

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide®



Cruising Northern Europe: From Normandy's  
Beaches to the Shores of Scandinavia

2025

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will enjoy the thrill of off-the-beaten-path discovery coupled with the convenience of unpacking just once. Aboard our privately owned small ship, you will visit lesser-known ports that larger vessels cannot access—and enjoy intimate interactions with local people in your small group of no more than 25 travelers. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation.

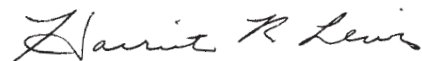
But your personal connections are not limited to your time on land—while onboard, you will enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, as well as the camaraderie of your fellow American travelers. Whether you travel with a partner, sister, friend, or independently, you will feel welcomed and included throughout your journey. And if you do choose to travel solo, you will enjoy an unmatched value, with our FREE or low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Overseas Adventure Travel

# CONTENTS

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## ***CRUISING NORTHERN EUROPE: FROM NORMANDY'S BEACHES TO THE SHORES OF SCANDINAVIA***

### Your Adventure at a Glance:

Where You're Going, What it Costs, and What's Included .....	<b>4</b>
Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary .....	<b>6</b>
Pre-Trip Extension .....	<b>17</b>
Post-Trip Extension .....	<b>20</b>
Deck Plans .....	<b>24</b>

## **ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION**

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements. . .	<b>26</b>
Rigors, Vaccines & General Health .....	<b>28</b>
Money Matters: Local Currency & Tipping Guidelines .....	<b>32</b>
Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch .....	<b>36</b>
Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits . . .	<b>40</b>
Climate & Average Temperatures .....	<b>46</b>
Aboard Your Ship: Cabin Features, Dining & Services on Board .....	<b>50</b>

## **ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE**

Cultures of Northern Europe .....	<b>54</b>
Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More .....	<b>67</b>

## **DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY**

United Kingdom .....	<b>70</b>
England .....	<b>70</b>
France .....	<b>72</b>
Belgium .....	<b>75</b>
Netherlands. ....	<b>77</b>
Denmark .....	<b>80</b>

## **RESOURCES**

Suggested Reading .....	<b>83</b>
Suggested Films & Videos .....	<b>86</b>
Useful Websites .....	<b>89</b>
Useful Apps .....	<b>90</b>





Amsterdam, the Netherlands

## New! Cruising Northern Europe: From Normandy's Beaches to the Shores of Scandinavia

### Small Ship Adventure

**France:** Paris, Dunkirk | **Belgium:** Bruges, Antwerp | **Netherlands:** The Hague, Harlingen | **Germany:** Kiel Canal | **Denmark:** Kerteminde, Copenhagen

Small groups of no more than 25 travelers, guaranteed

**13 days starting from \$9,445**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE** or **Low-Cost**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/clc2025pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/clc2025pricing)

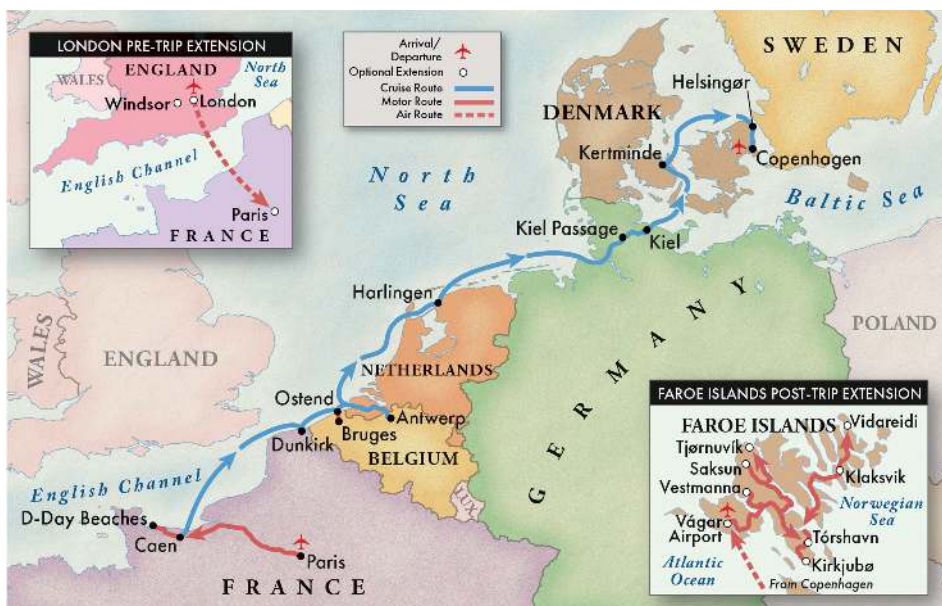
Delve into the highlights of five countries with 9 nights aboard our privately owned, **89-passenger M/V Clio**. Along the way, you'll explore Normandy's historic beaches, Germany's Kiel Canal, and the colorful lanes of Copenhagen. Plus, enjoy people-to-people experiences, including a **Home-Hosted Visit** in the Dutch town of Harlingen, conversations with locals about issues affecting everyday life, and the chance to sample traditional fare—like Belgian beer and waffles—at family-owned shops.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 11 nights accommodation, including 9 nights aboard our privately owned, 89-passenger M/V *Clio*
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 31 meals: 11 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 11 dinners—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- 14 guided tours and cultural experiences
- Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- All port charges
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*

**Cruising Northern Europe: From Normandy's Beaches to the Shores of Scandinavia**



## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2	Paris, France
3-5	Caen • Embark ship • Dunkirk
6-7	Bruges, Belgium • Antwerp
8-9	Amsterdam, Netherlands • Harlingen
10	Kiel Canal, Germany • At sea
11	Helsingborg, Sweden
12	Copenhagen, Denmark
13	Return to U.S.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

**Pacing:** 13 days, with 9 nights aboard the privately owned 89-passenger M/V *Clio* and two single-night hotel stays

**Physical requirements:** Walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 3-4 hours of physical activities each day. Expect to travel over city streets, rugged paths, cobble streets, and sand, in some places.

**Flight time:** Travel time will be 8-16 hours and will most likely have one connection

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/clc](http://www.oattravel.com/clc)

## NORTHERN EUROPE: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Learn how modern Belgians are confronting their past and addressing the atrocities committed at the behest of King Leopold II during Belgium's colonial expeditions in Africa. Plus, get to know the traditions of the Low Countries during a visit to a Dutch tile shop in Harlingen, as well as both a family-owned brewery and waffle shop in Bruges, Belgium.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Discover the cultural marvels of 6 northern European countries on one itinerary. Plus, join a Dutch family in Harlingen for a **Home-Hosted Visit** featuring coffee, cake, and conversation about what life is like in this part of the world.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

**London: England's Regal Capital**  
PRE-TRIP: 3 nights from **\$1,395**

**The Faroe Islands: Land of Vikings & Volcanoes**  
POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$2,795**

### ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **London** before your London pre-trip extension from **\$410** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Paris** before your main adventure from **\$490** per room, per night



# Cruising Northern Europe: From Normandy's Beaches to the Shores of Scandinavia

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 3 nights in *London: England's Regal Capital*

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive in London, England

**Day 3** Explore London • Hampton Court Palace & Gardens

**Day 4** London • Optional Windsor Castle tour

**Day 5** London • Fly to Paris, France • Begin main trip

#### Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on an overnight flight to Paris, France.

#### Day 2 Arrive in Paris, France

- Destination: Paris
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Crowne Plaza Republique or similar

**Morning/Afternoon:** You'll arrive in Paris this morning or afternoon, depending on your individual air itinerary. You'll be met at the airport and transferred to your airport hotel. Depending on where you stay, your hotel will likely include an on-site bar and restaurant, complimentary wireless internet, and a gym.

The remainder of the day is yours to rest or see more of Paris. You may also choose to join your Trip Experience Leader on an orientation walk to get acquainted with the neighborhood surrounding your hotel.

Late this afternoon, you'll get acquainted with your fellow travelers—including those who joined us on our *London: England's Regal Capital* pre-trip extension—over a Welcome Drink.

**Dinner:** Enjoy an included Welcome Dinner of French cuisine at the hotel.

**Evening:** On your own. Feel free to explore the City of Light at night, or return to your room to relax.

#### Day 3 Paris • Overland to Caen • Caen Memorial Museum • Embark ship

- Destination: Caen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Served buffet-style at the hotel.

**Morning:** Following breakfast, we'll check out of our hotel and board a motorcoach bound for Caen. As we begin our four-hour drive, our Trip Experience Leader will lead a Welcome Briefing, during which we will review our itinerary in

more detail (including any changes that may need to occur). Our Trip Experience Leader will also discuss logistics, safety and emergency procedures, and answer questions we may have.

As our journey continues, our Trip Experience Leader will tell us about Caen's significance during World War II, which will prepare you for the discoveries that await later today and tomorrow.

**Lunch:** Upon arrival in Caen, we'll enjoy an included lunch.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll make our way to a local cider farm for a tour and tasting. During our visit, we'll learn about the apple varieties that are produced here, and about the process for turning them into the delicious, fruity beverage, before having an opportunity to sample the cider for ourselves.

From there, we'll make our way to the Caen Memorial Museum, where visual exhibits and a guided audio tour will put the tragic story of World War II and the fragility of 20th-century peace into perspective. Our visit begins with the viewing of a film in the museum's 360-degree cinema, which details the 100 days of brutal combat that followed in the wake of the triumphant Normandy landings as the Allies battled through miles of *bocage*—a portion of the French countryside typified by grids of hedgerows, each one providing cover for a potentially fatal Nazi ambush. You'll then have free time to reflect on your own, and visit the three memorial gardens on the museum's grounds, each dedicated respectively to the American, British, and Canadian soldiers who lost their lives here.

At the conclusion of our visit, we'll travel approximately 30 minutes to the port where our small ship—the *M/V Clio*—will be waiting.

Upon arrival we'll begin the embarkation process and get to know the ship that will be our home for the next nine nights.

Meet the Captain and crew in the lounge, participate in a safety briefing, and take some time to relax and explore the ship. Throughout your adventure, you'll experience a family-like atmosphere onboard that will make you feel right at home.

You'll also have time to get acquainted with the ship's inviting common areas. Multiple lounges are equipped with couches and chairs, and a bar serves complimentary house beer, house wine, and soft drinks throughout the day. A topside Sun Deck features ample deck chairs for admiring the scenery. Complimentary wireless Internet is available in all cabins and common areas—the front desk staff will be happy to provide you with an access code.

Prior to dinner, you'll enjoy a Welcome Drink with your Captain and fellow travelers and get to know the crew. Then, your Trip Experience Leader will lead a Port Talk about the experiences that await tomorrow. These informative conversations, which are held nightly, will give you an overview of the following day's itinerary, and prepare you for the discoveries ahead.

**Dinner:** Served onboard in the ship's dining room. Dinners onboard include a three-course meal with a choice of meat, fish, and vegetarian options available. As with all the dinners during your cruise, the atmosphere is relaxed, the dress code is smart casual, and you are free to sit at whichever table you please.

**Evening:** The evening is yours to enjoy at leisure.

## Day 4 Caen • Explore Omaha Beach & Normandy American Cemetery

- Destination: Caen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Served onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** We'll travel toward the sea this morning to explore the beaches where the first nail was hammered into the coffin of the Nazi occupation of France. With the aid of a local guide, we'll see a few of the sites where the fighting was at its fiercest on D-Day.

First, we'll visit La Pointe du Hoc, a 110-foot seaside cliff looking over the English channel. Upon this strategic location, German forces dug in and built a battery of artillery which threatened to rain hell upon the invading forces, protected by an imposing network of bunkers and machine guns. On D-Day, the job of silencing these deadly defenses fell to the 225 American Army Rangers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Rudder, who landed at the foot of the cliff and scaled its sheer walls with ropes, ladders, and grappling hooks, all under the punishing fire of German guns.

In keeping with the chaotic spirit of the day, the daring assault was undermined from the start by setbacks—Nazi defenders destroyed or disabled several of the Rangers' landing craft, and Rudder had only half as many soldiers to lead up the cliff as he'd left England with. And when they reached the top of the cliff, they found—as they'd been warned prior to the invasion by members of the French resistance—that the artillery had been moved. Eventually, however, the Rangers won the day, and found and silenced all of the guns, but at a heavy cost; after the fighting ended, more than half of the Ranger force lay dead or wounded.

Next, we'll travel to Omaha Beach, one of the five beaches selected for the opening assaults of Operation Overlord, the codename for the Battle of Normandy. The U.S. Army was tasked with securing Omaha, and when they arrived on shore at dawn on June 6, 1944, they were met with a deafening barrage of German gunfire. As Nazis soldiers shot from secure concrete pillboxes built high above the open sand, and shells screeched down from the sky, American infantry were devastated while exiting their landing craft, paying for every inch of progress in blood and sweat.

The battle for Omaha Beach turned out to be some of the most brutal fighting of the initial landings, and more than 2,000 Allied troops died on this single shoreline. The heroic invasion has since been immortalized in films like *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Longest Day*, and countless others. You'll have a rare opportunity to put their ordeal into perspective as you tread upon the same sands that these brave men fought and died upon, imagining the dread and determination they must have carried in their hearts as you take each step towards the foreboding stone bunkers that still stud the ridgeline in the distance.

When our visit concludes, we'll make our way to a nearby restaurant.

**Lunch:** Included at a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll pay respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice when you visit the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial in Colleville-sur-Mer, which honors American troops who perished in Europe during World War II. The cemetery contains 9,387 white marble gravestones, lined up in a perfect soldierly formation, keeping an eternal watch over Omaha Beach. You'll also have the opportunity to examine maps and details



surrounding the Normandy landings, as well as view a bronze statue erected in honor of those who lost their lives.

We'll take some time to reflect upon their sacrifice, and then return to the ship, where the rest of the day is free.

Prior to dinner this evening, join your Trip Experience Leader for a Port Talk about tomorrow's destination—Dunkirk.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** On your own. Perhaps you'll head up to the Sun Deck to take in sea views as we cruise along the French coast.

## Day 5 Visit Dunkirk Beach

- Destination: Dunkirk
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** We'll awake this morning in Dunkirk, a city along France's northern coast.

With the help of a local guide, we'll set out to explore Dunkirk Beach, site of the Battle of Dunkirk and an important turning point in World War II. It was here, between May 27 and June 4 of 1940, that some 300,000 Allied soldiers were rescued by British evacuation forces after the German Wehrmacht's advance across France left the Allies nowhere else to turn. Despite the success of "Operation Dynamo," as the evacuation plan was named, more than 30,000 soldiers were captured by the Germans and 90% of the beach—as well as essential equipment like warships and fighter planes—were destroyed.

Today, as we'll see, the beach has been restored. In fact, it might be difficult to imagine the dramatic events that took place here eighty

years ago when standing on the golden sand beach and looking out across the picnickers to the waves.

**Lunch:** Back onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries. If you would like to continue exploring Dunkirk's wartime past, you might like to visit the Commonwealth War Graves, which memorialize members of the British Expeditionary Forces who died at Dunkirk and have no known grave.

Or, choose to join a Trip Experience Leader on one of two elective excursions to nearby Gravelines to enhance your understanding of local life. You might opt to visit the nuclear power plant, which is responsible for approximately 6% of France's energy production. If your interests are more nautical in nature, you may choose to tour the unusual construction site of a 17th-century warship, the *Jean Bart*. On a rural plot of land, a team of amateur enthusiasts is re-creating the nearly 200-foot-long, wooden sailing vessel with the utmost authenticity.

In the early evening, we'll regroup onboard for a Port Talk on tomorrow's destination, the Gothic Belgian city Bruges.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** Free for you to do as you'd like—consider sharing a nightcap at the bar with your fellow travelers.

## Day 6 Explore Bruges, Belgium

- Destination: Bruges
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** We'll drop anchor in the coastal Belgian town of Ostend and make our way overland to Bruges, Europe's best-preserved medieval city. With its cobbled streets, quaint canals, and step-gabled rooftops, Bruges charms visitors with its palpable Old World feel. We'll experience the best the city has to offer this morning on a walking tour that takes us from the Church of Our Lady, which houses Michelangelo's "Madonna and Child" sculpture; past the Basilica of the Holy Blood, where a scrap of cloth believed to be stained with the blood of Jesus Christ is displayed; and finally, to the Market Square, whose distinctive belfry was featured prominently in Martin McDonough's 2008 film *In Bruges*. As we explore, we'll stroll along streets lined with small brick houses and grander mansions who still bear the imprint of the city's former mercantile success.

After sampling Bruges's architectural and historic highlights, we'll visit a local vendor to savor one of Belgium's most iconic treats: waffles. Unlike the waffles we're used to back home, Belgian waffles are made from a thicker, yeasted batter and contain pearls of sugar, which gives them a characteristic crunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Bruges.

