



Share the Experience

## PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

### EDINBURGH FESTIVAL AND TATTOO 2012

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

We have prepared the following pre-departure information which we trust will assist you in planning your trip. Some points should be taken as a *guide only* - after all, everyone is different! For instance information such as daily spending money and clothing lists can vary greatly from one person to the next, so please bear this in mind. However, we are sure you will find the information in general to be very useful.

Get ready for a fantastic holiday!

*From all the crew at Topdeck Travel*

### FESTIVAL INFORMATION

Edinburgh's Royal Military Tattoo is Scotland's annual outdoor military spectacular featuring pipes and drums, international bands, display teams, dancers and acts from around the world. This amazing event is set against the backdrop of Edinburgh Castle, showing Edinburgh at its best and featuring a spectacular fireworks display using Edinburgh Castle itself as a backdrop.

The first Edinburgh Tattoo took place in 1950 when there were eight items in the programme. Today, more than 12 million people have attended the Tattoo. The annual audience is over 200,000, and around 100 million people watch the Tattoo each year on international television with about 70% of each audience coming from outside of Scotland! From its early days, the Edinburgh Tattoo has been an international favourite, with performers from over 40 countries having presented at the Tattoo.

The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, which is on at the same time as the Military Tattoo, is unique, breaking its own record every year as the largest arts festival on the planet (according to the Guinness Book of Records). Each year it brings thousands of performances of hundreds of shows in over 250 venues across Scotland's capital city.

### BAGGAGE

We recommend soft bags, suitcases or frameless backpacks, plus a small day pack or carry bag. Please limit your luggage to a **maximum of 20kgs**. Maximum allowable size for all backpacks 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 the morning of departure may be told that they cannot take their entire luggage with them. 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

As a general rule, **pack light!** People invariably bring more than they need, and you will have to transport it around before and after the trip, as well as in and out of the accommodation during the trip!

Remember also that during your trip you are bound to find items that you may wish to buy, so leave room in your luggage for additional purchases. A full coach of passengers with heavy bags may render it overweight, which will result in severe disruption to our schedules and potentially affect our itinerary, so please pack so that your baggage will be less than 20kg by the end of the trip, not just at the start!

The following clothing list is suggested, based on our experience:

- Smart casual evening wear
- 1 pair sandals / thongs / jandals
- 1 pair of jeans / trousers
- 1 pair of walking shoes
- 1 sweater / jumper
- 1 warm jacket
- 2 shirts / t-shirts
- 1 rainproof jacket
- 1 pairs of shorts / skirt
- 1 pair of shoes (smart/casual)
- Underwear and socks

General things to pack:

- Towel
- Toiletries
- Basic medical kit (inc. plasters, aspirin etc)
- Washing powder
- Insect repellent
- Conversion plug

Optional:

- Sewing kit
- Sleeping sheet / sleeping bag liner
- Pillow case
- Torch

Please be aware that most things you might want to bring, for instance towel, washing powder, insect repellent etc. are easily purchased in London before your trip starts.

**Please Note:** The Edinburgh Military Tattoo takes place outside without cover, and in case of bad weather will more than likely continue. Please ensure you bring a rain jacket with you in case of rain.

## 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.

## VISAS 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 your passport 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.topdeck.travel](http://www.topdeck.travel), click on '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.

## HEALTH AND 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 the UK. 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

The currency in the United Kingdom is Great British Pounds Sterling (£) (GBP). The most common bank notes are printed by the Bank of England and are easily recognisable. However notes printed in Scotland and Northern Ireland look different, yet are the same currency!

Automatic Teller Machines (**ATMs**) are available all over the UK and are the safest and easiest way to have access to cash. Travellers' cheques are also accepted and are an alternative to using ATMs, though it may be difficult finding places to cash them, especially on bank holidays and weekends.

Most well-known **credit cards** are accepted in the UK. 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.

Based on past experience, we recommend around £35-£50 GBP per day to cover your normal expenses including sightseeing, small souvenir shopping and non-included meals. 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!

## 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. See the section called **Optional Excursions on your trip itinerary** to help you assess any extra personal expenses you may incur.

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.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

Your Edinburgh Festival and Tattoo trip stays in a 5\* hostel located just off the Royal Mile, in the heart of Edinburgh. We have endeavoured to select a good quality hostel that reflects the character of the local area, as centrally located as possible, whilst still striving to keep the cost affordable. Please be aware that many Scottish hostel rooms, especially those in major urban centres or older cities, may be smaller than what you are used to in other parts of the world.

The number of people in a room varies depending on the size of the group. Rooms in the hostel are usually 6-8 bedded rooms, however there may be limited occasions where rooms of up to 10 beds are used. Your hostel trips **do not** operate a single sex policy and therefore you may be sharing your room with Topdeck passengers of the opposite sex.

## **MEALS**

Your included meals are detailed in the 'What's Included' section on the trip pages in our brochure and on your detailed Trip Itinerary.

Breakfasts are included every day in the hostel (except on the first morning). They are usually 'continental breakfasts', which are typical in most European countries. A typical breakfast may consist of cereals with milk, bread and a range of spreads, and fruit juice, tea or coffee to drink.

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. Please be aware that in some countries the hostels we use may not be able to cater for every single dietary requirement, but we will always try our best to arrange it. However, we cannot cater for tastes or dislikes, as most of our included meals feature a set or buffet menu.

## **TOILETS**

In most of the UK 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.

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 is:

<p><b>Clink 78 Hostel,</b> 78 Kings Cross Road, London, WC1X 9QG.</p>
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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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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, National Rail services and National Express coach services operate regularly between London and Edinburgh. Smart City Hostel in Edinburgh is located in the city centre, about a 10 to 15 minute walk from the main rail and bus stations.

## FINISHING YOUR TRIP

All trips ending in London finish at the Clink Hostel, Kings Cross. Your Edinburgh Festival and Tattoo trip should finish at approximately 9.00pm. Please be aware that delays often occur in summer on the motorways coming towards London. If this happens, 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.

## GREAT DEALS ON OUR FESTIVALS AND SHORT BREAK PACKAGES!

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

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

For further details, dates and prices, or to book, please visit our website [www.topdeck.travel](http://www.topdeck.travel)

## PAST PASSENGER DISCOUNT

Thinking about booking another trip, festival or short break with us? As a thank you for being a loyal Topdeck customer, you can claim the following discounts on your next trip!

- 5% off any Topdeck trip departing in 2012.

\*\*Terms & Conditions apply – please see the website for full details\*\*

## TOPDECK REWARDS: REWARDS ON FESTIVAL BOOKINGS

**BRONZE**

**SAVE 10%\***

WHEN YOU BOOK YOUR **SECOND** TOPDECK FESTIVAL

**SILVER**

**SAVE 12.5%\***

WHEN YOU BOOK YOUR **THIRD** TOPDECK FESTIVAL

**GOLD**

**SAVE 15%\***

WHEN YOU BOOK YOUR **FOURTH** TOPDECK FESTIVAL

\*For terms and conditions please see go to [www.topdeck.travel](http://www.topdeck.travel) and look under 'deals and competitions'

## FINAL CHECKLIST

- Passport
- Airline tickets (Where applicable)
- Insurance Policy (You must bring this with you)
- Visas if required
- Camera, Batteries
- Conversion plug
- Topdeck eKit global phone card, sim card or phone
- Sense of excitement!

*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*