



Share the Experience

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

EUROCLUB TRIPS TO SCANDINAVIA AND RUSSIA

Hi, 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

BAGGAGE

We recommend soft bags, suitcases or frameless backpacks, plus a small day pack or carry bag. **No external framed bags** please, as they damage other bags on the coach.

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 joining a trip with too much luggage may be told that they cannot take their entire luggage with them and will have to make their own arrangements to have it stored. Any luggage left behind will be at your own risk and you will be required to pay any cost that is incurred.

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 for all passengers, based on our experience:

- 1 pair of walking shoes
- 1 pair of smart casual shoes
- 1 pair thongs / jandals / flip-flops
- 2 pairs jeans / trousers
- 2 pairs shorts / skirts
- 4 shirts / t-shirts
- 2 sweaters / jumpers
- Smart casual evening wear

- 1 rainproof jacket
- 1 warm jacket
- Underwear and socks!

General things to pack for passengers on **Russian Revelations** and **Vodka & Caviar** trips:

- Toiletries (inc. toilet roll / tissues)
- Basic medical kit (inc. plasters, aspirin etc)
- Conversion plug
- Towel (optional)

(Although towels are provided in all hotels on these trips, they can sometimes be small, so you may wish to bring one. You may also require one for the final night in Berlin on Russian Revelations).

General things to pack for passengers on **Red Star Special**, **Russia Scandi**, **Northern Exposure**, **Scenic Scandi** and **Scandi Express** trips:

- Toiletries (inc. toilet roll / tissues)
- Towel
- Swimming Costume
- Basic medical kit (inc. plasters, aspirin etc)
- Conversion plug
- Torch
- Insect repellent
- Sewing kit (optional)
- Sheet / sleeping bag liner (optional)
- Pillow case (optional)

(Please remember that most things you might want to bring, for instance towel, washing powder, toilet roll etc. are easily purchased in Europe).

SLEEPING BAGS

On EuroClub trips to Scandinavia, the Baltics and Russia, we stay in a variety of accommodation. Whether you need to bring a sleeping bag depends on the trip you are doing.

In Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland) we mainly stay in cabin or bungalow accommodation at campsites. The majority of these do not supply full bedding. For instance, many places supply pillows and blankets, but not pillowcases or bedsheets. This is standard practice for campsites throughout the Scandinavian region. In some cases it is possible to hire sheets and pillowcases, and you are welcome to bring your own, but it is easier (and possibly warmer!) to bring your own sleeping bag, which is recommended.

In Russia, Poland and the Baltics region (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), we stay in hotel accommodation. In Berlin we stay in multi-share hostel accommodation. Full bedding is provided in all of these places and a sleeping bag is not necessary for these nights.

To see whether you should bring a sleeping bag, check below:

Name of trip	Length	Sleeping bag required?
Red Star Special	37 days	Yes
Northern Exposure	22 days	Yes
Vodka & Caviar	8 days	No
Russian Revelations	17 days	No
Russia Scandi	23 days	Yes (5 nights max)
Scandi Express	10 days	Yes
Scenic Scandi	15 days	Yes

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, 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, 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.

RUSSIAN VISA

If your trip visits Russia, most nationalities require a visa. These can take some time to obtain. When you book your Topdeck trip you must supply your Travel Agent with the following information:

Full Name, as per your passport
Nationality of your passport
Date of birth
Passport number

Topdeck will then apply for your invitation letter to Russia, which you must have to apply for your visa. Once you receive the invitation letter then you must apply for your visa. This may take some time to obtain so it is important to give this information to your Travel Agent as soon as possible.

SCHENGEN AGREEMENT

France, Italy, Austria, Germany, The Netherlands, Portugal, Luxembourg, Greece, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and 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 will require a multi-entry Schengen visa.** The country you will be spending the most time in usually issues the Schengen visa.

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 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 and rural areas. 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 Scandinavia, the Baltics and Russia, and are the safest and easiest way to have access to cash. Please be aware though that after leaving Oslo, ATMs will be quite limited until we reach Helsinki. Travellers' cheques are also accepted in Europe and are an alternative to using ATMs.

Most well known **credit cards** are accepted in Scandinavia, Russia and the Baltics, but it is useful to confirm that yours is accepted before trying to purchase goods. In Russia you may need your passport to make purchases with your credit card. We recommend that you bring your credit card 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 the equivalent of at least €50-€60 Euros 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!

CURRENCIES

Most countries on these trips have their own currency, as listed below:

- | | | | |
|------------|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| • Denmark: | Danish Kroner (DKK) | • Lithuania: | Litai (LTL) |
| • Estonia: | Krooni (EEK) | • Norway: | Norwegian Kroner (NOK) |
| • Finland: | Euro | • Poland: | Zlotych (PLN) |
| • Germany: | Euro | • Russia: | Rubles (RUB) |
| • Latvia: | Lati (LVL) | • Sweden: | Swedish Kronor (SEK) |

In some of these countries, it is possible to pay for some purchases in Euros, and receive change in local currency. This is not guaranteed however, and you should anticipate paying for things in local currency.