**Afternoon:** You are free to continue exploring the West Flemish capital on your own, or to return to the ship to relax. Those who choose to remain in the city might consider climbing the 366 steps of the 13th-century belfry tower; while not for the faint of heart, travelers who make the climb will be rewarded with unparalleled views of the city skyline.

In the early evening, we'll reconvene onboard for a Port Talk.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** You'll be treated to some onboard entertainment in the ship's lounge.

## **Day 7 Explore Antwerp • Chocolate tasting • Conversation about Belgium's colonial past & modern racial issues**

- Destination: Antwerp
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Set off on a walking tour of Antwerp. Located on the banks of the Schelde River, Antwerp is Belgium's major port and has been commercially important in European trade since the eleventh century. Like Amsterdam, it is one of the world centers for diamond trading. In spite of damage suffered during both World Wars, Antwerp remains a city full of beautiful historic architecture dating back to the 16th century. We'll explore Antwerp's well-preserved Old Town, built around the *Grote Markt* (Town Square), and graced by the lovely old Town Hall, dramatic cathedral, and rows of guild houses.

Later this morning, we'll learn about Belgium's 400-year association with fine chocolate during a visit to a locally owned shop, before returning to the ship for lunch.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, you're free to spend a few hours discovering Antwerp at your own pace. Perhaps you'll stroll along the *Meir* (Antwerp's main shopping street), lined with wonderfully elaborate historic buildings.

Prior to dinner this evening, we'll convene in the ship's lounge for a conversation with a local expert about Belgium's troubling history of colonialism—and how the country is reckoning with its past to this day.

In the late 19th century, Belgian King Leopold II took control of the Congo Free State (today known as the Democratic Republic of Congo) as his personal colonial asset. The territory was rich in natural resources—including rubber and ivory—which Leopold exploited for his own financial enrichment. Unfortunately, he did so at an enormous human cost: Under King Leopold's administration, indigenous Congolese men, women, and children were forced to harvest the colony's resources under threat of violence. Those who resisted or failed to meet their quotas were abused, maimed, and murdered. An estimated 10 million locals died as a result of Leopold's colonial ambitions. His brutal practices were eventually characterized as crimes against humanity, and Leopold was pressured into ceding control of the territory to the Belgian government.

The Congo scandal faded in the public's memory following Leopold's death, and in the 1930s statues were erected to honor his contributions to Belgium. But in 1999, Leopold's sins were re-exposed by historian Adam Hochschild in *King Leopold's Ghost*—the publication of which ignited a still-simmering debate within Belgium about whether the monarch deserves to be celebrated. In recent years, activists have taken it upon themselves to remove him from public view—defacing and toppling statues in a half-dozen cities, including Antwerp.

After our conversation concludes, our Trip Experience Leader will deliver a Port Talk about tomorrow's destination.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** On your own—you might choose to relax in the lounge or retire to your room to prepare for tomorrow's discoveries.

## **Day 8 The Hague & Mauritshuis Museum • Optional Keukenhof Flower Park tour**

- Destination: Amsterdam
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Activity Note:** If the Mauritshuis Museum visit is not available, an alternate activity will be arranged by your Trip Experience Leader. Additionally, the optional tour to Keukenhof Flower Park is only available until around mid-May while the tulips are in season. When the park is unavailable, an optional tour to the Maeslantkering storm surge barrier will be offered instead at the same price.

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** From our port in Scheveningen, we'll ride by bus to The Hague, the seat of the Dutch government. We'll take a short stroll with our Trip Experience Leader to acquaint ourselves a little better with the city before an included tour of the Mauritshuis Museum in The Hague. Known as one of the best museums in Europe to view the works of Dutch and Flemish Old Masters, Mauritshuis is home to masterpieces such as Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* by Rembrandt.

After our tour of the museum, we will have some free time to explore The Hague independently before returning to the ship for lunch.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy an afternoon to explore independently. Shuttle bus service is available to take you back to The Hague if you'd like to continue exploring.

Or, you may join an optional tour (when in season) to a quintessential Netherlands springtime experience: the Keukenhof



Flower Park. Set in the heart of the western Netherlands' tulip-growing region, and once the kitchen garden of a medieval castle, today it is known as the "greatest flower show on Earth," featuring more than seven million tulips and a variety of other flowers in both indoor and outdoor exhibits. You'll have a few hours to stroll through the park's 70 acres of lovely, tree-shaded grounds with ponds, winding paths, streams, and fountains during an included orientation stroll, followed by time to wander independently.

Back onboard this evening, our Trip Experience Leader will give a Port Talk on tomorrow's discoveries in Harlingen.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** Relax with a good book in the ship's lounge, or stargaze from the Sun Deck—the choice is yours.

## **Day 9 Explore Harlingen • Home-Hosted Visit**

- Destination: Harlingen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** We'll dock in Harlingen for a walking tour of this charming seaside harbor. Overlooking the *Waddenzee*—the Wadden Sea, a UNESCO World Heritage Site—Harlingen is a traditional Dutch fishing town that rose to prominence during the 13th century. As you navigate the cobbled streets, you'll witness a handful of well-preserved canals and historical landmarks. We'll end our walking tour at a local tile shop, where we'll learn about Dutch ceramic craftsmanship dating back to 1598. Then, enjoy an hour or so to explore independently before returning to the ship for lunch.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** We'll split into smaller groups of 5 or 6 travelers and travel by motorcoach to the homes of local families for a **Home-Hosted Visit**. As you savor homemade cake and coffee, you'll enjoy lively cultural conversation with your hosts.

Harlingen is far off the Netherlands' well-trod tourist track, so you'll get an authentic sense of what local life is like during your visit. Depending on who is present from the family—perhaps a school-age child, working professional, or grandparent—you might discuss the Dutch education system or employment opportunities. If your interest was piqued by yesterday's controversial conversation, perhaps you'll want to hear the family's opinions of the Netherlands' progressive social policies.

We'll return to our ship in time for this evening's Port Talk about tomorrow's voyage through the Kiel Passage.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** Free. Perhaps you'll discover the world of Dutch beer over pints in the lounge with your fellow travelers.

## **Day 10 Kiel Passage, Germany • At sea**

- Destination: Kiel Canal
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Enjoy a leisurely day aboard the M/V *Clio* as you cruise from the Wadden Sea to the Baltic Sea via the Kiel Canal. This 61-mile waterway slices through the Jutland Peninsula, separating it from the rest of Europe. The peaceful waters of the Kiel Canal meander through the German

state of Schleswig-Holstein, stretching from Brunsbüttel on the Wadden Sea to Kiel (the capital of Schleswig-Holstein) on the Baltic Sea.

As the 19th century was coming to a close, with war on the horizon and European countries vying for power, German engineers devised the canal as a way to increase the country's power, both commercially and from a military standpoint. Nine thousand workers toiled to complete this man-made waterway. The Kiel Canal opened for business in 1895—after eight years of digging—and shortened the trading route between the Wadden and Baltic seas by nearly 300 miles. Today, at least 100 ships traverse the canal every day.

As we cruise the canal, your Trip Experience Leader will provide commentary about its significance. You might want to pull up a seat on the Sun Deck to marvel at the charming villages and towns and impressive bridges that we pass by.

**Lunch:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Afternoon:** Continue relaxing onboard. If you'd like, you may join a galley tour, followed by high tea, in the midafternoon. The ship will sail around the city of Kiel, offering views of a shoreline dotted with 19th-century structures as well as more modern designs.

Prior to dinner, join your Trip Experience Leader in the lounge for a Port Talk about tomorrow's discoveries.

**Dinner:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** At leisure. You might opt for a nightcap at the bar, or retire early to prepare for our day in Sweden tomorrow.

## **Day 11 Explore Kerteminde • Discover Ladbyskibet Viking Museum • Visit Odense**

- Destination: Helsingborg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** Our ship docks in Nyborg this morning, where we'll board a bus and drive to Kerteminde, a picturesque seaside town. Here, we'll embark on a walking tour. A popular retreat for artists due to its particular qualities of light, the town features a variety of small museums and galleries housed in red-roofed buildings, and water views are around almost every corner.

Next, we'll delve into Denmark's legendary Viking past when we drive to the nearby Ladbyskibet Viking Museum. The Museum was built around the burial site of a Viking Chieftain; archaeological excavations show that the chieftain was buried in a boat (as was the custom for high-ranking Vikings at the time) along with eleven horses and numerous dogs, so that he would be prepared for life in the afterworld. Enter into the burial mound to view the grave ship, then spend time in the museum's exhibits to view the artifacts that have been excavated from the site. Taken together, they show not just how the Vikings died, but how they lived as well.

**Lunch:** We return to the ship for lunch onboard.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll drive to Odense, the main city on Funen Island, and birthplace of one of the world's most beloved children's authors, Hans Christian Andersen. We'll acquaint ourselves with this literary history with a visit to the Hans Christian Andersen Museum, whose exhibits showcase Andersen's life and works through displays of personal

artifacts (like his top hat and suitcase), his papers, and even a recreation of his private study.

Following our museum tour, you'll have some free time to stroll through Odense on your own before returning to the ship. Be on the lookout for statues scattered throughout the city depicting Andersen's most famous literary characters.

Once we return to the ship, we'll join the Captain in the lounge to toast to our discoveries over a Farewell Cocktail. Our Trip Experience Leader will also deliver a final Port Talk recapping your adventure and previewing tomorrow's activities.

**Dinner:** Enjoy the Captain's Farewell Dinner in the ship's dining room.

**Evening:** At leisure. Perhaps you'll choose to spend a final evening in the lounge, conversing with your fellow travelers and saying farewell to the crew.

## **Day 12 Disembark ship • Explore Copenhagen**

- Destination: Copenhagen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Copenhagen Admiral Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** Onboard in the ship's dining room.

**Morning:** We'll disembark our ship for the last time this morning, as luggage porters bring our bags to our hotel. Then, we'll set off on a morning of discoveries in Copenhagen, complete with views of the city's colorful houses, picturesque canals, and innovative modern architectural designs.

Our first stop is Gefjon Fountain. Here, you'll have a chance to get off the motorcoach to see the massive fountain on the harbor that

depicts the legendary Norse goddess Gefjon. A touchstone of the Norse mythology, Gefjon is referenced in many poems and epics throughout the centuries as the "mother" of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The statue at the fountain's center depicts Gefjon and the creation of Zealand, the island on which Denmark was founded, as she plows through the earth with her oxen.

Next, we'll visit the city's signature attraction—the Little Mermaid monument. Unveiled in 1913, the Little Mermaid was designed from bronze and granite by Edvard Eriksen and given as a gift to the city from Danish brewer Carl Jacobsen of Carlsberg Breweries. The statue marks the influence of fairy tale writer Hans Christian Andersen, who was born in Copenhagen. Andersen published the original story in 1837 in a collection of children's stories, and since then, the journey of a young mermaid willing to risk everything for a human soul has been retold and adapted again and again. A small, but intricately sculpted statue, the Little Mermaid has guarded Copenhagen's harbor for over a century.

From there, we'll take a scenic motorcoach journey past Tivoli Garden, the third-oldest operating amusement park in the world, and the Danish Royal Opera House, one of the most modern concert halls on Earth. From there, we'll make a brief stop at the renaissance-era Rosenborg Castle before continuing on to Christiansborg Palace, which is seat of the Danish government. As we stroll through the grounds, our local guide will explain the political system in Denmark, including the famously high tax rate that funds the country's ample social services. Our walk concludes at the charming Royal Library Garden, which you'll have time to explore independently.



**Lunch:** On your own in Copenhagen. You might like to seek out smørrebrød, a traditional open-face sandwich made from rye bread, fish or meat, and vegetables.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll begin making our way to our hotel. Typical rooms include a minibar, safe, air conditioning, wireless Internet, and a private en suite bathroom. After checking in, you have some free time to continue exploring the Danish capital on your own. Maybe you'll choose to visit the Marble Church, which took 150 years to complete, and boasts an elegant dome resting atop twelve pillars. If you're feeling up for a hike, follow the 686-foot indoor spiral ramp leading to the top of the *Rundetaarn* (Round Tower), which is Europe's oldest observatory. The viewing platform 100 feet above the street offers beautiful vistas of the city.

**Dinner:** We'll re-convene with our group at the hotel for our Farewell Dinner. As you savor Danish cuisine, enjoy the final night of your

adventure with your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader, reminiscing on all the experiences you've shared.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend your last evening as you wish. Head to a local bar for a pint of Pilsner, the locally-produced pale ale; or, return to your hotel to pack before tomorrow's flight.

### **Day 13 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Activity Note:** A boxed breakfast will be available for travelers with early morning flights.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Check out of your hotel and transfer to the airport, where you will catch your return flight home. Or, begin your *The Faroe Islands: Land of Vikings & Volcanoes* post-trip extension.

## **END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION**

### **5 nights in *The Faroe Islands: Land of Vikings & Volcanoes***

**Day 1** Fly to Tórshavn, the Faroe Islands

**Day 2** Tórshavn • Explore Streymoy Island villages

**Day 3** Conversation about Faroese independence • Explore Tórshavn • Sea bird watching cruise • Visit Viking farm ruins • Explore Leynar beach

**Day 4** Explore Borðoy Island • Visit Viðoy Island • Brewery visit

**Day 5** Explore Skansin fortress • Visit Tinganes • Fly to Copenhagen, Denmark

**Day 6** Return to U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

**Please note:** *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

### Keukenhof Flower Park

(Day 8 \$100 per person)

Join an optional tour (when in season) to a quintessential Netherlands springtime experience: the Keukenhof Flower Park. Set in the heart of the western Netherlands' tulip-growing region, and once the kitchen garden of a medieval castle, today it is known as the "greatest flower show on Earth," featuring more than seven million tulips and a variety of other flowers in both indoor and outdoor exhibits. You'll have a few hours to stroll through the park's 70 acres of lovely, tree-shaded grounds with ponds, winding paths, streams, and fountains during an included orientation stroll, followed by time to wander independently.

**Please note:** *This optional tour is only available while tulips are in season, until around mid-May. Outside of this season, an alternate optional tour to the Maeslantkering storm surge barrier will be offered instead at the same price.*

## PRE-TRIP

### London: England's Regal Capital

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 3 nights accommodation
- » 6 meals—3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners
- » 1 small group activity
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Discover London, the bustling, historic capital of England, and enjoy plenty of time to independently explore all corners of the city—from the Royal Albert Hall to the British Museum. You'll also enjoy a guided tour of the majesty of Hampton Court Palace and Gardens.*

##### Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. on an overnight flight to London, England.

##### Day 2 Arrive in London, England

- Destination: London
- Accommodations: Hotel in London

**Afternoon:** Arrive throughout the day in London, England. You'll be met at the airport and accompanied to your centrally-located hotel, where you are invited to join your Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk of the surrounding neighborhood.

**Dinner:** On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out a pint and a plate of fish and chips at a local pub.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

##### Day 3 Explore London • Hampton Court Palace & Gardens

- Destination: London
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in London

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart your hotel for a tour of Hampton Court Palace and Gardens this morning, exploring at your own pace while using their audio equipment. Hampton Court was leased by Cardinal Wolsey in 1514, and he began rebuilding and converting it into a lavish palace. Hampton Court became a royal residence when it was turned over to Henry VIII in 1529. A pair of magnificent public rooms remains from Henry's reign: the Great Hall and the Chapel Royal, still a place of worship today. The practical side of royal life is represented by the enormous Tudor Kitchens, the most extensive surviving 16th-century kitchens in Europe, where meals for 1,000 people were once prepared daily. The palace is home to one of the



greatest collections of Renaissance paintings in England, housed in the Wolsey Rooms and the Renaissance Picture Gallery. The buildings cover six acres, and there are also more than 60 acres of gardens.

**Lunch:** Included at a nearby café.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll return to our hotel as a group, stopping in central London for travelers who would like to spend their free afternoon exploring the heart of the city. You might also choose to join your Trip Experience Leader on an optional discovery walk on London's South Bank—the city's cultural hub. You'll witness more than 1,000 years of architectural history during our stroll, and we'll also pay a visit to Borough Market, the oldest food market in London.

**Dinner:** We'll re-convene at the hotel this evening for an included Welcome Dinner.

**Evening:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to recommend a local bar or pub, or suggest a good route for an evening stroll.

#### **Day 4 London • Optional Windsor Castle tour**

- Destination: London
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in London

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Or join our optional tour to Windsor Castle, the largest and oldest occupied castle in the world, and the favorite residence of Queen Elizabeth II. While visiting the home of some of the most famous English monarchs, including Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, you'll visit some of the castle's most impressive features, including its ornate state apartments,

as well as St. George's Chapel, where Prince Harry and Meghan Markle said their "I dos." After the guided portion of our visit concludes, you'll have time to explore the castle gardens independently.

