

Topdeck

THE BIG BALKAN



TRIP CODE:
EXBBDD-0



TOPDECKER, meet Australasia (TD)

DISCLAIMER: This is not your average Europe trip. Big in every sense of the word, this Balkan adventure is cram-packed with unique cultures, seriously fascinating history and all sorts of hidden gems that your regular suitcase-dragger doesn't even know exist. Ancient ruins? They're here. Monasteries and mosques? Them too. Is that a butterfly? Probably! Embrace the weirdness and get yourself involved. Ain't nowhere does unforgettable moments like Eastern Europe.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Sail & Swim



Nights



Download app



Meals

Thanks for choosing to holiday with Topdeck

Ready for the time of your LIFE?

The countdown's on...

ABOUT YOUR TRIP NOTES

These Trip Notes contain everything you need to know before your trip departs – from where to meet your Topdeck fam to what we suggest you bring.

Read them on the train, in the supermarket queue or on the loo – we don't mind, just look through them carefully so you know what to expect on your trip. We recommend you download this document so it's with you when you travel (and give a copy to your MVPs so they know what you're up to).

IMPORTANT: please refresh this doc as close to your departure as possible. This means you'll have the most up-to-date info available.

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Walking tour of Dubrovnik with a local guide
- Visit Kotor
- Visit the Monastery of Saint Naum
- Visit Matka Valley
- Visit Rila Monastery
- Visit Ruse
- Visit Veliko Tarnovo
- Walking tour of Sofia with a local guide
- Walking tour of Belgrade with a local guide
- Visit the Srebrenica Memorial
- Walking tour of Sarajevo
- Visit Mostar

YOUR ITINERARY



AWESOME
TRIP
LEADER



DRIVER

DAY 1 | DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

It doesn't get much better than this. Say hey to Dubrovnik before you meet the group and kick things off with a walking tour. Travelling solo? You won't be for much longer. Exciting times ahead!



MEALS:

- Dinner



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Walking tour of Dubrovnik with a local guide

DAY 2 | DUBROVNIK

Yay! A free day in Dubrovnik! Spend some time checking out the residential homes further up in the Old Town for some awesome views, then enjoy a cold beer on the wall as the sun sets over the Adriatic. Alternatively, take to the water for a spot of optional sea kayaking around the city walls. There's also a Game of Thrones tour to get stuck into if that's your jam.



MEALS:

- Breakfast



OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Sea kayaking around the Dubrovnik Walls
- Game of Thrones tour in Dubrovnik

DAY 3 | DUBROVNIK TO TIRANA, ALBANIA VIA KOTOR, MONTENEGRO

Say bye to Croatia, 'cos we're off to Albania via a pit stop in Kotor, Montenegro. That's right - three countries in one day. Check you out, seeing the world like a boss!



MEALS:

- Breakfast
- Dinner



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit Kotor

DAY 4 | TIRANA TO OHRID, MACEDONIA

Today we're off to Ohrid. Think: medieval churches, monasteries, ruins and a lake so blue you'll forget what stress even is.



MEALS:

- Breakfast
- Dinner

DAY 5 | OHRID

Check out historic monuments one minute, then lie on a deck chair with your toes in the water the next... it ain't so bad here! This afternoon we've got a visit to the Monastery of Saint Naum lined up. From here, the views over Lake Ohrid are incredible.



MEALS:

- Breakfast



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit the Monastery of Saint Naum

DAY 6 | OHRID TO SKOPJE

Today it's back on the coach for a drive to Macedonia's capital, Skopje (pronounced SKOPE-yey.) Before we hit the big city, we'll stop for a dose of daily greens at Valley Canyon. Think: 5,000 hectares of forest, monasteries and cool rocks.



MEALS:

- Breakfast



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit Matka Valley

DAY 7 | SKOPJE TO PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

Next stop: Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second-largest city. And with a visit to the quirky Rila Monastery on the cards, day seven of the trip is set to be a memorable one! Dinner's up to you tonight, so be sure to seek out somewhere awesome to round off your day.



MEALS:

- Breakfast
- Lunch



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit Rila Monastery

DAY 8 | PLOVDIV TO SUNNY BEACH

Sunny Beach: a place that does exactly what it says on the label. Think: sand, sea and multiple sunbathing opportunities! Want more? There's also some pretty amazing nightlife to get involved with when the sun goes down.



MEALS:

- Breakfast

DAY 9 | SUNNY BEACH

Free days are the best days. Today you have two options: flick your towel out on the beach and resume your best tanning posish, or seek out some of the best local cuisine in one of the many restaurants. One thing's for sure: it's impossible to be bored here.



MEALS:

- Breakfast

DAY 10 | SUNNY BEACH TO BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

Another day, another country. We're off to Bucharest - but first, we'll make a pit stop in Ruse. This Vienna-inspired UNESCO town is sure to set your Insta feed on fire!