It is generally always possible to change money in to local currency after arriving in the country, however it is useful to have a small amount of local currency on arrival to cover initial purchases before you visit an ATM. This can be done before your trip, but a good idea is to exchange extra currency you have left over before you leave a country. For example, if you visit an ATM in Denmark and find you withdraw more Danish Kroner than you need, visit an exchange bureau on your free day in Copenhagen and exchange it for Swedish Kronor.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

On all 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.

ACCOMMODATION

Your trip will stay at a variety of multi-share accommodations, including hotels, hostels, bungalows and cabins. The 'What's Included' section for each trip in our brochure details what type of accommodation is used for our overnight stops. Some general details are provided below:

Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland	We mainly stay in cabin or bungalow accommodation at campsites, which are usually 2-6 beds per room with external shower and toilet facilities.
Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland	We stay in hotels, which are usually twin or triple share rooms with en-suite shower and toilet facilities.
Germany	We stay in hostel accommodation, which is usually 4-6 bed rooms with en-suite shower and toilet facilities.

EuroClub trips operate a single sex policy and therefore **couples should not expect to share together**. Our Road Crew will try their best to accommodate couples when staying in twin share accommodation, provided the gender breakdown of the group allows. If you are a solo traveller you will only be required to share with passengers of the same sex.

Some campsites in Scandinavia are well equipped with shops, TV rooms, clothes washing facilities and even saunas! Others, mainly in rural Norway, are of a more basic standard. Clothes washing facilities are usually adequate but don't expect machines and dryers in all campsites. Hot showers are sometimes free and sometimes not; where not you will have to pay a small amount to use them.

MEALS

Topdeck provide included meals as detailed in the 'What's Included' section of our brochure and on your detailed Trip Itinerary.

For passengers on **Red Star Special, Russia Scandi, Northern Exposure, Scenic Scandi** and **Scandi Express** trips, you will have a Topdeck "On Road Chef" travelling with you through Scandinavia, as far as Tallinn in Estonia. Your On Road Chef is responsible for the catering of your meals, and will provide breakfasts, lunches and evening meals as per your Trip Itinerary. All trips have a cook tent which will be used by our On Road Chef, fitted out with tables and gas burners, and all cutlery and eating utensils are supplied.

The cook tent has to be erected upon our arrival in campsite accommodations and dismantled on departure. Food also has to be prepared, and cooking equipment has to be cleaned after use. Whilst our Topdeck Road Crew will always be working hard and will be in charge of the main tasks, we use a roster system to ensure that they have some help and to make the process of setting up and cooking dinner go a bit faster! A roster system ensures that everybody pitches in at some point, whilst nobody is required to help out every evening - it also fosters a social atmosphere!

For passengers on **Russian Revelations, Vodka & Caviar, Red Star Special** (from Tallinn onwards) and **Russia Scandi** (from Tallinn onwards), included meals are provided by local restaurants and accommodation places. Breakfasts are included every day in the accommodation. They are usually 'continental breakfasts', which are typical in most European countries, though sometimes there is hot food available as well. Included evening meals are in local restaurants or accommodation places, and are either 2 or 3 courses. In most cases water is provided with the meals, and if you wish to purchase additional drinks you can do so at your own expense.

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, particularly in Russia, it is more difficult to cater for dietary requirements, but we will always try our best to arrange it. However, we cannot cater for tastes or dislikes.

TOILETS

In some countries you may 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.

Occasionally, public toilets or campsite toilet blocks may run out of toilet paper, so it may be useful to carry a small toilet roll or 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 - 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 - 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

The Global Phonocard with more:



When you're on a trip with Topdeck you can also receive a complimentary Global Phonocard on the coach. Your phonocard comes with a FREE 5-minute phone call and is a great way to stay connected and let your family and friends know how your trip is going. Please ask your Trip Leader if you wish to have one.

It's fully rechargeable; you'll receive a \$5 bonus on your first recharge and it can be used in over 150 countries – so all of Europe is covered. An essential part of your European adventure, your Topdeck Global phonocard comes with easy to use voicemail and a free email account! Visit www.topdeck.ekit.com for more.

SECURITY

Use eKit's travel vault and avoid hassles along the way. You can securely store all your important documents online, passport number, insurance and visa information and travellers cheques details. Refer to the eKit brochure or visit www.topdeck.ekit.com

DEPARTING ON YOUR TRIP

As there are various departure points for the Russia, Scandinavia and Baltic trips, please see the check-in details on your Trip Itinerary.

If you miss the trip from the departure point, firstly contact Topdeck in London on +44 20 8987 3300 during office hours, or if it's outside of office hours call our emergency number +44 779 277 5415 for details. Our staff can advise you and also provide you with the mobile phone number of your Trip Leader

FINISHING YOUR TRIP

All trips finish after breakfast on the final day, making it possible to arrange onward travel arrangements for the date your trip finishes.

For Red Star Special, Russia Scandi and Russian Revelations passengers finishing in Berlin, we strongly advise that you do not book travel arrangements for the day your trip arrives in Berlin, as we may be delayed in traffic and cannot guarantee an arrival time. It is much safer to make travel arrangements for the actual finishing date of your trip.

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

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 2011.

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

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