**Lunch:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy additional time to explore independently this afternoon. Travelers on the optional tour will return to the hotel with plenty of time to freshen up before dinner.

**Dinner:** Included at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free for independent discoveries. If you're a theater lover, you might choose to spend your final night in London catching a show in the West End.

#### **Day 5 London • Fly to Paris, France • Begin main trip**

- Destination: Paris
- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After checking out of the hotel, we'll make our way to the airport for our flight to Paris to begin our main adventure.

## OPTIONAL TOUR

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### Windsor Castle

(Day 4 \$170 per person)

The oldest and largest occupied castle in the world, Windsor Castle (in its first form) was built by William the Conqueror shortly after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Since then, it has been home to some of the most famous English monarchs of the millennium, including Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. You can see some of the castle's most impressive features, including the ornate state apartments, grand St. George's Chapel, and the iconic Round Tower.

Join an optional tour to Windsor Castle, the largest and longest-inhabited castle in the world. Founded by William the Conqueror in 1078, the castle is famous as the current royal family's favorite residence. As you explore the interior, as well as the lovely grounds perched on the River Thames, consider the 900 years of history lived at Windsor. Your tour includes Queen Mary's Doll House, built in 1924 for the Queen of England, as well as the magnificent State Apartments built for Charles II in the mid-1600s. Admire the apartments' fine china, art, and furniture before passing through St. George's Chapel, the final resting place of many royal family members.

## POST-TRIP

### *The Faroe Islands: Land of Vikings & Volcanoes*

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 11 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 12 guided tours and cultural experiences
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Wrap up your explorations in the ruggedly beautiful Faroe Islands, a rocky collection of isles located just north of the United Kingdom that feel like a world away. From the ruins of a Viking settlement to swirls of seabirds nesting in the cliffs, discover the natural, cultural, and historic treasures of this windswept archipelago.*

##### **Day 1 Fly to Tórshavn, the Faroe Islands**

- Destination: Tórshavn
- Accommodations: Hotel in Tórshavn

**Morning/Afternoon:** Depart Copenhagen for your flight to Streymoy, the largest island of the Faroes. Please refer to your personal air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times. Upon arrival in the capital of Tórshavn, transfer to your hotel and check in.

Tórshavn is home to nearly half the Faroese population, yet it's one of the smallest capitals in the world. Boasting a charming old town, idyllic harbor, and quaint commercial center, you'll find no shortage of captivating historical sites and modern draws, from the city's 18th-century cathedral to its trendy culinary scene.

After settling in, our group will embark on a short orientation walk to acquaint ourselves with the neighborhood surrounding our hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant suggestions. Fish and lamb are staples here and come highly recommended.

**Evening:** The rest of the evening is free to relax or explore independently.

##### **Day 2 Tórshavn • Explore Streymoy Island villages**

- Destination: Tórshavn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Tórshavn

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we will traverse the island via private motorcoach, stopping along the way to get a taste of small-town life on Streymoy. First, we'll visit the village of Kirkjubø—the southernmost village on the island and a treasure trove of medieval history. Here we'll discover the ruins of Magnus Cathedral, dating back to around 1300; Saint Olav's church, built



in the 12th century; and the even more ancient Kirkjubøargarður farmhouse, which can be traced back to eleventh century and has been occupied by the same family for an amazing 17 generations.

Then, we'll transfer to the tiny village of Saksun. Home to just 14 residents, Saksun is known for its tranquil atmosphere and views of the surrounding mountains, both of which we'll enjoy during a guided walk.

Our next stop will be Tjørnuvík, the northernmost village on Streymoy. This coastal town is known for its Viking heritage, but in recent years it has also become popular with surfers. We'll visit one of the island's oldest Viking burial grounds where you can still see some of the original burial stones.

**Lunch:** We'll enjoy a boxed lunch while admiring views of the "Giant and Hag" rock formations along the headland.

**Afternoon:** We'll embark on a scenic drive to Fossa Waterfall. At 459 feet, Fossa is the tallest waterfall on the Faroe Islands. Afterwards, we'll drive to the village of Gjógv where—after a stroll around town—we'll enjoy coffee and cakes with some locals in a nearby café before returning to Tórshavn.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant featuring traditional cuisine—primarily seafood and lamb.

**Evening:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 3 Conversation about Faroese independence • Explore Tórshavn • Sea bird watching cruise • Visit Viking farm ruins • Explore Leynar beach**

- Destination: Tórshavn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel in Tórshavn

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** While Faroe Islands is a self-governing archipelago, it is also part of the kingdom of Denmark. Though an independence referendum was passed in 1948, the island's desire for full autonomy is still a topic of debate. This morning, we'll chat with a local to learn more about the islands' status within the country of Denmark and their own level of independence.

Then, we'll drive to the town of Vestmanna—famous for its steep seaside cliffs that offer refuge to a variety of sea birds. We'll get the chance to see some of these birds today as we sail in and out of grottoes and through narrow sounds—getting as close as possible to the edge of the 2,000-foot high vertical cliffs. As we sail, keep an eye out for birds flying overhead or nesting in the cliffs.

**Lunch:** Onboard as we sail.

**Afternoon:** After our cruise, we'll disembark and drive to the village of Kvívík where we'll explore the ruins of a Viking-age farm that was excavated here—a major archaeological find that gives us a window into the ancient Norse history of the Faroe Islands.

Later, we'll drive to the scenic village of Leynar where we'll take a walk along its smooth, sandy beach before heading back to our hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

**Evening:** Free to spend however you'd like.

#### **Day 4 Explore Borðoy Island • Visit Viðoy Island • Brewery visit**

- Destination: Tórshavn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Tórshavn

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll island hop, enriching our discoveries of the Faroe Islands. First we'll head to Klaksvik on Borðoy Island, the second-largest town of the archipelago. While here, we'll visit the town's famous Christianskirkjan—a Christian church built in 1963. While relatively modern, the church was built in an old Nordic style with a traditional eight-oared wooden boat hanging from the ceiling and a font thought to be at least 4,000 years old, originally found in an ancient pagan temple.

We'll then drive to Klakkur, a small mountain near Klaksvik. We'll hike up to a viewing platform where we'll enjoy sweeping views of the island and learn more about this striking landscape from a local guide.

**Lunch:** Learn more about the cuisine and culture of the Faroe Islands today during an included lunch.

**Afternoon:** We'll next head to the island of Viðoy to explore the town of Vidareidi—the northernmost village in the Faroe Islands. Remote and serene, we'll set off on a scenic walk here before heading back to Klaksvik for a tour of the town's brewery. After learning about the brewing process, we'll enjoy a taste of the finished product.

**Dinner:** Included at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the evening as you wish.

#### **Day 5 Explore Skansin fortress • Visit Tinganes • Fly to Copenhagen, Denmark**

- Destination: Copenhagen
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel in Copenhagen

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll drive to the remains of Skansin fortress. Constructed in 1580, the fort has been destroyed and resurrected throughout the centuries, and even served as headquarters for the Royal British Navy during World War II.

After we've explored the fort, we'll drive to Tinganes, or "parliament jetty" in Faroese. The unassuming buildings that stand on this rocky outcropping are the historic home to the Faroe Islands' government—one of the oldest, if not the oldest, still-operating parliamentary meeting places in the world. The parliament first assembled here during the age of Vikings, when Norwegian colonists placed their first parliament here in 825 AD.

Then—after a stroll through a local park—we'll make our way to the airport for our flight to Copenhagen.

**Lunch:** On your own at the airport.

**Afternoon:** We'll arrive in Copenhagen late this afternoon and check into our centrally-located hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to recommend an option for a final Faroese meal.

**Evening:** Free to spend as you wish.

#### **Day 6 Return to U.S.**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the U.S.

## YOUR M/V OCEAN DIAMOND EXPEDITION SHIP

Explore aboard a privately chartered, 180-passenger small ship, operated and fully staffed by O.A.T.

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Venture to the realm of mighty polar bears and towering fjords aboard the M/V *Ocean Diamond*. Rugged enough to ply Arctic waters, this vessel is a true expedition ship—not a traditional luxury cruise liner—which we exclusively charter for our expedition. The ship holds groups of **20–25 travelers (average of 22)**, each with its own **Trip Experience Leader**. A **16-member Expedition Team** is present during every voyage—including seasoned members of O.A.T.’s Arctic Expedition Team. They’ll provide insights into Arctic history, ecology, and research, and accompany travelers on all Zodiac landings.

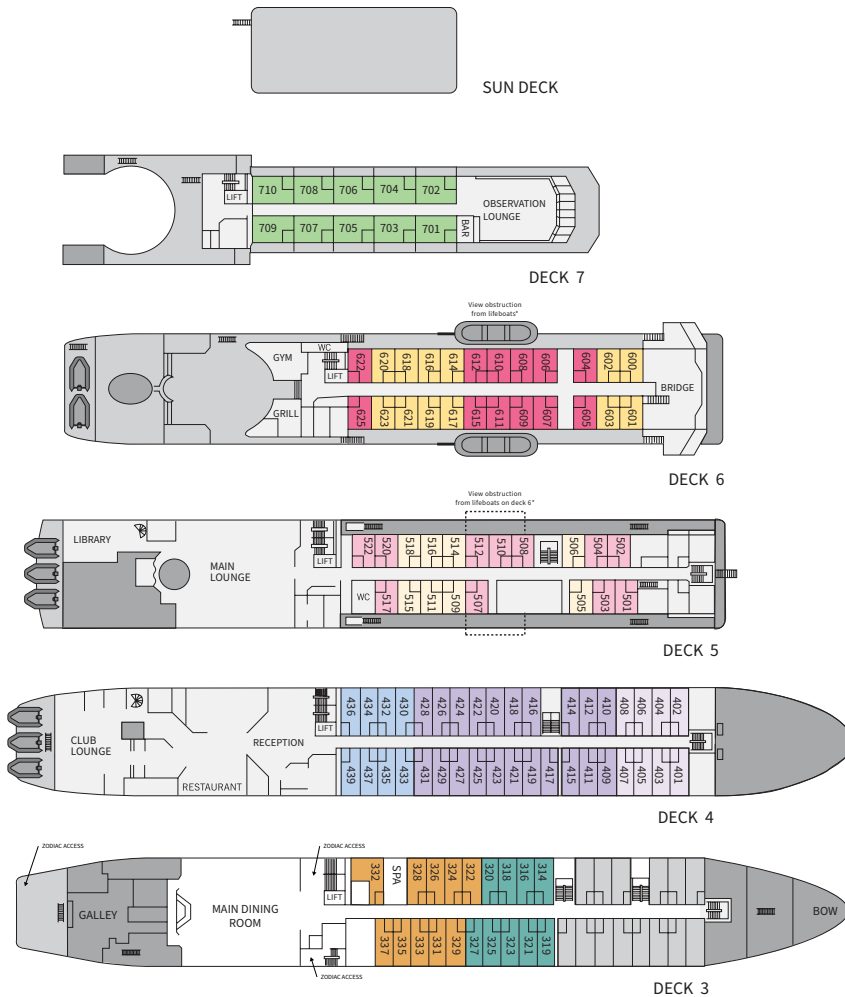


### SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Welcoming restaurant:** Savor internationally themed and American-style dishes during all meals.
- **Three comfortable lounges:** Witness towering mountains and an array of wildlife in the window-lined Observation Lounge; participate in informative discussions with your Expedition Team in the Main Lounge; and relax with a beverage in the Club Lounge.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Outdoor Sun Deck:** Relish views of glacier-clad shores as you breathe in the crisp Arctic air.
- **Relaxing spa:** Treat yourself to a massage or utilize the available fitness equipment.
- **English-speaking crew:** Enjoy dedicated attention from the staff throughout your journey.
- **Zodiac crafts:** Venture into the Arctic landscape—including cruises and shore landings—aboard the ship’s Zodiacs.



## M/V OCEAN DIAMOND



### CABIN CATEGORIES

A	Balcony Suite - 322 sq. ft.
B	Outside Cabin with Picture Window - 172 sq. ft.
C	Outside Cabin with Picture Window - 172 sq. ft.
D	Outside Cabin with Picture Window Obstructed View - 172 sq. ft.
E	Outside Cabin with Picture Window Obstructed View - 172 sq. ft.
F	Outside Cabin with Picture Window Obstructed View - 172 sq. ft.
G	Outside Cabin with Picture Window Obstructed View - 172 sq. ft.
H	Outside Cabin with Picture Window Obstructed View - 172 sq. ft.
J	Outside Cabin with Picture Window - 185 sq. ft.
K	Outside Cabin with Picture Window - 185 sq. ft. <i>Non-Expeditions only</i>

**Registration:** Bahamas

**Length:** 406 ft.

**Beam:** 52 ft.

**Draft:** 16 ft.

**Cabin size:** 173-200 sq. ft.

**Number of Cabins (in use):** 90

**Passenger Capacity:** 180 to 198

**Entered Service:** 1974

**Last Refurbished:** 2020

**Staff & Crew Size:** 103

**Passenger Decks (in use):** 6

**Group Size:** 25 travelers maximum, with 1 dedicated Trip Experience Leader and 1 rotating member of the Expedition Team

**Elevator service to all passenger decks except the top-most Sun Deck (access via stairs only)**

**Onboard doctor and small infirmary are available**

*This ship complies with the latest international and U.S. Coast Guard safety regulations and is outfitted with current navigational and communications technology. It has retractable fin stabilizers to help reduce discomfort during rough seas.*

## CABIN FEATURES

- 90 cabins between 173-200 sq. ft.
- All outside-facing with a balcony or window (some obstructed views)
- All cabins have either one double bed or two twin beds
- Flat-screen TV, DVD player, telephone, lockable safety drawer
- Private bathroom with shower and toiletries



*Typical Ocean Diamond cabin*

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 3 blank “Visa” pages in your passport.
- **Pre- and/or post-trip extension:** No additional blank pages are needed for any of the extensions.

## Visas Required

**We’ll be sending you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **United Kingdom:** The United Kingdom requires an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) for entry. This includes entry to England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. You will need an ETA if the UK is your final destination or if you are transiting through a UK airport. The ETA will be valid for 2 years.

- **Europe (France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

### Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **[www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

### Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

### Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

### Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

#### GROUP SIZE

- This adventure has a maximum group size of 25 travelers with a local Trip Experience Leader exclusive to O.A.T.

#### PACING

- 13 days, with 9 nights aboard the privately owned 89-passenger M/V *Clio* and two single-night hotel stays

#### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 1-3 miles unassisted over the course of 1-2 hours, and participate in a total of 3-4 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs and cobblestones; elective activities may also be offered, requiring some additional physical exertion
- Good agility and balance are required for boarding canal boats and navigating steep, slippery stairs
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them; in exceptional cases, these travelers may not be physically able to participate in certain features on the itinerary
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

#### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over city streets, rugged paths, cobble streets, and sand in some places
- Travel by 89-passenger sea ship and by coach
- Changes in tides and water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary

#### CLIMATE

- The climate in northern Europe is generally mild in summer and quite cold in the winter
- During the summer months of May through October, temperatures can range from 45°-70°F



## FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 8-16 hours and will most likely have one connection

## Ocean Cruise vs. River Cruise

Your experiences on our ocean cruise ship may differ from any past river cruises. In order to set the right expectations, we'd like to take a moment to compare the two:

- The pace is faster on ocean cruises than on a river cruise, with more emphasis on the ports of call and less on scenic cruising.
- Compared to a river cruise, the motion of the ship is more noticeable and can be significant. Rough seas are a possibility at any time of year, and some travelers may feel queasy or experience passing seasickness. Our experienced travelers recommend that travelers who are prone to motion sickness should bring medication, because of the possibility of high waves.
- Based on weather and sea conditions, we may need to revise the itinerary, which could include changing ports of call, adjusting length of stay at Caen, or skipping ports entirely (possible in Dunkirk).
- Caen has a tidal port and the length of stay in this port of call may need to be adjusted due to based on tide time.
- Getting ashore from an ocean ship requires balance and agility, and possibly the use of a small shuttle boat. Also, there may be formalities in port before you can leave the ship.
- The groups are smaller than most river cruises (25 travelers maximum) so any "stragglers" will have a bigger impact on the group.

## Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **[www.cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel)** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

### Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

### Staying Healthy on Your Trip

#### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

### Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## **Water**

- Tap water is safe to drink on this trip, as is the water on board your ship
- If you prefer bottled water, it is widely available for sale. Another option is for you to bring a reusable water bottle and fill up on board the ship.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip; you will need pounds, euros, Danish krone, and Swedish krona instead.** Most banks will only exchange money for their customers, so we recommend that you change some money before your trip. (Once on the trip you can use ATMs and/or exchange offices.)

