy of your travel insurance policy with you on the trip.

Your Trip Leader will make a record of your basic travel insurance details at the start of your trip, e.g. the name of the insurance company, the 24 hour emergency telephone number, and your policy number. These will be faxed back to our London office to ensure that if you lose your policy details, they can be easily retrieved.

## **Health & Vaccinations**

If you suffer from any kind of medical condition you must advise Topdeck at the time of booking, or at least six weeks prior to the departure of your trip. No vaccinations are currently compulsory for entry into European countries. Please reconfirm this before you leave as conditions could change.

If you require regular medication, you must have an ample supply of medication before your trip departs, as it can be difficult to obtain in some countries. You must be able to administer your own medication, as Topdeck Road Crew will not be able to administer it, and there are no guarantees that there will be anyone with first aid training on board.

## **Spending Money**

Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are available all over Belgium and are the safest and easiest way to have access to cash. Travellers' cheques are also accepted in Belgium and are an alternative to using ATMs, however if your trip is over a weekend or public holiday you may find it difficult to cash your travellers' cheques. The Euro (€) is the currency used in Belgium. We recommend at least €50-€60 Euros per day to cover your normal expenses. If you wish to purchase expensive souvenirs, you will need to budget for more, or use your credit cards for these purchases. Remember, this is a *guideline* figure and can vary greatly between individuals according to your overall personal budget and spending habits!

### **Credit Cards**

Most well known credit cards are accepted in Belgium. We recommend that you bring yours along in case you see something special, which you haven't budgeted for. Credit cards **CANNOT** be used for optional excursions.

## **Optional Activities**

On most trips we have arranged extra activities that we think will enhance your travel experience, but you have a choice as to whether or not you will participate. These are called Optional Excursions and are not included in the cost of your trip. They are usually organised on a group participation basis and should be taken into consideration when budgeting your spending money.

None of the optional excursions on your trip are operated by Topdeck, and nor do they form part of your contract with Topdeck for your trip. Topdeck arranges optional excursions as an Agent of the local supplier. Should you participate in any optional excursions your contract will be with the local supplier of the excursion, and their conditions will apply. We have selected all of these operators based on recommendations from past passengers and Topdeck Road Crew.

## **Claim Your Free Topdeck Global Sim Card Before You Leave for Your Trip**

All our travellers are entitled to claim a free TopDeck global SIM card to use while on their Topdeck trip! Just follow this link to claim yours: [www.topdeck.ekit.com/freesim](http://www.topdeck.ekit.com/freesim) - use your Topdeck "Booking Reference" and purchase a minimum of \$20 calling credit.

The Topdeck SIM is a "roaming free" SIM card just drop it into your mobile and enjoy savings of up to 90% on calls while travelling throughout Europe.

Every SIM card includes the ekit Travel Journal. The Travel Journal automatically updates your location to Google maps on a daily basis. This allows you to keep track of where you've been, and with the option to publish this on facebook and twitter you can easily show-off your

travels to friends and family. Not only does this provide a hassle free way of keeping in contact, but you can text in your own journal updates or photos for an even more detailed record of your holiday!

- Free Global SIM card and US \$5 bonus call credit, when you purchase \$20 of call credit
- Coverage in 150 countries including all TopDeck destinations

\* Fast low-cost 1st class shipping to Australia, UK, Europe, USA and Canada

\* You can upgrade your SIM card's calling plan for even better international rates:

- Passport Plus – International rates from just USD \$0.29 per minute
- Passport SIM / Home & Roam SIM – Free to receive calls in over 60 countries

To redeem your FREE SIM card and \$5 credit **before you travel** visit: [www.topdeck.ekit.com/freesim](http://www.topdeck.ekit.com/freesim) - and use your Topdeck "Booking Reference". For more information visit the above URL or phone our dedicated 24/7 Customer Service on: **(AUS)** 1800-795-252, **(UK)** 0800-376-2370, **(USA)** 1-888-513-8804, **(CAN)** 1888-513-8804

## Departing on Your Trip

Our London departure point for your Brugge Christmas trip is:

<b>Clink 78 Hostel,</b> 78 Kings Cross Road, London, WC1X 9QG.
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Here are a few directions to help you on your arrival.

