



Grand European

Welcome & Tour Tips

Good to have you here — this page covers what you need to know before we meet in London, with a closer look at the Eurostar departure and everything worth knowing for the journey ahead.

Not everything here will be new to you — think of this as a useful reference to check back on before travelling. Use the navigation below to jump to any section.

This is a personal guide from your Travel Director — for your official itinerary and inclusions, refer to your Trafalgar documents.

At a glance



Know where to be

Your welcome email confirms your London departure hotel and morning timings. Be in the lobby/reception area ready in good time.



Passport on your person

You go through immigration at London St Pancras. Passport in your day bag or jacket — not in your main suitcase.



Save my number

Add me to your contacts before you travel — details are in your welcome email or use the links on this page.

London start

Our London departure morning is the most logistically involved part of the tour start. We travel by Eurostar from St Pancras to Brussels, then continue by coach to Bruges.

Departure from London (morning)

Your welcome email confirms the exact morning timings and meeting point for your departure. Please follow those details, as departure runs to schedule.

It helps to have breakfast done, luggage sorted, and your day essentials ready before coming down. The lobby is usually busy and we need to keep things moving.

Passport — keep it on your person

Your passport must be in your day bag or jacket pocket throughout the morning — not packed inside your main suitcase.

At London St Pancras, you go through both UK Border Force and French immigration control before boarding. Bags are scanned and passports checked — one buried in a suitcase will cause delays for everyone.

Keep it accessible from the moment you leave your room.

Managing your luggage at St Pancras

Unlike flying, there is no bag drop on the Eurostar. After the coach drops us at the station, you carry your bags through check-in, security, and immigration to the platform.

Luggage is stored at the ends of each carriage — not at your seat. Make sure your main bag has a working handle and that you can lift it independently for a short distance.

This only takes a few minutes, but it helps to be prepared for it rather than surprised by it.

Pre-night and portorage

Joining instructions can vary by booking. Some travellers may have a Trafalgar pre-night package with portorage on departure morning, while others have pre-nights arranged independently, sometimes at a different hotel.

If you are unsure what applies to your London start, check your welcome email and joining documents.

Lunch — buy at St Pancras

Food options on the train are limited. Before we board, there is time in the waiting area at St Pancras to buy lunch — there is a good range of cafes and shops in the terminal.

If you have specific dietary requirements that would make terminal options difficult, packing something from the hotel in the morning is a sensible backup.

What catches people out

- Passport packed in the main suitcase instead of your day bag or jacket.
- Main bag is heavier than expected when carrying it through station checks and onto the train.
- No pen handy if forms are needed while we are travelling.
- Skipping food at St Pancras and relying on limited train options.

Arriving in Bruges

We arrive in Brussels by train and collect our tour coach for the drive to Bruges. We arrive in Bruges in the afternoon and have a walking tour of the city with a Local Specialist before checking into the hotel.

Wear comfortable walking shoes on departure day — Bruges has beautiful cobblestone streets and we do a proper tour of the city before we settle in.

Joining the tour in Bruges?

A small number of guests join the tour in Bruges rather than travelling with the group from London. If this applies to you, please get in touch directly so I can share the details specific to your first day — including hotel information and the group welcome dinner.



Before you travel

This tour departs from London and covers multiple countries. A quick check before travel makes the start feel much smoother.



Check your joining details

Your welcome email and official documents confirm your London departure hotel, departure time from London, and Eurostar details. Keep those easy to access before and during travel.



Travel documents

- Your **passport** must be valid for the full duration of the tour — check your government's official travel advice for entry requirements across all countries on the itinerary.
- Keep your passport in your day bag or jacket on departure morning — you will need it for Eurostar check-in and both UK and French immigration at St Pancras. Do not pack it in your main suitcase.
- Your **Eurostar tickets** will be provided by me in the hotel lobby on the morning of departure. You do not need to print anything in advance.



Luggage prep


- Label your main suitcase clearly before leaving home.
- Make sure your main bag has a working handle — you will carry it through London St Pancras and lift it into carriage storage on the Eurostar.
- Pack essentials (passport, medications, phone charger) in your day bag, not in your main case.