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**United Kingdom:** Pound Sterling (GBP)

**Euro Countries:** European Euro (€)

**Denmark:** Danish *krone* (Kr., DKK)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.



## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

**Belgium:** ATMs are widely available in large cities, but are less common in smaller towns.

**Netherlands:** International ATM networks are widely available in the Netherlands.

**Nordic Countries:** Most Nordic countries are cashless. In response, ATMs are less widely available and cash is not accepted in many places.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**France:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in France. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

**Nordic Countries:** Credit and debit cards are readily accepted in Nordic countries. Some cafes, restaurants, and attractions will only accept credit cards. Visa is the most widely accepted credit card in most Nordic countries, followed by MasterCard and then American Express.

## Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

### Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

### On Board Ship: Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.). This bill is payable at the front desk by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept U.S. dollars. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, or American Express are not accepted.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. This bill is paid with your Trip Experience Leader (they will have you fill out a form) by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.

**Please note:** Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

### Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader

is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- **Shipboard:** We recommend a flat tip of \$16–\$18 per traveler, per day. You'll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire crew. *Due to international banking laws, we are not able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

**Time at Leisure:** When you are exploring on your own, it's useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** In the UK, especially in London, a 10% tip is considered the norm. In mainland Europe, tipping in taxis is less common and most people will simply round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. If the driver goes out of their way or helps you with bags, then 5%–10% would be a nice tip.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** A service charge is usually included in restaurant and bar bills. If not, it is customary to leave a tip of around 10% of the bill for your waiter or bartender.
- **Public restrooms:** Most public restrooms in mainland Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually half a euro—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. In this case, the fee is set and no tip is needed. In the UK, restroom attendants are less common, so tipping is usually not needed.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.



- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### **Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased**

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com).

### **Optional Tours**

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

### **What You Need to Know**

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## **Communicating with Home from Abroad**

### **Cell Phones**

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone is “unlocked”, meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is “unlocked” then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with “Pay as You Go” cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

### **Calling Apps**

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, WhatsApp, or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you’ll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

### **Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers**

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**United Kingdom:** +44

**Netherlands:** +31

**France:** +33

**Denmark:** +45

**Belgium:** +32

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person.</p> <p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

## Your Luggage

### Checked Luggage

A sturdy suitcase is best. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

### Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

### Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions

### Functional Tips

- **The weather can be unpredictable. We recommend you dress in layers and bring waterproof gear.**
- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. We recommend you pick pack color-coordinated separates that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is perfectly acceptable at each of your destinations. Men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you. You would only need nicer dress if you plan to dine at a deluxe city restaurant on your own.



- **Warm clothes are needed year-round:** Regardless of your travel season, bring a warm layer of clothing, such as a heavy sweatshirt, fleece top, or light sweater. During fall and spring, a jacket is recommended for the colder night temperatures. If you're traveling in the summer, be prepared for warm temperatures, though cool days are still possible. Bring a sweater (or a fleece top), as well as some summery attire and a windbreaker for "in-between" days.
- **Good walking shoes are essential:** For your comfort, you'll need supportive walking shoes that offer good traction. Water-resistant shoes can be handy in case of a heavy downpour.
- **Rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell—preferably one that is knee length.

## Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the "Climate" chapter of this handbook.

**And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

## Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Waterproof clothing
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A jacket or sweater (all year) plus a coat and gloves/hat/scarf in the winter

## Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, sunscreen, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap

- ☐ Travel money bag or money belt
- ☐ Swimsuit if your hotel has a pool
- ☐ Compact umbrella
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “waterless” hand cleanser
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards (and originals!)
- ☐ Written prescriptions for your medicines
- ☐ Washcloth (not a standard amenity in English hotels)
- ☐ Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards
- ☐ Plug adapters—see “Electricity” for details
- ☐ Optional: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version. Hair dryers are provided on your ship.

## Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed/ Dristan
- ☐ Pain relief: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ☐ Band-Aids
- ☐ Moleskin foot pads
- ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin
- ☐ Motion sickness medicine, such as Dramamine

## Home-Hosted Visits

It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all of our adventures include a home-hosted visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

## Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Electricity in the United Kingdom and mainland Europe is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with 110-volt outlets. In your bathroom you will find a dual 110/220-volt outlet; this outlet is only for low-voltage appliances, like electric shavers. (Your bathroom also comes equipped with a hair dryer).

### Plugs

Aboard ship, the plugs are standard American plugs.

In hotels, the shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Even though you'll only need one adapter on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

*Note that a C plug can fit into an F socket.*

**United Kingdom:** G

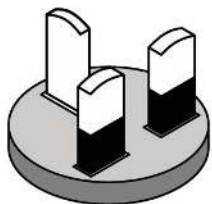
**France:** C and E

**Belgium:** C

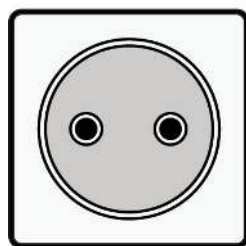
**Netherlands:** C

**Denmark:** C and F

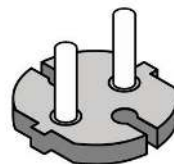
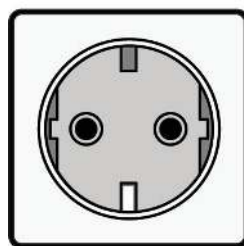
**Type G**



**Type C**



**Type F**



## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**England:** The weather across England can be unreliable and unpredictable, with lovely sun-drenched mornings regularly turning into damp, overcast afternoons—and vice versa. Still, legends about incessant rain in England are exaggerated. London, in fact, has less rainfall accumulation than Rome, which is known as a sunny city. It's just that in London, the rain is spread over more days. The British capital is very much a city of the temperate zone. With occasional exceptions, London's summers tend to be moderately warm, with few days having temperatures above 75° F; winters as well tend to be moderately cold, with few days dropping below 30° F. Spring and autumn are generally comfortable, with little more than a sweater or light overcoat required. The weather in York and Bath is similar.

**Caen, France:** The summers are pleasant in Caen and the winters are long and very cold; it is partly cloudy year round. Temperatures typically vary from 37°F to 73°F over the course of the year.

**Belgium:** The northern part of Belgium is low-lying, with a climate that is almost identical to that of the Netherlands, its adjoining neighbor. Showers are common—Bruges, in particular, gets a lot of rain—but the sprinkles rarely turn into heavy downpours. The weather can change quite frequently from day to day throughout the year. Though generally the daytime temperatures are mild, summer may bring a warm spell for a few weeks. Fall brings overcast and rainy days and the temperature will start to drop.

**Netherlands:** As in most areas of northwest Europe, the weather in the Netherlands is frequently rainy and can be very changeable from day to day all through the year. During spring, a fine, warm spell may last for weeks, or a stretch of cool, unsettled weather may prevail. Daytime temperatures are generally mild, averaging in the upper 50s and low 60s, but weather shifts do occur on a regular basis. In summer, fine warm periods may last for weeks on occasions; but then again, the weather could also be cool and unsettled. By autumn, overcast skies occur more frequently, and the overall weather pattern consists of longer, heavier, rains and colder temperatures. Generally, the flat countryside of the Netherlands makes it a rather windy place in all seasons. In the past, the Dutch relied on this weather element to run the windmills that pumped the seawater from the low-lying lands.

**Copenhagen, Denmark:** The weather in Copenhagen is mild through all the four seasons—with highs usually in the 60s and lows usually in the 50s—although temperatures in winter can drop down into the 30s and 40s. On the other end of the scale, summertime highs rarely go above 80 °F despite the occasional heat wave. Rainfall is moderate too, but spread throughout the year, so showers are possible in any season. Grey skies are the norm rather than the exception in Copenhagen.

**Tórshavn, Faroe Islands:** The Faroe Islands are cold, wet, and windy all year-round, with mild winters and cool summers. For all the winters are long and cold, snow is infrequent and sunlight just as rare. Tórshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands, is noted as the least sunny place in the world, averaging less than 900 hours of sunlight a year. During the summer, the Islands are known to experience “white nights”, where the sky does not get completely dark until midnight.



## Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

### Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	LONDON, ENGLAND			CAEN, FRANCE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	45 to 34	90 to 80	23	48 to 36	88 to 79	2.2
FEB	46 to 34	90 to 74	19	49 to 36	89 to 74	1.8
MAR	52 to 37	91 to 68	21	54 to 39	90 to 71	1.7
APR	57 to 39	90 to 60	20	58 to 41	90 to 68	1.7
MAY	63 to 44	90 to 59	18	64 to 47	92 to 69	2
JUN	69 to 49	90 to 61	18	69 to 52	93 to 70	1.9
JUL	73 to 53	91 to 59	17	74 to 55	93 to 66	2
AUG	73 to 53	94 to 64	18	74 to 55	93 to 66	2
SEP	59 to 44	93 to 72	21	69 to 52	94 to 67	2.3
OCT	59 to 44	93 to 72	21	62 to 47	92 to 73	2.7
NOV	51 to 39	92 to 78	22	54 to 41	90 to 77	2.8
DEC	46 to 35	90 to 82	22	49 to 38	88 to 81	2.5

MONTH	BRUGES, BELGIUM			ANTWERP, BELGIUM		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	39 to 35	87	18	42 to 33	89 to 81	22
FEB	39 to 34	88	16	43 to 33	89 to 73	16
MAR	45 to 38	86	17	49 to 37	89 to 70	20
APR	51 to 44	82	16	55 to 40	89 to 62	19
MAY	58 to 49	79	14	63 to 47	89 to 62	19
JUN	63 to 54	81	14	68 to 53	90 to 63	18
JUL	66 to 58	82	15	71 to 56	90 to 64	18
AUG	68 to 59	81	14	72 to 55	92 to 61	16
SEP	64 to 55	78	15	66 to 51	93 to 68	17
OCT	58 to 51	82	16	58 to 45	92 to 73	18
NOV	48 to 43	86	19	49 to 39	90 to 79	20
DEC	45 to 41	89	20	44 to 36	90 to 82	21

MONTH	AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS			COPENHAGEN, DENMARK		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	41 to 34	91 to 86	8	37 to 30	89 to 85	18
FEB	42 to 32	91 to 79	11	36 to 28	89 to 80	15
MAR	48 to 37	92 to 74	9	41 to 32	89 to 74	15
APR	53 to 40	90 to 66	12	49 to 36	84 to 63	15
MAY	61 to 46	87 to 62	12	60 to 45	76 to 57	14
JUN	66 to 52	89 to 66	9	66 to 52	76 to 59	16
JUL	69 to 55	90 to 68	12	69 to 55	78 to 60	15
AUG	70 to 55	91 to 65	11	69 to 54	82 to 60	16
SEP	64 to 51	93 to 72	10	61 to 50	86 to 67	15
OCT	57 to 46	93 to 78	9	53 to 44	87 to 76	19
NOV	48 to 39	92 to 85	7	44 to 37	87 to 82	19
DEC	44 to 39	92 to 88	7	39 to 32	88 to 85	18

MONTH	TORSHAVN, FAROE ISLANDS		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # Days of Rainfall
JAN	43 to 36	89	22
FEB	43 to 34	88	17
MAR	43 to 36	88	21
APR	45 to 37	87	16
MAY	48 to 41	87	13
JUN	52 to 45	88	12
JUL	55 to 45	89	13
AUG	55 to 48	90	13
SEP	54 to 46	89	18
OCT	48 to 41	89	22
NOV	45 to 37	88	21
DEC	43 to 36	89	22

# ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

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## M/V Clio

### Cabin Amenities

Your cabin amenities include a private bathroom with shower, hairdryer, TV, in room heating, internal telephones and a mini-refrigerator. Each cabin is appointed with a sitting area, plus the decks and dining rooms are spacious and attractively decorated, providing welcoming locations for relaxing with your traveling companions.

### Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner). However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for many small ships.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

### Dining

All meals are taken in the onboard restaurant, which acts as the ship's dining room. Meals will be a mix of regional specialties and familiar American standards, and will feature a variety of entrée options including vegetarian. Complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks are served with lunch and dinner. A selection of fine wines is also available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20-30 per bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

If you require a special diet, such as vegetarian, low-cholesterol, or gluten-free, please request this in advance, you may do so by contacting one of our Travel Counselors. Dining times will vary according to the scheduled daily activities. In keeping with regional custom, dinner may be served at a later hour (around 7:00 pm) than Americans may be accustomed to.

### Electricity

Cabins are equipped with 110-volt outlets that are designed to fit American plugs. In your bathroom you will find a dual 110/220-volt outlet, for use with electric shavers. While your bathroom does come equipped with a hairdryer, please do not use any other appliances that heat up, such as hair irons or curlers—they tend to short out.

### Getting Ashore

Getting from ship to shore during an ocean-going voyage is not the same experience as on a river cruise—it requires more balance and agility, plus there are more formalities.

- **Balance and agility are needed:** You'll either walk down a gangway—which can be steep, wet, and slippery—or be shuttled to land in a small boat (a process known as “tendering”). We'll use the gangway most of the time, but tenders will be used when the ship cannot dock closely enough for the gangway to reach the shore. Tenders can differ in size, and some of them maybe open with no covering. From time to time we will use the ship's own fleet of Zodiacs—which are small but sturdy open-air boats holding 8-10 people each—as tenders. To get into one of the Zodiacs, you'll need to go down a steep staircase, and then crew members will assist you as you step from the M/V Clio into the Zodiac.
- **Clothing note:** Since tenders in general (and the Zodiacs in particular) are small open-air boats, they are more susceptible to being splashed by water. You might want to bring a rain jacket or waterproof cover (like a poncho) to protect your clothing while transferring from ship to shore.
- **Expect formalities on arrival in port:** When the M/V Clio arrives in a new port, she'll need to be cleared by the local port authorities before you can leave the ship. In some cases, the wait will be as short as 30 minutes, but other times it may take up to 2 hours. Your crew will do all they can to make the wait as short as possible and to minimize the inconvenience to you. (For example, you will be asked to leave your passport with the front desk when you first embark on the ship. That way, it is on hand if the port authorities ask to see it.) However, the procedure can be complex and may take a while to complete. Typically the authorities work directly with the crew, but they do retain the right to speak with you as well.

## Internet Access and Email

Limited WiFi service is available for free in some of the public spaces, but not in individual cabins. If you want to use the WiFi connection you'll need to bring your own device—a laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc.—because the ship does not rent or loan these devices. Instructions on how to connect will be available at Reception. Please keep in mind that our WiFi access onboard is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume onboard will affect connectivity and speed. You should expect that there will be times when the WiFi is either slow or not available, and that these disruptions can be brief or longer lasting.

## Laundry Services

There is laundry service available on board, but no dry cleaning. Prices are per piece of clothing and will be provided to you onboard.

## Medical Services

There is always a doctor onboard, as well as all of the basic First Aid supplies. All physician's fees will be payable directly to the doctor. All specific medicines are the responsibility of each traveler.



## Recreational Facilities

Our ship features a library, a lounge with a bar, a dining room, and a sun deck. The bar is open from approximately 11 am to 11 pm, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines).

## Shipboard Payments

Payment for shipboard expenses can be made using major credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard, or Discover. You will not need a PIN to use your credit card onboard. Personal checks and American Express are not accepted onboard.

## Ship-to-Shore Communications

The ship has satellite telephone connections which allows you to call anywhere in accordance with the current local tariffs. You can purchase phone cards at the reception desk for \$10, which will give you 15-30 minutes' worth call time to the U.S. (depending on which state you are calling).

## Smoking Policy

Smoking is prohibited on board, with the exception a designated outdoor deck area reserved for smokers.

## Wheelchairs

The ship is not built to accommodate wheelchairs.

## Water

Tap water onboard ship is filtered and safe to drink. As part of our sustainability commitment, we offer filtered tap water at meals rather than bottled water, which creates waste. If you prefer bottled water, it will be available onboard for a charge.

## Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

## Ship Specifications: M/V Clio

- **Year built:** 1998
- **Year purchased:** 2015
- **Length and width** 328' by 46'
- **Passenger capacity:** 89

- **Crew members:** 60
- **Decks:** 5
- **Cabins:** 45
- **Elevator:** Yes

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### Cultures of Northern Europe

#### French Culture

It would be hard to find someone who was not familiar with at least some aspects of French culture. Few nations have surpassed France's legacy when it comes to exporting art, literature, fashion, cuisine, film, and entire schools of intellectual thought. But that doesn't mean that French culture has not been misunderstood.

For example, the French are justly proud of their cultural heritage, and that pride is often embodied in the nation's unofficial symbol, the Gallic rooster. But the flip side of Gallic pride is the stereotype of French snobbery. The French very much believe in their national motto of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). But in their daily interactions, the French are rather formal with people outside their social circle, and they follow a strict set of manners to avoid social missteps (*faux pas*). That mannerly approach, combined with the extreme directness of their language, makes many visitors jump to the conclusion that the French are cold or arrogant. *Au contraire*, when you get to know a French person, that sense of decorum generally takes a back seat to affectionate and loyal friendships.