MEALS:

- Breakfast
- Dinner



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit Ruse

DAY 11 | BUCHAREST

Welcome to Bucharest. Despite what the name suggests, today there's no resting allowed! You have a mission: to hunt down cheap beers and vampires. For those wanting to wander, the Palace of Parliament and the Cismigiu Gardens are highly recommended. Psst: ten points if you find the Mini Arc De Triomphe. 10,000 steps? Too easy.



MEALS:

- Breakfast

DAY 12 | BUCHAREST TO SOFIA, BULGARIA

The very charming and historic Sofia is up next on our Balkan bucket list. But to break the day up, we'll stop off at Veliko Tarnovo for some pics.



MEALS:

- Breakfast
- Dinner



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit Veliko Tarnovo

DAY 13 | SOFIA

Get a lay of the land on a walking tour with a local guide, then you're free to do Sofia your way. Hot tip: head on over to the Aleksander Nevski Cathedral. You can thank us later!



MEALS:

- Breakfast



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Walking tour of Sofia with a local guide

DAY 14 | SOFIA TO BELGRADE, SERBIA

Serbia, here we come! When we arrive in Belgrade, a guide will show us how to explore this city like a local. After an included dinner, why not hit the town? We've got a free day tomorrow, so it'd be rude not to!



MEALS:

- Breakfast
- Dinner



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Walking tour of Belgrade with a local guide

DAY 15 | BELGRADE

Sleep in or get up early? Decisions, decisions! If you're stuck for ideas when it comes to planning what to do today, ask your Trip Leader for tips on how to make the most of this super underrated city.



MEALS:

- Breakfast

DAY 16 | BELGRADE TO SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

After a sobering visit to the Srebrenica Memorial, we'll move on to Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo - where a local guide will tell us all about the city's war-torn past. Tonight, discuss everything you've learned over dinner - it's on us!



MEALS:

- Breakfast
- Dinner



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit the Srebrenica Memorial
- Walking tour of Sarajevo

DAY 17 | SARAJEVO TO DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

Croatia's calling us again! We'll make a pit stop in Mostar before we cross back over the border. While we're here, make sure you take the time to walk over the iconic Stari Most (Old Bridge) - a reconstructed medieval arched bridge sitting above the Neretva River. It's a must!



MEALS:

- Breakfast



INCLUDED TODAY:

- Visit Mostar

DAY 18 | DUBROVNIK

Today we say goodbye. Number swap and prepare for the next adventure!



MEALS:

- Breakfast

MEALS

Your included meals are detailed in the 'Included Essentials' section of this document.

Breakfasts (usually continental breakfasts) are included every day, except on the first morning of your trip. A typical continental breakfast may consist of cereals with milk or yogurt, bread, croissants, cold meats, and cheese – with fruit juice, tea or coffee to drink. It is rare to get a hot breakfast, though on some occasions some hot food may be available.

Included meals will be provided in a mixture of local restaurants and places in which we stay. In most cases, table water is provided with meals. If you wish to purchase additional drinks, you can do so at your own expense.

If you have any dietary requirements, we'll make every effort to cater to your needs – as long as you advise your travel agent or Customer Service Consultant when you book. You can also make a note of dietary requirements in the

Topdeck app when you check-in.

PLEASE NOTE: Although we'll do everything in our power to cater to your needs, we cannot guarantee this will be possible in every restaurant we visit. We also cannot cater to tastes or dislikes, as most of our included evening meals feature a set menu.

OTHER INFORMATION

TOPDECK APP

Feeling appy? Download the Topdeck app and get PUMPED for the adventure ahead. Best bit is: from 45 days before departure you'll be able to chat with your soon-to-be tripmates.

Plus, get your itinerary at your fingertips – so you know where you'll be going and what you'll be doing on each day of your trip. Nice!

Links:

Apple <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/topdeck/id994727866>

Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.FlexiTechSolutions.TopDeck&hl=en>



YOUR SAFETY

NIGHTS OUT

We love a good night out – experiencing the nightlife and entertainment places have to offer is a big part of travelling. But alongside the fun it's important to be aware of your surroundings and personal safety.

When you're out late, remember to avoid walking alone – particularly through deserted areas like beaches and back streets. Always stick together, take a registered taxi where possible, and keep a note of your accommodation so you can find your way back to your fellow Topdeckers if you become separated. Make sure you have your trip mates' mobile numbers in case you need to get hold of them while out and about.

In some countries, alcoholic measures can be considerably larger than what you may be used to. Try to keep track of what you're drinking – and if you see one of your trip mates looking a little worse for wear, take them back to your accommodation. Never leave your drink unattended.

It's also important to be aware that what you might consider harmless flirting may be interpreted differently in some countries. Be yourself and have fun, but stay savvy – you don't want to find yourself in an uncomfortable situation.

DRUG USE

Topdeck has a strict zero-tolerance drug policy. Customers should not bring any illegal substances onto the Topdeck coach or into any of the accommodation we stay in on our trips. This includes marijuana – even if it is legal in some of the states your trip passes through. If you are found in possession of drugs, you will be removed from the trip immediately. All instances of drug possession will be reported to Topdeck Head Office, who may consider alerting the relevant authorities.