Entry & travel documents: Entry and visa requirements can vary depending on your nationality. Your Trafalgar documents include guidance, and I recommend checking your government's official travel advice before departure to be safe.


On the coach


The coach will be our moving base between destinations. A few simple habits help keep things comfortable, safe and pleasant for everyone travelling together.


 **Seat rotation** happens daily. I will explain the system clearly at the start of the tour.

 There is often a **WC on board**, and we also plan regular comfort stops along the way.


 **Mobility & boarding:** There are steps when getting on and off the coach, so please take your time and use the handrail.

 **Snacks are absolutely fine.** For general comfort and safety on a moving vehicle, it's best to avoid hot food and hot drinks while on the coach.

 Bring a **small day bag** with what you may need during the day. Main suitcases stay in the coach hold until hotel arrival on travel days.

 **Carry-on space on the coach is limited.** Smaller soft bags such as backpacks or tote-style bags work best overhead or under the seat. Wheel-based carry-on suitcases usually do not fit well in the racks above — they are best avoided as on-board bags.








 **Seatbelts are required by law** while the coach is moving.

 Please be mindful of **general hygiene**. Clean hands and common sense go a long way in shared spaces. If you feel unwell, wear a mask and keep some distance where appropriate.





What to pack


Most people find they pack more than they actually use. July in Europe calls for comfortable, lightweight layers — practical and easy to manage tends to win every time on this tour.


Essentials

-  Comfortable walking shoes — essential from departure day (Bruges cobblestones) and throughout the tour
-  Light layers for varying climates and elevations
-  A compact, packable waterproof jacket
-  Sun protection — July in Italy and southern destinations can be genuinely hot
-  A small day bag
-  A universal travel adapter — this tour visits multiple countries, each with different socket types
-  Optional: wired headphones with a 3.5mm jack, useful with our walking-tour audio devices

Packing smarter

-  Think practical rather than "just in case" — and leave a little room for things you pick up along the way.
-  Layers are key — the tour covers a wide range of climates, from coastal Belgium to the Swiss Alps to the warmth of Italy. A light layer + compact waterproof covers most situations.
-  Optional: a reusable drink bottle. Collapsible or slim styles are easiest to carry on coach days.
-  Good shoes matter most on this tour — cobblestones, hills, and varied terrain across every destination.

 **Luggage allowance:** 1 suitcase (max 23kg / 50lbs) plus 1 soft hand-luggage bag. The hand-luggage bag should be soft-sided (backpack/tote style), without wheels or a telescopic handle. Label your bags clearly before arrival — and remember, on London departure morning you carry your main case independently through St Pancras. Make sure it has a working handle and can be lifted into Eurostar carriage storage.

 **Laundry:** On a tour of this length, people are usually glad to know there is a chance to freshen up the wardrobe. We can generally manage a service wash at one of our multi-night stops — I will let you know the best opportunity once we are underway.



What to expect from the weather

July is one of the best months to travel in Europe — long days, generally warm, and a lot of blue sky. That said, this tour covers a wide range of climates and elevations, from coastal Belgium to the Swiss Alps to the heat of Italy.



What to expect

Northern Europe (Belgium, Germany) — warm and pleasant. Switzerland — noticeably cooler at altitude, especially on mountain excursions. Italy — warm to hot, particularly further south. A light layer always earns its place in the day bag.



What usually helps

A compact packable waterproof is more useful than a heavy one — you will probably not need it every day, but it is good to have. Sun protection matters more on this tour than most. Treat forecasts as a guide rather than a guarantee.

Honestly — July in Europe is a delight. The light alone in the evenings is worth the trip. Come ready to enjoy it.

Staying connected on tour

I use WhatsApp for reminders and day-to-day updates while we are travelling. Joining is optional, and it works alongside your official documents and welcome email.


1 Download WhatsApp before you travel if you do not already use it — either from the link below or directly from your phone's app store.

[Download WhatsApp here](#)

2 Set up your profile and verify your number.

3 Save my number in your phone from the welcome email or with the links above.

4 Send me a quick WhatsApp message with your name so I know you are set up before the tour begins.

 **Travelling with someone?** It helps if both of you message me, just in case phones get separated during the trip.

Most hotels and many public places offer free Wi-Fi throughout the tour. If you plan to rely on mobile data across multiple countries, it is worth checking international roaming options with your provider before travel. Some people use an eSIM as a simple alternative for staying connected across borders.