When you get to that stage, you'll have to master the art of the French air kiss or *faire la bise*. This is how French people greet acquaintances, by leaning in and gently brushing their right, then left cheeks together while making a subtle kissing sound with their lips. If someone wishes you hello or goodbye with *la bise*, consider it a compliment!

Most people in France share a strong appreciation for the arts and intellectual discourse. A lot of that is going on whenever you walk into a café, where people will be engaged in lively conversations for what seems like hours. There's an historical precedent for this, for during the 18th century, France was the epicenter of the Enlightenment. It was an era that gave us radical new philosophies, science and art based on the sovereignty of reason, and empiricism. The French openness to new ideas is evident in their embrace of innovative artistry— from the Impressionists to Dadaism to Abstract Expressionism and beyond. The French brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière are generally considered the inventors of modern cinema, and their legacy has been expanded by a host of acclaimed filmmakers from Abel Gance to Jean Renoir to Jean-Luc Godard to Francois Truffaut and too many others to list.

When it comes to gastronomy, it goes without saying that the French have elevated their cuisine to an art form. The French have always considered dining as something worthy of one's time as opposed to being a necessity or even a sinful indulgence. They appreciate every morsel of their meal on a sensory level, for the technique of the chef, and for what that dish may represent in terms of national, regional or just family history. They are particular about all these things, and especially, about the freshness and quality of ingredients. But because they also see chefs as artists, they delight in innovative culinary interpretations of classic dishes. So when you sit down to dine in France, you are not just consuming a meal, you are tapping into the French spirit.

## Belgian Culture

Consider this: Belgium's brewing heritage dates back at least to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. And while many connoisseurs proclaim Belgian beer to be the best on the planet, with the greatest diversity of original beer styles, more people have heard of brands from Germany, Denmark, and Ireland than Belgium. The fact that Belgian brewers have never aggressively marketed their products on an international scale is a clue to the national character: Belgians loathe self-promotion, and are genuinely modest about their achievements. They are also self-critical, to a fault. This is striking, considering that Belgium has much to be proud of.

Since the Middle Ages, tiny Belgium has been one of the richest and most developed regions in the world. During the Renaissance, only northern Italy could rival the splendor of cities such as Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, and Antwerp. (Even today, Belgium has the world's greatest number of castles per square meter.) Prior to World War I, Belgium was the world's fourth mightiest economic power, despite the fact that the populations of its industrial rivals were five to ten times larger. Belgium's wealth derived not from natural resources, which were scant, but from the sheer productivity and trade-savvy of its people. Even today, many studies cite the Belgian worker as the most productive in the world.

This has paid off for Belgium's highly skilled workforce. Though they work hard, they enjoy liberal vacation and free time, and a comprehensive social security system. There is very little crime, very little poverty, and a fairly even distribution of wealth. The wage differential between men and women is the lowest in the European Union, with female workers earning on average 91 percent of a man's salary. Most Belgians own their own homes, and have access to free or low-cost post-secondary education. There is a well-developed infrastructure, good healthcare, and excellent, affordable cuisine. By almost any standard, the quality of life here is high. So it's no wonder that in poll after poll, Belgians consistently rank high among those who say they are most satisfied with their lives.

But Belgians take nothing for granted, and have a reputation for being skeptical of government, thumbing their noses at authority, and being *laissez-faire* when it comes to following rules. This may be attributable to a 2,000-year history of nearly continuous occupation by foreign powers. But not all of Belgium's discontent has arisen from outside sources. The biggest social divide is the ethnocultural one between Flemish (Dutch) speakers and French (Walloon) ones. In the past, this further fragmented Belgian society into so-called "pillars" based on language, religion, and

political leanings. It manifested itself in the community's schools, hospitals, sports and leisure clubs, civic organizations, newspapers, and political representation. Though the influence of these pillars has drastically diminished, it still lingers.

As a visitor, you will find the Belgians to be friendly and welcoming, if a little formal at first. They are proud of their tidy homes and local cuisine, and though they would never boast about either, they would warmly appreciate your praise. Though flexible and tolerant of others, Belgians reserve their harshest judgments for themselves, and will be candid about their own country's faults. Somewhere between their pragmatic and rebellious poles lies the Belgian genius for creativity and invention. Belgium gave us the Flemish Masters, the surrealism of Magritte, the guitar brilliance of Django Reinhardt, the Art Nouveau whimsy of Victor Horta, the charm of Audrey Hepburn, and more comic book makers per square kilometer than any other country. And let's not forget the French, that is, *Belgian*, fries.

## Dutch Culture

There is a saying that "God created the earth, but the Dutch created the Netherlands." It refers to the fact that more than half of the Netherlands's physical area are lowlands (called *polder*) that were literally reclaimed from the sea. The story of this amazing engineering feat begins in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and it is a testament to the Dutch people's pragmatism, industriousness, ingenuity, and sheer determination. These are traits that the Dutch are still proud of today.

That pragmatic streak informs another trait the Dutch are known for: *verdraagzaamheid* or tolerance. Since the 16th century, the Netherlands has been a humanitarian haven for immigrants, asylum seekers, and religious refugees (such as the English Puritans who settled here before continuing on to America as Pilgrims). The Dutch have always been interested in new ideas, and today this open-mindedness has led to permissive policies on women's rights, free speech, drugs, sex, LGBTQ rights, and more. For example, prostitution, euthanasia, and recreational marijuana use (in coffeeshops) are legal here (albeit, with restrictions).

This does not mean that the Dutch are libertines. Many have very strong views on what constitutes "right" behavior. But even the pragmatists, the Dutch simply prioritize policies based on doing the least amount of harm, that is, minimizing the negative social and economic costs of various human behaviors, whether legal or not.

The most liberal enclaves here, as elsewhere, tend to be urban. And they tend to lie within a U-shaped region called the *Randstadt* which means "rim city" or "edge city." The *Randstadt* is a densely-populated megalopolis that includes the country's four largest cities—Amsterdam, the Hague, Utrecht, and Rotterdam—plus all their associated suburbs. It is the country's economic powerhouse, and it dominates the national culture. The *Randstadt* covers the provinces of North Holland, South Holland, and Utrecht, so its people are called "Hollanders." Given the term's geographic and social connotations, people *outside* the *Randstadt* resent being lumped into that group. That's why it is proper to call the country "the Netherlands" and not "Holland."

In the past, the more significant social distinction was a matter of *verzuiling* or "pillarization." This was the *de facto* segregation of society based on religious, social and political affinities. People would self-identify among the various pillars which had their own schools, hospitals,



newspapers, social clubs, and mutual aid systems. Since the 1960s, when the Dutch social welfare system became more comprehensive, people no longer need to rely on their pillar groups for support, as there is less of an economic imperative for belonging to one.

Today, pillarization has been replaced by a broader middle class that enjoys access to free or subsidized healthcare, education, retirement, housing, and unemployment benefits—and contributes to the hefty tax system that pays for them. This is available to Dutch people who are *autochtoon* (indigenous or native-born) and for the most part also to *allochtoon* (non-indigenous residents). That being said, the Netherlands' famous tolerance has been tested over the past few decades by an increase in Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa. There has been a concomitant rise in far-right populism that blames immigration for a rise in religious extremism and terrorism; and a perceived loss of prosperity and Dutch identity. So far, this is still a minority opinion.

Meanwhile, the majority of Dutch people you meet will be notable for their unpretentiousness and good humor. They like to poke fun at themselves and others—especially those who flaunt their wealth or are otherwise showoffs. Most Dutch people are quite fastidious, a trait reflected in the spotless streets and tidy homes. They are equally meticulous about time, so if you are late for something, you'd better have a good excuse. The Dutch are considered quite individualistic so it is difficult to generalize. But perhaps the most common Dutch trait is directness: they are honest, forthright, and even blunt in their speech—so don't expect a Dutch person to mince words. They tend to eschew sarcasm, and prefer that you deliver your opinion straightforwardly. Don't worry: they can take it, and do not hold grudges.

## Scandinavian Culture

Does Scandinavia even have a common culture? And how does it differ from Nordic culture? First off, Scandinavia refers to the lands originally occupied by the Vikings—which would be Norway, Sweden and Denmark. When referring to Nordic countries, it would be Norway, Sweden and Denmark, with Finland and Iceland added to the mix. While these northern lands differ in language and geography, their shared history and religion have given rise to several cultural similarities.

A belief that Scandinavians are sullen or aloof, however, is one of the most common cultural misunderstandings. If you are unable to engage in a conversation with a local, you might interpret it as someone being standoffish or even rude. But a Scandinavian would perceive it as being polite by not bothering a stranger with small talk. Broadly speaking, Scandinavians place a high value on being polite and do not wish to speak to anyone unnecessarily or even ask for help unless it's absolutely necessary.

A common thread woven throughout Scandinavian culture may be its focus on the wellbeing of the group rather than of the individual. While Americans admire even the most extreme efforts of individuals to achieve success, Scandinavians strive for moderation—in themselves, the community, and the workplace—to achieve a sense of balance. There are reasons why they always make the lists of the “happiest people on earth.” Scandinavians attribute it to their focus on life/work balance—while they do pay high taxes, the generous social programs they get in return take

all the fear out of losing their livelihood or growing broke. This allows them to focus on enjoying life. Scandinavia's concern for group wellbeing expresses itself in a variety of ways. The Danes have the centuries-old concept of "*hygge*," which is a general state of mind that embraces life. The Finns have their saunas, whose bonding rituals are intertwined in national culture. And the Swedes consider "*fika*," a type of mandatory coffee hour, to be an essential part of each day in order to bond with friends and colleagues.

Workplace culture is far less stressful in Scandinavian countries, too. Everyone expects everyone else to perform to the same standard. Since it's a common practice among Scandinavians to say what they mean, no one has to search for hidden meanings. And dealing with fewer office politics makes for a far more relaxed and comfortable workplace environment. Scandinavian culture discourages those seen as aiming too high or being too ambitious. In an attempt to make society as homogenous as possible, measures like private schools using the same curriculum as public schools are put in place to ensure equal opportunities for all. And Scandinavians believe that wealth should have no bearing on how you are treated.

### Waterways of the Netherlands

Nearly half of this small country—it measures just over 16,000 square miles—is below sea level, making the famous Dutch dikes a requisite for the use of a lot of the land. As early as 100 years ago, as much as 1,000 square miles of the Netherlands were still under water. Over the 20th century, however, it was a never-ending Dutch pursuit to extract more and more land from the sea. With the completion of ingenious water-control designs like the Zeeland Delta Project—a massive system of dikes, storm-surge barriers, and sluice gates—the Netherlands now has working solutions to its centuries-old problem of recurrent flooding by the North Sea.

Even so, the country still contains a lot of water, at least 1,100 square miles of it. That water, however, due to Dutch ingenuity and modern technology, is now mostly channeled into manageable canals, lakes, and rerouted rivers that were once open sea. It is the Netherlands' waterways, which, despite being a hazard when flooded, have long enabled the commercial success of the country. Throughout history, the rivers' strategic positions have given the Netherlands a prominent role in world shipping and trading. Essentially, the Netherlands is Europe's delta. Here three of Europe's major waterways—the Rhine, the Maas, the Waal, and their tributaries (including the Kil and the Merwede Rivers)—come to empty into the North Sea. Since the earliest seafaring days, products from the rest of Europe have come to this point on their way to the Atlantic Ocean for shipment to markets around the world.

The rivers also serve as natural boundaries that dissect the country into several different topographical regions. The land to the north of the rivers is relatively low; south of the rivers, elevations are somewhat higher, but no spot in the Netherlands would ever be considered mountainous. There is just one modest hilltop peak—only 1,093 feet high—among the rolling hills in the southeast province of Limburg. The central provinces of Gelderland and Utrecht are forested; otherwise most of the countryside is flat green fields. In addition to natural geographical divisions, the rivers also designate religious boundaries. Above the rivers, the population is predominantly Calvinist; below the rivers, most of the people are Catholic.

## Hotels

With an emphasis on minimalism and functional design, you'll discover that hotel rooms in this region are traditionally much smaller than in the United States, and tend to feature a sleek, modern look. Rooms are comfortable, clean, and well-equipped, but you should expect to experience how locals make use of limited space, which may mean that the bathrooms are smaller, or the beds are closer together, than you'd find at home.

## Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

## English Cuisine

The French used to have a joke about their English neighbors that went something like "other countries know how to cook while the English know how to boil". Even the Brits themselves would joke about their standard "meat, potatoes, and two veg" meals. But starting in the 90s there was a revival of British classics using fresh ingredients, flavor-boosting "low and slow" cooking methods, and sometimes borrowing elements from other cuisines. As a result, modern British cooking now has many admirers (see the devoted fans of *Great British Bake Off* or the

cookbooks of Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsay, and Nigella Lawson as proof). Add to this the fact that the UK has a diverse choice of restaurants—Indian, Thai, Italian, French, and Chinese to name a few—and we can say that the English eat very well. Popular dishes include:

- **Bangers and Mash:** Sausage and mashed potatoes.
- **Bubble and Squeak:** A potato and cabbage/brussel sprout dish.
- **Fish and chips:** A well-known meal and is usually bought from special shops (chippies) where the cooked food is wrapped and sprinkled with salt and vinegar.
- **Toad in the Hole:** Sausages served with **Yorkshire Pudding**, a baked pudding made from eggs, flour, and milk or water.
- **Cream Scones:** A baked good served with jam and clotted cream.

## French Cuisine

It would be an understatement to say the French have an appreciation for fine food. They have a reverence for it, and it shows in the quality of French cuisine, which was designated by UNESCO as part of the World's Intangible Cultural Heritage. You certainly don't need to dine at a Michelin-starred restaurant to experience the best of French cuisine. A visit to just about any local *marché* (open-air market), *pâtisserie* (pastry shop), *boulangerie* (bakery), café, bistro, or brasserie may well be as memorable an outing as visiting the famed monuments and museums.

Classical French dishes formed the basis of what we once called *haute cuisine*. But some of these dishes were regional in origin. Fortunately, because there is such widespread regard for gastronomy, regional dishes may appear on menus far from home, especially in large cities. Some of these dishes include:

- **Soupe à l'oignon:** a sweet and savory broth of caramelized onions, beef stock, and sherry with a crust of grilled Comté or Gruyère cheese.
- **Coq au vin:** a specialty of Burgundy, made with chicken braised with red Burgundy wine, lardons, mushrooms, and garlic.
- **Entrecôte à la Bordelaise:** A traditional dish in Bordeaux. It is a rib eye steak cooked in a red wine sauce with bone marrow.
- **Bouillabaisse:** A seafood soup made from fish and shellfish cooked in a broth of onions, tomatoes, saffron, and herbs.
- **Coq au Riesling:** A flavorful dish of chicken braised in white Riesling wine, accented with lardons of bacon and button mushrooms, and enriched with a silky touch of crème fraîche
- **Flammekueche** (or in French, *tarte flambée*): A chewy flatbread smothered with *fromage blanc* (a tangy fresh cheese), *crème fraîche* or sour cream, slivered onions, and crispy *lardons* of bacon.

## Belgian Cuisine

It's said that in Belgium one can savor food that has the quality of French cuisine, in German portion sizes. Belgians have cosmopolitan tastes, so in addition to dishes that borrow from their neighbors (France, Germany, and the Netherlands), you'll find many ethnic eateries. But there is also an inherently Belgian gastronomy that goes well beyond the famous chocolate and beer.

Perhaps the most iconic Belgian dish is one you may not recognize as Belgian at all: **pommes frites** (fried potatoes) or *frites* for short. Don't call them French fries, because they were invented in Belgium, where they are a national obsession. City streets abound with fry carts (*freitkot*) and fry shops (*friteries* or *fritures*) that serve up paper cones filled with hot, crispy fries, and a dazzling array of toppings. Mayo, ketchup, and curry sauces are common, but the most popular sauce is called **andalous**, a purée of red peppers, tomatoes, shallots and garlic.