REMEMBER: if you are found in possession of drugs, not only do you risk getting in trouble with the local police, but our Driver will also be held responsible if they are found on the Topdeck coach. Trust us, you don't want that to happen to any of our Drivers – they're awesome.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Culture shock, homesickness, random periods of feeling down – these things happen and are totally normal. You can rest assured that if you're feeling low, your Topdeck crew will do their utmost to cheer you up.

Measures you can take to look after your mental health and wellbeing while on the road with us are:

- Call home. Sometimes it's nice to hear a familiar voice and have a good old-fashioned catch up with your loved ones
- Eat well. Never underestimate the power of a good, wholesome meal. Nobody feels at their best when they're hungry!

- Drink responsibly. Not only will you swerve the dreaded hangover, but by keeping an eye on what you drink you could also avoid getting into any potentially uncomfortable situations
- Talk to your Trip Leader. Don't forget, they're probably far from home too – so they're sure to know some tried- and- tested ways to beat the blues
- Integrate with your fellow Topdeckers. This one is key! The more fun you're having on your trip, the less likely you are to feel homesick (fact!)

TRAVEL SINCE COVID-19

Travel looks a bit different since COVID-19. That's why we've put some new procedures in place to help keep you safe on the road.

What remains the same? Your Topdeck trip will be run hygienically, responsibly, and with your safety at the forefront of everything we do. End of.

Here's the info: <https://www.topdeck.travel/resources/travel-safely>

RESPECT ON THE ROAD

RESPECTING FELLOW TRAVELLERS

Our trips are for everyone. We're a family – and we want every Topdecker to have an incredible time.

What we're not about is excluding people or making them feel like they don't belong. That's why we always encourage Topdeckers to be kind and courteous to their fellow tripmates . The golden rules? Respect each other's space, be mindful of causing excessive noise in shared accommodation, and treat others how you'd wish to be treated. Easy!

HOW TO BE A RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLER

Responsible travel isn't difficult to achieve. With a little conscious thought and preparation, you can have an awesome adventure AND a positive impact on the places you visit. Sweet!

Here are five things you can do to ensure you're travelling responsibly:

- Conserve water. You know the drill – reuse your room towels, take short showers and remember to turn off the tap when you're brushing your teeth
- Reduce your waste. Ditch the plastic bag, refuse unnecessary packaging, dispose of your waste responsibly and recycle as much as possible
- Go local. Hunt down locally owned and operated restaurants and bars, shop in local markets, and book tours and activities run by local guides
- Consider the wildlife. Avoid any attractions that involve closely engaging with wild animals
- Respect local people and culture. Obeying local laws is a given – but also remember to dress and behave in a manner appropriate to the community. Be polite and keep an open mind!

INSURANCE

Before your trip departs, it's compulsory for all passengers to take out comprehensive travel insurance covering cancellation, medical expenses (including repatriation), loss or damage to baggage and personal belongings, money and personal liability.

Head to our FAQ for more info: <https://www.topdeck.travel/resources/faqs-0>

Got more Qs? Chat with our Customer Service team: <https://www.topdeck.travel/about-us/contact>

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Please make sure your passport is valid for at least six months after the last day of your trip. Some countries will refuse entry if you do not have at least six months validity remaining on your passport after your departure date. Depending on your nationality, you may require a visa to enter certain countries.

It is your responsibility to obtain visas prior to your trip's departure. To determine which visas you'll need, you can consult either your own government's website or the government websites of the countries in which you will be travelling. Check out our handy interactive map showing global visa requirements:

<https://www.topdeck.travel/resources/latest-border-restrictions>

PLEASE NOTE: some visas can take up to six weeks to acquire, so don't leave it until the last minute. Also, bear in mind that the validity of a visa often runs from its date of issue rather than the date of entry into the country. Please check with the appropriate embassy/embassies prior to departure, as requirements do change periodically.

TIPPING

Basically: it's not necessary.

Your Trip Leader and Driver don't expect tips, and they won't ask for any either. Meaning? More dollar to spend on optional activities (and a souvenir for your nan).

WHAT TO BRING

Based on our experience, these items are key. Everyone's different though – so if you want to bring more or less, go for it (as long as you don't exceed your 20kg allowance, that is!).

Off to Japan? Your luggage must be no bigger than 160cm in total (height x width x length). So maybe leave the hairdryer at home.

Psst: this is a packing list for Topdeck trips in general. Obv you'd look silly splashing around the Greek islands in a snowsuit.

- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes + 1 pair of smart casual shoes
- 1 pair of thongs/jandals/flip-flops
- 2 pairs of jeans/trousers
- 2 pairs of shorts/skirts
- 4 shirts/T-shirts
- 2 sweaters/jumpers
- Smart casual evening wear
- 1 warm jacket + 1 rainproof jacket

- Underwear and socks + swimwear
- Towel
- Toiletries
- Hat and sunscreen
- Basic medical kit (including plasters, aspirin etc)
- Adaptor plug
- Reusable water bottle
- Snow gear



THAT'S IT!