### **From London Airports:**

**Heathrow Airport** is connected to the entire Greater London area by the capital's underground railway network. From passport control and baggage reclaim follow the "Underground" signs to the underground station. Take the Piccadilly Line (colour coded dark blue) to Kings Cross station. When leaving the station take any exit and ensure that Euston Road is in front of you and that the King's Cross and St. Pancras stations are behind you. Turn left and walk down Euston Road, Euston Road then turns into Pentonville Road. Walk down this road and the 2nd street on your right is King's Cross Road. Take this road and as it curves around to the right you will see a big Travelodge hotel on your left. The Clink is a former courthouse located directly after this hotel. Walking time is 10 minutes.

**Gatwick Airport** is not connected to the underground system. By overland rail, First Capital Connect trains take you directly to St. Pancras station. Once at St. Pancras station follow the directions above.

If you are going to be in London for a few days, it will be cheaper for you to buy an **Oyster Card** on arrival. This will give you savings on all London's public transport for the length of your stay.

### Departure Times of European Trips from London:

Check-in time at the Clink Hostel:	6.00 - 6.30am
Departure time by:	7.00am

### If You Miss the Departure in London – What To Do!

Firstly ring our emergency number +44 77 9277 5415 and our staff can advise you what to do next.

If you happen to miss your coach, trips leaving from London travel to Dover where they catch a ferry to Calais, and then drive to our central Brugge hostel, called Charlie Rockets Hostel, Hoogstraat 19, 8000 Brugge. If you miss the coach, Charlie Rockets Hostel is about a 25 minute walk from Bargeplein, where the Eurolines bus service to Brugge drops off.

### Finishing your trip

All trips ending in London finish at the Clink Hostel, Kings Cross. Your Brugge Christmas trip should finish at approximately 9.00pm. Please be aware that delays often occur during the Christmas and New Year period either on the motorways coming towards Calais or at UK Immigration. If this happens and we miss our normal ferry from Calais to Dover, your arrival time back in London could be delayed up to several hours. Therefore we strongly recommend that you do not book flights out of London on the night your trip finishes.

## Accommodation

Your Brugge Christmas trip will stay at in multi-share hostel accommodation. The number of people in a room varies, however rooms in the hostel are usually 4-8 bedded dorm rooms. Please be aware that this trip **does not** operate a single sex policy and therefore you may be sharing your room with Topdeck passengers of the opposite sex.

## Meals

Breakfasts are included every day (except the first morning). Other meals are included as detailed in the trip itinerary. Many lunches and dinners are not included, so that you can take full advantage of the variety of food available in Belgium. If you have special dietary requirements e.g. vegetarian or wheat intolerance, we will make every endeavour to cater to your specific needs as long as you advise your agent or reservations when you book.

## Toilets

In most European countries you will have to pay a small amount to use public toilets at service stations and in city centres. It is a common practice in Europe and should be regarded as a form of 'tipping', as the money goes to the people who clean and/or maintain the facilities. It is very rare that public toilets do not supply toilet paper, but it may be useful to carry a pack of tissues with you.

## Great Deals on our Festival and Short Break packages!

Did you know Topdeck also run a great range of festival and short break packages all year round?

These include:

- Venice Carnival
- Anzac Day
- Las Fallas
- St. Patrick's Day
- Easter Trips
- Pamplona – Running of the Bulls
- Edinburgh Fringe Festival
- La Tomatina
- Oktoberfest
- Ski packages and MORE

## Past Passenger Discount

As a thank you for being a loyal Topdeck customer, you can claim your 5% discount off any Topdeck Europe, Egypt, Africa or Festival trip departing in 2012 when you book your next Topdeck trip (\*Terms & Conditions apply – please see the website for full details).

## Topdeck Rewards: Rewards on Festival Bookings



		
<b>SAVE 10%*</b>	<b>SAVE 12.5%*</b>	<b>SAVE 15%*</b>
WHEN YOU BOOK YOUR <b>SECOND TOPDECK FESTIVAL</b>	WHEN YOU BOOK YOUR <b>THIRD TOPDECK FESTIVAL</b>	WHEN YOU BOOK YOUR <b>FOURTH TOPDECK FESTIVAL</b>
<small>*For terms and conditions please see go to <a href="http://www.topdeck.travel">www.topdeck.travel</a> and look under 'deals and competitions'</small>		

## **Final Checklist**

- \* Passport
- \* Airline tickets
- \* Insurance Policy (you must bring this with you)
- \* Visas if required
- \* Camera, Batteries
- \* Conversion plug

*We trust you have found this information useful, and we sincerely hope that you have a fantastic holiday with Topdeck! Thanks again for choosing to travel with us.*

*From all the crew at Topdeck Travel*