- **Moules frites:** Belgium's national dish made of plump and sweet North Sea mussels are steamed in a savory broth of white wine, shallots, parsley, and butter (or sometimes, cream) that you can soak up with your fries.
- **Chicon au gratin:** These endive heads are braised, wrapped in ham slices, and smothered with a Gruyère sauce. It's usually served with mashed potatoes.
- **Waterzooï:** A flavorful fish stew or thick soup with vegetables, herbs, and cream. It can also be based on chicken.
- **Tomates aux crevettes:** Grey shrimp stuffed inside a tomato.
- **Garnaalkroketten:** Grey shrimp that is formed into breaded, cylindrical croquettes served with lemon and parsley.
- **Paling in't groen:** Also known as "eels in the green" in which delicate chunks of (sometimes smoked) eel are simmered in a sauce made of herbs fresh from the riverbanks: usually sorrel, chervil, parsley, and watercress.
- **Carbonnade flamande:** A rich beef stew simmered in Belgian beer with bacon, carrots, and herbs.
- **Vol-au-vent:** This means "windblown," in reference to the light, flaky pastry that tops this deconstructed chicken pot pie, which sometimes also comes with meatballs.
- **Frikadellen met krieken:** Meatballs in a sour cherry sauce. It's a favorite at town fairs or family gatherings as either a main course or dessert.
- **Spekuloos:** These crispy caramel-y cookies are perfect for dessert.
- **Gauffres:** Also known as waffles. Belgian waffles are here called Brussels waffles, and they are large and rectangular.

- **Liège waffles:** These waffles have rounded edges and are flecked with pearls of sugar that caramelize into chewy goodness. You can have *gauffres* with syrup, whipped cream, jam, drizzled chocolate, fruits, and more. Or satisfy your sweet tooth with world-famous, hand-made Belgian chocolate. It shouldn't be hard, since Belgium boasts more than 2,000 chocolatiers.

The only thing more prolific is Belgian beer: there are more than 450 varieties. Trappist beers are strictly regulated and must be brewed in Trappist monasteries. Abbey beers are brewed in the monastic style, but can be made anywhere. In general, Belgian beer is a bit yeastier and higher in alcoholic content than other beers. In 2016, UNESCO added Belgian beer culture to its list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. To that, we say, “*Op uw gezondheid.*” Cheers!

## Dutch Cuisine

Until the first half of the last century, the cuisine of the Netherlands had a reputation for being bland. Today, it is surprisingly diverse, thanks to a bounty of ingredients and influences. The modern Netherlands is one of Europe's largest exporters of produce and dairy goods, both of which figure prominently (and freshly) in the national cuisine. Along with continental favorites, dishes from former Dutch colonies, particularly Indonesia, have entered the Dutch diet. And every town has its favorite place for Turkish and Middle Eastern *kebabs*, *shawarma*, and *falafel*.

For truly patriotic fare, nothing beats *hollandse nieuw haring* or “Holland new herring.” Every May or June, pop-up shops fly the red, white, and blue Dutch flag to say that Holland “new” herring are here. It's the lead-up to *Vlaggetjestdag* (Flag Day) on June 15<sup>th</sup>. The traditional way to eat herring is to grab the tail, toss your head back, and pop the fish in your mouth. Or try *broodje haring*: cut-up herring and onions, tucked in a bun with a Dutch flag toothpick.

Right off the bat, you'll notice that Dutch city streets abound with food stalls, kiosks, trucks, and automat-style snack bars called *raampje* (where you select your food from a wall of tiny glass windows.) You might encounter dishes like these:

- **Stamppot:** Which is hot mashed potatoes mixed with veggies such as kale, carrots, leeks, turnips, or sauerkraut. There are even versions made with fruit such as apples (called *hete bliksem* or “hot lightning”). Sometimes stamppot is served with gravy and a side of smoked **rookworst** sausage, or simply with gherkin pickles.
- **Snert:** Or pea soup is the quintessential Dutch comfort food—a thick stew of split peas, bacon, celery, onions, carrots, potato, and slices of smoked **rookworst** sausage. What sets it apart from other pea soups are the spices—ginger, allspice and cloves.
- **Hachee:** A hearty stew of beef and caramelized onions.
- **Hutspot met klapstuk:** (“hotpotch”) A mix of potatoes, onions, and **winterpeen** (a sweet, winter carrot), served with braised beef. It's as close to a Dutch national dish as it gets, eaten every October 3 to honor the 1574 siege of Leiden.
- **Stroopwafel:** Two wafer-thin waffles sandwiched with caramel or syrup. They come in convenient discs to top your cup of coffee and keep it warm.



- **Poffertjes:** Tiny, yeasty buckwheat pancakes dusted with sugar and smeared with butter. You can also get toppings like **stroop** (syrup), **slagroom** (whipped cream), or **aardbein** (berries).

## Danish Cuisine

Twenty years ago one might've described Danish food as peasant cooking—hearty, stick-to-your-ribs Viking fare that would get you through a long day of farming, fishing, or raiding. Today, Denmark is the epicenter of the New Nordic cuisine, a movement begun by Danish chefs René Redzepi and Claus Meyer, who helmed Copenhagen's Noma restaurant (considered the world's best) and influenced chefs everywhere with their philosophy that celebrates sustainable, locavore, and seasonal ingredients—many of which are foraged and were previously forgotten. It has inspired many cooks to revisit and refine some of the classics of Danish cuisine, like these:

- **Smørrebrød:** These best-known Danish delights are open-faced sandwiches built on a base of buttered *rugbrød*, a dense, dark rye bread. These are not random sandwiches, they are artfully composed, so the dish is colorful and the garnishes are complementary. Toppings might include *syltede sild* (pickled herring) with micro greens; shrimp and egg with dill; or roast beef with pickles, onions, and horseradish. A favorite is *dyrlægens natmad*, which translates as “veterinarian's midnight snack” and includes corned beef, sky (Danish meat aspic), and *leverpostej* (liver pâté) topped with slivered red onions, sprouts, and parsley or dill.
- **Stegt flæsk:** The national dish of Denmark. Crispy pork belly chunks served with boiled potatoes and parsley sauce.
- **Brændendekærlighed:** So many Danes have a “burning love” for bacon, they named this dish after this affliction. This dish is mashed potatoes topped with oven-roasted cubes of bacon, caramelized onions, and butter.
- **Forloren hare:** A Danish meatloaf made with ground pork, leeks, and egg. Bacon strips are woven around the loaf, which is then baked till it looks like an elegant brown basket.
- **Rødspættefilet:** A filet of plaice (a mild white fish) that is breaded and fried. It can be eaten as an entrée, or as the *stjernesud* (“shooting star”) of a *smørrebrød* topped with shrimp, lettuce and caviar from the Limfjord.
- **Tarteletter:** These are flaky pastry tartlets filled with chicken and asparagus in a creamy béchamel sauce.
- **Andesteg:** This dish is a holiday favorite. A roast duck stuffed with apples and prunes, then roasted until golden-brown and served with a sauce made with reserved duck fat, whiskey, and wine.
- **Wienerbrød:** For something sweet to go with your coffee (*bica*), order a Danish but call it by its proper name, *wienerbrød*, which means “Vienna bread” and is a more accurate reflection of its provenance. Even though Danes did not invent them, they love these flaky, croissant-like glazed pastries filled with cream or fruit.

- **Kransekake:** The cake that literally towers above them all. It's a cone of concentric almond cake rings bound together with a white icing glaze, and sometimes decorated with berries or nuts. They are served at festive occasions (especially New Year's), and the center of the tower might hold candies, chocolates, and even champagne or wine bottles.

## Copenhagen in Brief

### City Layout and Details

Old Copenhagen is defined as a rough square by Nørreport Station to the north, Rådhuspladsen (Town Hall Square) to the west, and Kongens Nytorv to the east.

Strøget is Europe's longest continuous pedestrians-only route. It runs east from Town Hall Square to Kongens Nytorv, and is composed of five interconnected streets: Frederiksberggade, Nygade, Vimmelskaftet, Amagertorv, and Østergade and roughly bisects Old Copenhagen. Strøget is a stroller's and shopper's heaven: lined with shops, bars, restaurants, and, in season, with sidewalk cafes it is a favorite of visitors and locals alike. On the Eastern end, Pistolstræde is a maze of galleries, restaurants, and boutiques, housed in restored 18th-century buildings.

Fiolstræde (Violet St.), closer to the western end of Strøget, offers antiques shops and bookshops and cuts through the university (Latin Quarter). At the end of Fiolstræde you can turn onto Rosengaarden where you'll find Kultorvet (Coal Square). Here you'll find join the third main pedestrian street, Købmagergade (Butcher St.) which runs gently south until it meets up with Strøget at the Amagertorv section.

At the eastern end of Strøget you approach Kongens Nytorv (King's Square), where you'll find the Royal Theater and Magasin, the largest department store in Copenhagen. Across the square you come to the beginning of Nyhavn, the former seamen's quarter that now features upscale restaurants, apartments, cafes, and boutiques.

Denmark's government is centered on the small island of Slotsholmen, which is connected to the center by eight different bridges. The island also features several museums, most notably Christiansborg Castle.

### Entertainment

Free time? Try strolling the Strøget, a three quarter mile stretch of shops between Rådhuspladsen and Kongens Nytorv . If you get peckish or thirsty midway, you can hop over a street to the Vestergade, lined with historic buildings, restaurants, stores and bars for a little more variety. Nynhavn (New Harbor) is the place to be on a good day – outdoor cafes abound, and classic buildings overlook the classic ships that line the harbor front.

In summer, a visit to Tivoli Gardens is a must. Tivoli's twenty-one acres encompasses impressive structures (the Chinese Tower, the Glass Hall Theater, and the Pantomime Theater among them), flower beds, fountains and lovely landscaping. The park features 5 roller coasters, including one of the world's oldest wooden coasters, as well as other rides. Locals and visitors alike find

the ambience and experience a repeatable pleasure. If you're not interested in the rides or the performances you can simply stroll, take in the view and people watch. (There is an entrance fee, but many of the events inside are included).

You'll find the nightlife in several neighborhoods, including Strøget and nearby areas; in Vesterbro, with its main street on Vesterbrogade just across from Tivoli Gardens; and on Istedgade — home to some of the today's trendier bars and cafés. The area just off Kongens Nytorv on Gothersgade is another busy nightlife spot.

The famed jazz venues of Copenhagen are largely closed. Nightspots now cater to a wider range of music — from ballroom music to house, rap, and techno. Restaurants, cafés, bars, and clubs stay open after midnight, a few until 5 am.

## Local Transportation

Copenhagen is sufficiently compact and inviting that most of your travel in the city should be as a result of a leisurely stroll. Many of the major sightseeing attractions are close to one another.

**By Bus:** Copenhagen's buses are an inexpensive way to get around a little further out, if necessary. Most buses leave from Rådhuspladsen. A basic ticket buys an hour of travel and unlimited transfers within the zone where you started your trip. For information, visit [www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/planning/public-transport](http://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenhagen/planning/public-transport)

**Metro:** Copenhagen's Metro is almost 20 years old, and it connects the east to west of the city with the center. It operates 24 hours a day, and Metro fares are integrated into Copenhagen's zonal system. A joint zone fare system works with Copenhagen Transport buses, State Railway, and the Metro. You have the option to purchase a *grundbillet* (base ticket), 10 tickets, or a 24-hour bus and train ticket which allows you to travel through nearly half of Zealand.

**Discount Passes:** The Copenhagen Card entitles you to free and unlimited travel by bus and rail throughout the metropolitan area (including North Zealand) and free admission to many sights and museums. The card is available for one day or three days. In order to use the Copenhagen Card, you will need to download the card to your smartphone. Your Trip Experience Leader will inform you of the app so you can download prior arriving into Copenhagen and can assist you in activating your card (once the card is downloaded and activated you do not need access to Wifi to use it on public transport, museums etc).

**Taxis:** Watch for the FRI (free) sign or a green light when hailing a taxi. Be sure the taxis are metered. Tips are included in the meter price and many drivers speak English.

**Bicycle:** In good weather cycling around the city is a great option. Getting through central Copenhagen can take around 30 minutes on a bike—and may be faster than the metro – and bikes are popular with the residents. Cycle paths are plentiful and quite safe.

## Caen in Brief

### City Layout and Details

Caen is a commune located in northwestern France. It rose to and became a great city under the rule of Norman dukes in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, becoming the capitol of Normandy during the reign of William the Conqueror. During his rule, William the Conqueror commissioned what would go on to be one of Caen's most historical sites known as the Abbaye-aux-Hommes (Men's Abbey), a Romanesque building with a Gothic façade. The city was badly damaged during the Battle of Normandy in 1944 but a considerable amount of history and heritage remains alive and has made it into a beautiful city. Caen today, is home to two ancient abbeys as well as several museums.

## London in Brief

### City Layout and Details

London is frequently described as a “city of villages” that cropped up around the square mile of the first walled Roman city that once stood here. Though most of the walls disappeared long ago, the political autonomy of The City of London still distinguishes it from the surrounding neighborhoods. The City has always been London's financial center, and it is chock full of tiny lanes and a historic atmosphere. The 32 boroughs of Greater London, which surround The City, comprise over 600 square miles, though thankfully for visitors, the major tourist attractions are relatively close together in the center.

**The West End:** Stretching from west of the City to Hyde Park is the lively West End, which includes the nation's thickest grouping of boutiques, stores, restaurants, and theaters. Oxford Street, which runs the length of the West End, vies with nearby Covent Garden and Soho as the most popular site for sightseers and shoppers.

**South Kensington and Chelsea:** Just beyond the West End, south of Hyde Park, are the stylish residential districts of South Kensington and Chelsea. These areas contain many impressive estates and important city buildings.

**The East End:** Flanking the City's eastern side is one of London's most impoverished areas. Historically, the East End was unappealing because both the prevailing winds and the flow of the River Thames move from west to east. In the plague-ridden days before sewers, life on the “wrong” side of the City was truly perilous for one's health. Today the East End is still home to indigent immigrants and the capital's famous Cockneys.

**Southwark:** The borough of Southwark lies across the river from the City, on the south bank of the Thames. Southwark became notorious as London's entertainment quarter during Elizabethan times, when theaters and brothels were banned within the City.

## Local Transportation

**Bus and Underground (“tube”):** Bus stations and tube stops abound in London, making it relatively easy to get across this vast city. The tube generally runs every few minutes from about 5:30 am to midnight (7:30 am to 11 pm on Sunday). In addition, some lines have an overnight service called “Night Tube” on Fridays and Saturdays. You can pick up a handy tube map, distributed free at all station ticket windows. While London’s comprehensive tube transport network may seem intimidating at first, it is surprisingly easy to navigate, and can feel very familiar after just a few rides. However, be aware that certain stations involve going up and down lengthy stairways; others provide escalators. You can access the tube using a contactless credit or debit card. If you do not have a contactless card, you will need to purchase a paper ticket in the station. Hold on to your subway ticket throughout the ride; you must insert it in a turnstile to exit the subway.

**Taxicabs:** You may opt to take a cab once or twice. Metered cabs may be hailed on the street (when “for hire” sign is lit) or ordered by phone. A 10% to 15% tip is usual for a cab ride. Expect an additional charge for travel after 8 pm, and on weekends.

**On Foot:** London can be a somewhat confusing city to negotiate. It seems as though no two streets run parallel, and even locals regularly consult maps. But in the winding streets of The City and in the tourist area of the West End, there’s no better way to go. Don’t forget that cars drive on the left, and look both ways before stepping off the curb. Also, cars have the right-of-way over pedestrians; take care even when the light seems to be in your favor.

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor’s terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

### Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop’s contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don’t assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

### Crafts & Souvenirs

#### England

Different parts of the United Kingdom (UK) are known for different specialties. Even if your trip only takes you to one part of the country, you’ll find these items for sale throughout. Popular items include umbrellas, Cadbury chocolate bars, Derby-style hats and fascinators, Paddington toy bears, Wedgwood china, orange marmalade, Woods of Windsor soaps and lotions, football

team shirts, Wellington boots, Burberry trench coats and accessories, books by British authors, Earl Grey tea, Beatles memorabilia and so much more. You can find all kinds of items emblazoned with Union Jacks, London Underground (Tube) imagery, and images of the royal family.

## France

Popular French souvenirs include fashion, art, antiques, perfume, food, and wine. Each region has its own specialties, but you can often find them for sale in other parts of the country. If time is short, try checking out a big department store, like Galeries Lafayette or Printemps. Or look for Monoprix chains, which have lower prices and are more for everyday shopping (sort of like the French version of Target).

The French value-added tax (VAT) is typically 19.6% and can be as high as 33.33% on luxury articles. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson at the time of purchase. Be sure to save all receipts for Customs. (Generally, you have to spend over 175€ at the same shop, on the same day, and have filled out a special form for this process.)

## Belgium

Popular items include porcelains, Belgium (the most famous laces to look for are *bloemenwek*, *rozenkant*, and *toveresseteek*), European antiques, leather goods, and edibles like chocolates, pralines, and the thin, spicy biscuits called *speculoos*.

## Netherlands

There is an abundance of art/prints and antiques available in the Netherlands, in addition to bargains on clothing and textiles. Keep an eye out for traditional items like *stroopwafel* (a cookie consisting of two thin wafers filled with caramel syrup), Delftware (famous blue and white pottery), Dutch cheese, wooden clogs, and salted licorice.