Practical notes

A few practical notes that tend to come up — worth a quick read before you travel.



The pace of the tour

This is a classic Grand Tour covering multiple countries across Europe. The variety and the destinations are what make it special — but expect a few longer travel days as we cross between countries, and some early starts. London departure morning is the most logistically detailed, but there are others along the way.



Walking

Expect cobblestones from departure day in Bruges, city walking, hills, and stairs throughout the tour. Comfortable shoes matter more than style on this one — every single day.



Hotel styles vary

Across multiple countries we use a mix of modern and historic properties. Room sizes and layouts can vary, particularly in older city-centre hotels.



Included meals

Breakfast is included daily and some dinners are provided. On included meal days, timings are set to keep the itinerary running smoothly, so punctuality is appreciated.



Travelling as a group

Touring as a group works best when everyone is mindful of shared timings — I will make sure things run smoothly from my end.



Your Driver

Your Driver plays a key role in both the safety and smooth running of each day. Driving hours are legally regulated across Europe, so it helps everyone if we are ready to depart at the agreed time.



Money & payments

Card payments are widely accepted throughout the tour. Carrying a small amount of Euro cash is still useful — for gratuities, local markets, smaller cafes, and the occasional spot that prefers cash.

In Switzerland, the Swiss Franc (CHF) is the local currency. A small amount of CHF is handy for excursions and local purchases, though major card payments are accepted almost everywhere there.

The simplest approach is usually a small ATM withdrawal when you arrive in each country — exchange counters outside airports often charge higher rates or commission.

Optional experiences can be paid by card or cash.

Gratuities

Some gratuities are included in your tour price — restaurant staff and hotel porters, for example. Tips for your Travel Director and Driver are separate unless pre-paid.

If you have pre-paid — thank you, it is genuinely appreciated.

Guidance on appropriate amounts is in your Trafalgar documents — or just ask me on tour.

If you are unsure whether gratuities are pre-paid, check your tour voucher or booking confirmation.

Currency

Most countries on this tour use the **Euro (€)** — Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and others.

Switzerland uses the Swiss Franc (CHF). Your Trafalgar documents will confirm all countries on the itinerary.

Toilets

Some public facilities in Europe may require a small coin payment, so keeping a little Euro change handy can occasionally help.

Security

Keep passports, cards, and valuables secure and on your person. In busy tourist areas — particularly Rome, Venice, and Florence — stay aware of your surroundings. A money belt or inside-jacket pocket is useful in crowded spots.

Optional experiences

Your tour already includes a lot — but optionals are worth knowing about. These are experiences that go a little deeper in certain places. Convenient, good value, and everything is organised for you.

These are not generic extras — they are hand-picked experiences that suit the pace and places of this particular tour. Most people who do them wish they had booked more.

Optional experiences are priced separately so people who want them can choose them, and people who prefer a quieter pace are not paying for something they would not use.

I will walk you through what is available once we are underway. There is never any pressure.



Important contact details

Save these before you travel — they are harder to find when you are already on the move.

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Email

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Instagram

[@tourwithjoel](https://www.instagram.com/tourwithjoel)



Website

tourwithjoel.com



Add to contacts

[Add Joel to contacts](#)

Questions before the tour?

Before we meet, European Guest Services are your main point of contact for anything urgent or time-sensitive — they are set up to help and available during office hours. I will have my phone with me and will read messages when I can, but I am usually travelling or finishing up another tour before we meet. Anything that can wait, I will pick up once we are underway.



Urgent or time-sensitive before departure?

For anything that needs immediate attention before departure, please contact European Guest Services using the details below.



European Guest Services

[+44 207 620 8900](tel:+442076208900)



Email

EuropeanGuestServices@ttc.com




Add to contacts

[Add European Guest Services to contacts](#)

For peace of mind, save my number and European Guest Services now, and keep your official joining instructions somewhere easy to find before departure.

Final note

During the tour, if you are ever unsure about anything, just ask. There is very little I have not come across before.

 See you in London.

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A personal guide from your Travel Director. For official timings, inclusions and operational details before the tour, refer to your Trafalgar documents.