## Denmark

A showcase for world-famous Danish design and craftsmanship, Copenhagen seems to have been designed with shoppers in mind. The best buys are such luxury items as crystal, porcelain, silver, and furs. Look for offers and sales (*tilbud* or *udsalg* in Danish) and check antiques and secondhand shops for classics at cut-rate prices.

**VAT:** Although prices are inflated by a hefty 25% Value-Added Tax (Danes call it MOMS), non-European Union citizens can receive about an 18% refund. For more details and a list of all tax-free shops, ask at the tourist office for a copy of the Tax-Free Shopping Guide.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.



The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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### United Kingdom

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 94,525 square miles
- **Capital:** London, with a separate parliament in Edinburgh for Scotland, a National Assembly in Cardiff for Wales, and a National Assembly for Northern Ireland in Belfast.
- **Government:** Constitutional monarchy
- **Languages:** English, Welsh, Gaelic
- **Location:** Situated off the northwest coast of Europe, the island of Britain is occupied by England, Wales, and Scotland—collectively called Great Britain. Together with Northern Ireland, Great Britain makes up the nation officially called the United Kingdom (UK). England, in the southern part of Britain, is separated from Scotland on the north by the granite Cheviot Hills. To the west along the border of Wales—a land of steep hills and valleys—are the Cambrian Mountains. To the south of England is the English Channel and to the east is the North Sea, which also washes the eastern coast of Scotland. To the west of England is the Irish Sea, mixed to the north with the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Population:** Entire UK 65,105,246 (estimate): England – 55,268,100, Scotland – 5,404,700, Wales – 3,113,200, Northern Ireland – 1,862,100
- **Religions:** Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.) 59.5%, Muslim 4.4%, Hindu 1.3%, other 2%, unspecified 7.2%, none 25.7%
- **Time zone:** Great Britain is five hours ahead of Eastern Time: when it is 6 am in New York, it is 11 am in Wales, England, and Scotland.

#### National Holidays: United Kingdom

National holidays can vary depending on which part of the country you're in; please refer to the section for the specific area that you'll be visiting. The United Kingdom also celebrates a number of national holidays that

follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

### England

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 50,346 square miles
- **Capital:** London

- **Location:** Consists of 48 counties, occupying the southern part of Great Britain
- **Languages:** English
- **Population:** 55,268,100
- **Religions:** Christianity 59.4%, Non-religious 24.7%, Unknown 7.2%, Muslim 5.0%, Hindu 1.5%, Sikh 0.8%, Jewish 0.5%, Buddhist 0.5%
- **Time Zone:** Same as the rest of the United Kingdom, five hours ahead of Eastern Time

## National Holidays: England

In addition to the holidays listed below, England celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

1st Monday in May Early May Bank Holiday

Last Monday in May Spring Bank Holiday

Last Monday in August Summer Bank Holiday

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

## England: A Brief History

Prehistoric England was home to Celtic and other tribal peoples, then was ruled by the Roman Empire from about AD 43 to AD 410. After Rome fell, Jutes, Angles, and Saxons established small kingdoms and fiefdoms. When the Viking marauders hit England's shores in the 9th century, many of those small kingdoms were unified by King Alfred the Great of Wessex. Strength in numbers.

Some of England's medieval monarchs stand out for their lasting impacts on history. William the Conqueror brought Norman rule to England in 1066. Richard the Lionheart embarked on the Third Crusade in 1189. King John was compelled to sign the Magna Carta in 1215, laying the foundation for constitutional monarchy.

English King Edward I conquered Wales in 1283 and sought to rule Scotland as well. Those imperial ambitions were not limited to the island of Great Britain—England under Edward III fought the Hundred Years' War with France between 1337 and 1453, ultimately losing all its possessions on the French side of the Channel. Then, between 1455 and 1485, the York and Lancaster families battled for the crown in the Wars of the Roses. The victor, Henry Tudor, who was a Lancaster but through illegitimate descent. He married a York, and their offspring, Henry VIII, became the third Tudor king in 1509.

Henry VIII is best known for his six marriages, the first of which, to Catherine of Aragon, he sought to end through annulment. When the Pope forbade it, Henry separated the Church of England from papal authority and made himself its head. His daughter, Elizabeth I, became queen in 1558 and ruled for 44 years—a golden age of cultural flowering, and the expansion of England's naval prowess.

England fell into civil war between 1642 and 1649, when Oliver Cromwell executed King Charles I and briefly replaced the monarchy with a republic. The monarchy was restored in 1660 with the enthronement of Charles II, though royal power was restored with limitations.

The United Kingdom came into being with the 1707 Act of Union between the parliaments of England and Scotland. Then, by 1714, the first of four King Georges ascended the throne, beginning the Georgian era, a time when England laid the groundwork for Empire. It reached its fruition in the 19th century during the Victorian era, when the British Empire straddled the globe.

During the 19th century, the entire island of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, having been incorporated into the UK in 1801. The Irish however, sought independence, and in 1921, all but the six northern counties of Ulster became the Republic of Ireland—leaving the UK in its present form. But the United Kingdom was still able to call on its crown colonies, protectorates and Commonwealth when it declared war on Germany in 1939. The Battle of Britain and the destructive air attacks known as the Blitz besieged England from July 1940 to June 1941. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, one of England's most influential statesmen, led the country to victory.

As a popular song of the war years put it, “There’ll Always Be an England.” But what of the United Kingdom? In recent years, the desires of the Scots and Welsh for greater autonomy have led to the process called “devolution.” In 1999, Scotland regained its own Parliament, and Wales established its own National Assembly. In 2014, a referendum was held in Scotland to vote on independence from the United Kingdom, but was defeated.

In 2016, a United Kingdom referendum passed with 51.9% in favor of leaving the European Union. Brexit went into effect on January 31, 2020, with an 11-month transition period, during which the government of former Prime Minister Boris Johnson must negotiate a new EU trade deal. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic the same year, Johnson was faced with serious policy decisions to mitigate civilian casualties. Johnson's struggles came to a head in July 2022, following multiple scandals, when the former Prime Minister stepped down.

His successor, Liz Truss, was in office from September 6th, 2022 to October 25th, 2022. Two days after her appointment, Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of the United Kingdom for over 70 years, passed. Faced with universal criticism and financial instability, Truss resigned from her position, to be succeeded by Rishi Sunak, who was in office from October 25nd, 2022 to July 5th, 2024. Rishi Sunak called for a general election in July 2024, and lost the election to Keir Starmer, from the opposing Labour Party.

King Charles III was coronated as the King of the United Kingdom and 14 Commonwealth Realms on May 6th, 2023.

## France

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 248,573 square miles
- **Capital:** Paris

- **Language:** French
- **Location:** France is a large country, two and a half times as big as Great Britain, extending for some 600 miles from north to south and from east to west. It has coastlines on both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Its southern land border is Spain; to the north are Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany; to the east are Switzerland and Italy.
- **Geography:** Except for extreme northern France, which is part of the Flanders plain, the country may be described as four river basins and a plateau. Three of the streams flow west—the Seine into the English Channel, the Loire into the Atlantic, and the Garonne into the Bay of Biscay. The Rhône flows south into the Mediterranean. For about 100 miles, the Rhine is France’s eastern border. In the Alps, near the Italian and Swiss borders, is Europe’s highest point—Mont Blanc, at 15,781 feet.
- **Population:** 68,042,591 (Estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 48%, None 34%, Islam 4%, Protestant 3%, Buddhist 2%, Jewish 1%, Other 2%
- **Time Zone:** France is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Paris. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

### National Holidays: France

In addition to the holidays listed below, France celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Whit Monday. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year’s Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/08 World War II Victory Day

07/14 Bastille Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints’ Day

11/11 Armistice Day

12/25 Christmas Day

### France: A Brief History

That the French do things with flair has been borne out by history. Even their most famous prehistoric treasure, the 17,000-year old cave paintings of Lascaux, are a dazzling work of art. The rest of French history is just as dazzling, colored by events and ideas that have impacted all of humanity, far beyond the borders of this hexagon-shaped crucible of culture.

When the Celts arrived in Gaul in the 5th century BC, it was already occupied by Iberians, Ligurians, and Greeks, who established the oldest city in France, Massilia (Marseille). It was a major port with temples, theaters, an agora, and a flourishing wine trade. The city had forged an alliance with Rome by the time Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in 57–52 B.C. Julius often gets credit

for founding Lutetia (Paris), but the Gallic Parisii tribe had already established a settlement there on the banks of the Seine. The Romans erected their own magnificent cities whose ruins still stand in Arles, Nîmes, Vienne, Lyon, and beyond.

During the 5th century AD, the Franks invaded and converted to Christianity under Clovis I. A national spirit emerged when Charlemagne, King of the Franks, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800 AD. Though his reign left an indelible imprint, French national history is considered to begin in 987, when Hugh Capet centralized the monarchy. During the 12th and 13th centuries, trade prospered, guilds were founded, and cathedrals were built. But the 14th century brought the Hundred Years War with England (1337–1453), whose Norman kings held vast estates in France. The English were expelled and as in the days of Charlemagne, the throne held a powerful mystique, this time with the aid of Joan of Arc, whose divine voices urged her to lead France to victory at Orleans in 1429 and to champion Charles VII as king.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, France moved closer towards absolute monarchy, best exemplified by Louis XIV, whose reign was unequalled for its autocracy—and magnificent style. From Versailles, he presided over a gloriously gilded France—so resplendent that it earned him the title of “the Sun King.” Ironically, the very splendor of the French monarchy precipitated its downfall, for it was exorbitant to maintain. That burden fell to the peasants and middle class, as nobles and the clergy were exempt from the taxes. That ended with the French Revolution in 1789. King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were guillotined, the monarchy was abolished, and the new (but short-lived) First Republic was established.

The ensuing chaos led to the rise of Napoleon, who became emperor in 1804 and built an empire across nearly all of Europe. Though Napoleon was a dictator, his Napoleonic codes brought unprecedented legal rights and civil liberties to his domains, in many places ending feudalism. With his fall in 1814, the monarchy was restored. France’s Third Republic was founded in 1870, during which the groundbreaking Impressionist school of painting emerged, as well as the Modernist movement. From 1914–18, France fought with the Allies in World War I, prevailing but suffering devastating losses. Between wars, France nourished major intellectual movements: Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Existentialism.

In 1940, France was invaded by Germany who set up a puppet government in Vichy under Marshal Philippe Pétain. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy and went on to liberate Paris in August. A provisional government was set up under General Charles de Gaulle. He remained France’s most influential statesman of the 20th (or perhaps any other) century, becoming president in 1958 until his resignation in 1969. Post-war France saw the break-up of its remaining colonial outposts. The country was one of the leaders in the founding of the European Union (1993) and the Eurozone (1999).

More recently France, like its European neighbors, had to contend with the fallout of the 2008 global economic crisis. Unemployment, immigration, structuring the post-Brexit EU, and climate change are some of the issues France must address with its historic resourcefulness—and characteristic flair.



# Belgium

## Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 11,780 square miles
- **Capital:** Brussels
- **Language:** Dutch, French, and German are the official languages.
- **Location:** Belgium is bordered by France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands
- **Geography:** Belgium is located on the western edge of continental Europe. It has about 40 miles of seacoast on the North Sea, at the Dover Strait. France is south of Belgium, the Netherlands is directly north. The country measures only 150 miles across from the sea to the Ardennes.
- **Population:** 11,323,973 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 75%, other 25%
- **Time Zone:** Belgium is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in New York, it is noon in Brussels. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

## National Holidays: Belgium

In addition to the holidays listed below, Belgium celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

07/21 Belgian National Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Armistice Day

12/25 Christmas Day

## Belgium: A Brief History

The modern state of Belgium was officially born in 1830, but its story begins long before that, and is inextricably entwined with those of its neighbors. It has been called the "crossroads of Europe" and the "battlefield of Europe." The Romans were the first organized invaders to experience it as both. Julius Caesar arrived here in 57 AD and made the unhappy acquaintance of the native tribes, whom he called "Belgae." The name stuck even longer than the Romans did, who remained in Gallica Belgica for 500 years.

Germanic Franks swept into the north in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, while the southern part of the region was overtaken by the Romanized Merovingians, who were Latin-based. This established the linguistic (and cultural) divide between the Germanic Dutch (Flemish) speakers of Flanders and the French speakers of Walloon that still exists today. During the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Vikings made frequent raids, prompting the fortification of many towns.

As the control of French kings and Holy Roman Emperors waned, Belgium was divided into feudal states. Coastal Flanders was the wealthiest, thanks to its burgeoning trade. In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, cities like Bruges, Ghent and Ypres became important cultural centers, dominated by a rich merchant class that gained increasing political power and challenged the local counts. But the nobles prevailed by calling in the French army to squelch any dissent.

The Dukes of Burgundy ruled for less than a century but had a profound impact. The Burgundian Duke Philip, the wealthiest man in Europe, built an elegant palace in Brussels, established a university in Leuven, and sponsored Flemish artists. He is known as the Conditor Belgii (founder of Belgium.) The Hapsburgs eventually took all Burgundian holdings. Their heir, Charles V, was born in Ghent and set up court in Brussels. But he abdicated in favor of his son, the Spanish King Philip II. Philip was widely unpopular, a fanatical Catholic who imposed harsh anti-Protestant edicts, and sent Spanish mercenaries to enforce them. When Protestants reacted violently in the 1566 Iconoclastic Fury, Philip doubled down by sending 10,000 troops under the Duke of Alba.

War continued for eighty years and by the end, the Netherlands won independence from Spain. But present-day Belgium remained part of Philip's Spanish Netherlands, and Protestants were expelled. Later, during the Wars of the Spanish Succession, the Spanish Netherlands were handed over to the Austrian Hapsburgs. Their reign (1713-94) was comparatively enlightened, and the region was allowed a fair amount of autonomy. The revolutionary French invaded in 1794, but French rule ended in 1815 when Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, near Brussels.

After this, the Congress of Vienna declared Belgium and Luxembourg as part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. King Willem I (of Orange-Nassau) divided his time between Brussels and The Hague, but he made enemies on the Belgian side when he tried to impose Dutch as the national language. Ironically, this also infuriated Flemish speakers, who saw their language as distinct from Dutch. The Belgians revolted during an opera performance in 1830. By 1831 it was over, and an independent Belgium declared Léopold of Saxe-Coburg Gotha King Léopold I of Belgium. He proved to be a competent ruler and helped Belgium prosper through the Industrial Revolution.

Léopold's heir, Léopold II, was committed to expanding upon his father's legacy. Through a series of shifty treaties, he personally acquired a bloc of Central Africa that was 70 times larger than Belgium. The "Congo Free State" was anything but free. Though Leopold paid lip service to abolishing the slave trade, his subjects in Congo were forced to work under abysmal conditions in rubber plantations. Almost half of the Congolese population died, directly or indirectly, due to Léopold's rule. Embarrassed by the world's condemnation, Belgium stripped Léopold of his property in 1908. But Congo remained a Belgian colony until 1960.

Belgium was a major World War I battleground. Germany invaded in 1914, despite Belgium's declaration of neutrality, and the Belgians put up a valiant defense led by their beloved King Albert. But Allied troops were bogged down in Belgian trenches for four horrific years. Thousands died and Belgium was stripped bare of its industrial infrastructure. The Germans returned during WWII in 1940 with a brutal air blitz. This time, the king, Léopold III, quickly surrendered. But the Belgian government objected and fled to London to operate in exile. Belgium had a strong but fragmented resistance. There was also significant collaboration from Belgian fascists, and from both militant Flemish and Walloon groups. Belgium was liberated in September, 1944, but fighting continued until January 1945 with the Battle of the Ardennes.

After the war the country was wracked with angst about Léopold III's wartime actions. Many believed him to be a collaborator and he remained in exile in Switzerland until 1950. In 1951, under pressure from Walloon socialists, he abdicated in favor of his son Baudouin I. Belgium struggled with reconstruction but emerged as a key international political player. In 1958 Brussels became the seat of the European Commission, and in 1967, the headquarters of NATO.

In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a huge public debt and high unemployment crippled the economy. Frustrated with 40 years of mismanagement, in 1999 the nation voted out the ruling Christian Democrat party and experimented with a new era of liberalism. Liberals, Socialists, and Green Party coalitions have led most governments since the turn of the century, but with increasing challenges from far right-wing groups (often with anti-immigrant platforms), Flemish separatists, and other nationalist parties.

## Netherlands

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 16,034 square miles
- **Capital:** Amsterdam
- **Language:** Dutch is the official language. A large percentage of the Dutch are also fluent in English and German.
- **Location:** Situated on the coast of the North Sea, the Netherlands borders Germany to the east and Belgium to the south.
- **Population:** 16,947,904 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 28%, Protestant 19%, other 11% (includes about 5% Muslim and lesser numbers of Hindu, Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness, and Orthodox), none 42%
- **Time zone:** The Netherlands is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST: when it's 6 am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Amsterdam.

## National Holidays: Netherlands

In addition to the holidays listed below, the Netherlands celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day  
04/27 King's Birthday  
05/05 Liberation Day  
12/25 Christmas Day  
12/26 Second Day of Christmas

## The Netherlands: A Brief History

Peaceful, tolerant, and prosperous, the Netherlands enjoys an enviable level of comfort and influence. But as its history proves, its success was hard won.

Germanic and Celtic tribes lived here by 750 BC, protected from invasion by the area's extensive wetlands. This changed in 57 BC, when Julius Caesar conquered the south, and established a military post in Nijmegen. Under the Romans, there was relative stability for 400 years. Franks came in the 5th century, bringing Christianity with them. By 800, the Emperor Charlemagne had a palace in Nijmegen. After his death, the Low Countries were split amongst various nobles.

With increasing attacks by Viking raiders, local rulers fortified their towns. These feudal lords also enlisted their subjects to fight against rival lords, and in return they granted certain rights that were set down in charters. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, many Dutch trade towns were enjoying limited self-government as communes. Many joined the Hanseatic League, and a strong merchant class grew. But their prosperity was threatened by constant wars.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the dukes of Burgundy rose to power, and generally dismissed the local charters. There were frequent rebellions but eventually, the communes grudgingly accepted the unity provided by the Burgundians. Shipbuilding thrived, and there was a brisk trade. The Dukes were patrons of the arts, and this ushered in the cultural flowering of the Northern Renaissance. In 1425, Jan van Eyck became the court painter of Duke Philip the Good. Italian financiers settled in the area, strengthening trade and cultural links with Italy, and commissioning artworks.

When the Hapsburgs inherited the Burgundian territories in 1482, their ruler, Charles V (born in Ghent), cherished the Low Countries and business went on as usual—until he abdicated in 1555 and gave the region to his son, Philip of Spain. The Reformation had taken hold in the Netherlands and Philip, a staunch Catholic, began a brutal Inquisition. Religious violence erupted, and Philip sent the Duke of Alba to slaughter thousands. This caused great resentment against Spanish rule, and a sense of Dutch nationalism arose, even among some Catholics.

What followed was an Eighty Years War for independence. But a hero emerged in Prince William of Orange, who went into exile; hired pirates to attack Spanish ships; and led a revolt. The first Dutch victory occurred when rebels drove the Spanish from Leiden in 1574 after a year-long siege. William's victorious forces distributed bread and herring to the starving residents—an event still celebrated today. In 1581, the Union of Utrecht proclaimed the "United Provinces" independent from Spain. In 1648, Spain finally recognized Dutch sovereignty.

Despite the wartime destruction, Amsterdam experienced tremendous growth, fueled by waves of immigrants. Trade expanded; intellectuals flocked to the city; and Dutch explorers charted new courses and established colonies around the world. In 1602, the Dutch East India Company became the world's first global corporation. By the mid-17th century, the republic was the biggest maritime power of Europe, and arguably the wealthiest and most scientifically advanced. Calvinism was the official religion, but other Protestants, Jews, and Catholics were allowed to worship. In a society dependent on trade, freedom and tolerance were essential.

The Golden Age began to tarnish as conflicts arose with Britain and France, and the United Provinces erupted into civil war in 1785. Enter Napoleon, who established the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1806. It passed in 1815 to Willem I (of Orange-Nassau), whose dynasty continues today. As nationalism swept 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, the Netherlands made constitutional reforms, beginning the liberal, modern state, and sustaining a slow but constant economic growth.

During World War I, the Netherlands remained neutral. They tried to do this again during World War II, but the Nazis leveled Rotterdam in 1940 and within days, the rest of the country fell. Queen Wilhelmina fled to England, and broadcast inspiring messages via the BCC and Radio Orange. But Dutch resistance was slow to rise in the face of a harsh occupation, the mass deportation of Dutch Jews, and pervasive collaboration. Towards the end of the war, resistance gained momentum as the Nazis forced thousands of Dutch men to work in German factories. As the Allies advanced, Dutch defiance grew. The "Hunger Winter" of 1944-45 was especially brutal, as the Nazis deliberately cut off food supplies, causing mass starvation. Many Dutch people had to eat tulip bulbs to survive. Canadian troops liberated the country in May, 1945.

The postwar years were times of material hardship and moral reckoning. As reconstruction got underway, 66,000 Dutch collaborators were tried in war trials. Many more never saw justice. To provide basic necessities, Prime Minister Willem Drees extended the welfare state. When the North Sea flooded in 1953, massive public works programs enabled the reclamation of 6,800 square miles of land, while providing jobs.

In the '60s, Dutch baby boomers came of age, demanding change. Social welfare programs reduced people's reliance on the "pillarization" that once kept them beholden to sectarian groups. New ideas about equality, the environment, religion, sex, and drugs gained credence. Ever pragmatic, Dutch authorities adopted a policy of tolerance for things that couldn't be enforced without causing more harm. Called *gedoogbeleid*, it persists to this day, but not without challenges.

Many immigrants arrived over the ensuing decades, often from Muslim countries, for family reunification, political asylum, and economic opportunity. After the assassination of two anti-immigrant/anti-Islamic Dutch figures—politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002, and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004—far-right populists have preyed on the anxieties of their countrymen to challenge multiculturalism. The elections of 2010 saw a shift when the coalition government included the far-right Freedom Party of Geert Wilders, who decries the "Islamicization" of the Netherlands and advocates against the EU. Mark Rutte, who has been Prime Minister since 2010, leads the centrist People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, or VVD.

# Denmark

## Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 16,640 square miles
- **Capital:** Copenhagen
- **Government:** Constitutional monarchy
- **Geography:** Denmark is the smallest of the Scandinavian countries (it's about half the size of Maine). The country occupies the Jutland peninsula, a lowland area, where the highest elevation is only 565 feet above sea level. But that doesn't mean that the country is entirely flat. Most of its terrain consists of folds, undulations, small, often steep hills, and long, low rises. There are also forests, rivers, lakes, and beaches, many of which are excellent for swimming, though the water may be too cold for some people.
- **Languages:** Danish, Faeroese, Greenlandic (an Inuit dialect), and a small German-speaking minority
- **Location:** Denmark consists of the peninsula of Jutland and a group of islands at the entrance to the Baltic Sea, between Sweden and Germany. The two largest islands are Sjaelland, site of Copenhagen, and Fyn. Denmark also has two self-governing dependencies—Greenland and the Faroe Islands.
- **Population:** 5,605,948 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Evangelical Lutheran 76%, Muslim 4%, other 16%
- **Time zone:** Denmark is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time is in effect in Denmark from the end of March until the end of September.

## National Holidays: Denmark

In addition to the holidays listed below, Denmark celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 May Day/Labor Day

05/05 Liberation Day

06/05 Constitution Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 2nd Christmas Day

## Denmark: A Brief History

About 10,000 years ago, the glacial ice sheets that covered northern Europe began to retreat, attracting huge herds of reindeer. These in turn attracted hunter-gatherers who arrived from southern and eastern Europe. As the climate further warmed, the reindeer migrated north, but the early Danes remained in this fertile land, establishing farming communities by 3000 BC.



By 1800 BC, these proto-Danes were trading weapons, jewelry, amber and furs with people as far away as Rome. They buried their dead in peat bogs and many of those bodies have been remarkably preserved. The first people identified as Danes came from Sweden around 500 AD. They had a written system of communication based on runes. (The symbol we now use for bluetooth devices is based on the runic signature of Harald Bluetooth, or Harald I, the Danish Viking who became king around 900 AD.)

The Viking Age began in 793 AD with the raid on Lindisfarne, an English island monastery. Sporadic raids had likely occurred before this, by Vikings from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. They were not unified and the Danish Vikings primarily raided northeastern England, which at the time was a collection of warring Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Danish Vikings had established a large settlement in Kent by 850 AD, and as more Danish colonists arrived, all of northeastern England fell under their control. The exception was Wessex, which reached an agreement with the Danes granting Wessex sovereignty, while the rest of the region was ruled as the Danelaw.

The Danish King Harald Bluetooth converted to Christianity in 965 AD, possibly to appease the Franks at Denmark's door. Harald forcibly established the new religion, and elevated the status of the Christian clergy. But Christianity did not bring peace. The Danes continued to fight to maintain and expand their territory, conquering parts of Germany and Estonia. After the Viking Age ended in 1066, Denmark's power declined. In 1397, the Union of Kalmar united Denmark, Sweden, and Norway under a single monarch, with Denmark as the dominant power.

Beginning in the 16th century, Denmark and Sweden began a lengthy rivalry. In 1658, Sweden took the Danish regions of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge, which are still Sweden's southernmost provinces. In the ensuing century, Denmark suffered more defeats: in 1814, it had to cede Norway to Sweden. But there were important domestic gains. . . . As 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe was swept by nationalist fervor and revolution, Denmark had already abolished serfdom and established universal public education. By the 1830s, social and agricultural reforms had boosted the economy; there was a peasant landowner class; and a free press. In 1849, a new constitution created a legislative democracy, ending the monarchy's previous absolute power.

Denmark remained neutral during World War I, and tried to do the same during World War II. It signed a non-aggression pact with the Third Reich. But Germany invaded in 1940, threatening to bomb Copenhagen. With only a small military, the Danish government yielded. The Nazis at first allowed the Danes some autonomy. But when it began pressuring officials to comply with anti-Semitic policies, the Danish government resigned in protest. The Nazis took over in earnest, and the resistance movement grew. Tipped off by a Nazi diplomat that Germany was about to deport Denmark's Jews to concentration camps, the Resistance and many citizens managed to evacuate 7,220 of Denmark's 7,800 Jews to safety in Sweden.

After Germany's defeat, Denmark joined the United Nations in 1945, and became a founding member of NATO in 1949. The latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw Denmark's emergence as a prosperous, stable social democracy with one of the world's highest standards of living. In 2000, Denmark voted by referendum not to adopt the euro. It is one of only 5 countries in the world that meets the UN goal for wealthy nations to provide 0.7% of its gross national income for international development assistance. In addition, Denmark has established Danida, Danish

Development Assistance, to fight poverty and improve education in developing countries. The current Prime Minister, Mette Fredericksen, is the second woman and youngest person (at 44) to hold that office. She is the leader of the center-left Socialist Democratic Party.

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### England

***A Traveller's History of England*** by Christopher Daniell (2005, History) An entertaining refresher course in English history, from hunter-gatherers to Margaret Thatcher's resignation. Written by a noted British historian and archaeologist

***London*** by Edward Rutherfurd (1998, Fiction) A very ambitious historical novel of London's past, which sweeps from Roman times through the medieval, Elizabethan, Victorian, and Edwardian eras on up to the present.

***All Creatures Great and Small*** by James Herriot (1998, Memoir) A heart-warming book, in which a veterinarian in Yorkshire shares amusing anecdotes about his dealings with animals and their owners.

***Bath*** by Edith Sitwell (1932, History) Sitwell, the famed Bloomsbury writer, provides a fine portrait of Beau Nash, the 18th-century "Master of Ceremonies" who put the city Bath on the Georgian social map. Insightful commentary on the fashions of the day, the development of the city, and the colorful array of politicians, peers, matchmakers, gamblers, artists and con artists who flocked here to "take the waters."

#### France

***The Seine: The River That Made Paris*** by Elaine Sciolino (2020, Nonfiction) Sciolino traces the history, route, and impact of the Seine River through the stories of its people—a riverbank bookseller, the Seine police, a houseboat owner, fishermen, and film directors, to name a few. She also includes a touching chapter on the 2019 Notre Dame fire, which was put out with water pumped from the river.

***A Brief History of France*** by Cecil Jenkins (2017, History) Exactly what the title promises: A compact overview of the history of France. Look for the 2017 edition, which was updated to include more recent events.

***The Miracle of Dunkirk: The True Story of Operation Dynamo*** by Walter Lord (2017, History) A well-written and comprehensive account of the British evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940 with the help of the French. The author has been praised for his ability to weave the personal stories of the survivors—who he interviewed in great depth—into the overall narrative of how events unfolded.

***My Life in France*** by Julia Child with Alex Prud'homme (2007, Memoir) Memoir of the famous chef's first, formative stay in France in 1949. Child describes herself as a "rather loud and unserious Californian," without a word of French. She enrolled at the Cordon Bleu and toiled

with increasing zeal and competence. With the bestselling *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, she revolutionized the American idea of cooking. This memoir recalls gorgeous meals in bygone Parisian restaurants, and reveals the personality and some of the secret arts of a culinary genius.

***Paris to the Moon*** by Adam Gopnik (2001, Travel Essays) A self-described “comic-sentimental essayist,” Gopnik spent the years from 1995 to 2000 in Paris writing the “Paris Journals” for the *New Yorker*. Collected here are his most charming, insightful, heartfelt, and humorous dispatches on the Parisian people, culture, food, economy, and lifestyle.

## Belgium

***The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women’s Movement*** by Laura Swan (2016, History) *Beguinaages* were medieval residences set up to house unmarried women, called *beguines*, who dedicated themselves to a communal life and service to the poor. *Beguines* often earned their own living working in local industries, and though not part of any religious order, they were often guided by spirituality. This book explores the phenomenon, which was especially prevalent in the Low Countries.

***War and Turpentine*** by Stefan Hertmans (2013, Biography/Memoir) An unusual hybrid book about an unusual life—one with a Dickensian childhood, service in World War I, a sad love story, and a passion for art. The author’s grandfather left behind several notebooks with his memories, which Hertmans reworked and edited as if his grandfather is telling his life story to the reader.

***The Lady and the Unicorn*** by Tracy Chevalier (2003, Historical Fiction) The author here does what she did for her novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring*: weaves together fact and fiction to reveal the lives behind a masterful work of art. In this case, it is the titular series of six allegorical and erotically charged tapestries that were created in Brussels, and now hang in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. Meticulously researched, it offers a vivid portait of life in the Low Countries (and France) circa 1500.

***The Factory of Facts*** by Luc Sante (1998, Memoir) Born in Belgium in 1954 and transplanted to New Jersey at age five, Sante reminisces about his upbringing in evocative passages about his national past and glimpses of his American experiences. The cumulative effect is a portrait not only of himself, but also of both his homelands.

***The Abyss*** by Marguerite Yourcenar (1968, Fiction) The alchemist Zeno of Bruges is on a quest for knowledge, one that faces many physical and philosophical detours as he roams 16<sup>th</sup>-century Flanders, and far beyond. Zeno encounters the religious upheavals of the Reformation and counter-Reformation, the Black Death, the military might of Ottoman Turkey, and the brilliance and treachery of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century’s greatest minds.

## Netherlands

***Lonely Graves*** by Britta Bolt (2012, Mystery) The first in a series, this mystery follows Pieter Posthumus of the “Lonely Funerals” team—the people who arrange funerals for the unknown—as he looks into the death of a Moroccan immigrant.

***Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age*** by Anne Goldgar (2007, History) The 17<sup>th</sup>-century speculation that caused a bubble (and a bust) of the Dutch tulip market is often presented a cautionary tale of capitalism gone wild. The author here debunks the hyperbole around this phenomena and instead explores how tulipmania reflected deep anxieties about the transformation of Dutch society during the Golden Age.

***Girl with a Pearl Earring*** by Tracy Chevalier (1999, Historical Fiction) This book—which was a worldwide best seller—imagines the story behind the famous Vermeer painting by the same name.

***Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*** by Geert Mak (1994, History) A Dutch journalist and native of Amsterdam offers a delightful survey of Amsterdam’s past and present, incorporating elements of politics, economics, and art history.

***The Diary of a Young Girl*** by Anne Frank (1947, Memoir) Arguably the most famous Holocaust book, this real diary shares the musings of Anne, a young Jewish girl who is hiding from the Nazis in an Amsterdam attic during World War II. If you’d like an adult’s perspective on Anne and her family, look for *Anne Frank: The Biography* by Melissa Muller.

## Denmark

***We, the Drowned*** by Carsten Jensen (2011, Fiction) An epic seafaring adventure that follows the inhabitants of the Danish town of Marstal from 1848 to World War II, when the men sail the world and the women who are left behind form a community. The book is long (600 plus pages) and deals frankly with war, violence, and cruelty. But it was a runaway international bestseller and lauded for its use of fantastical elements.

***Iceland’s Bell*** by Halldor Laxness (2003, Fiction) Nobel Laureate Halldor Laxness reinvents the traditional Icelandic saga and injects it with a modern sensibility and a satirical undercurrent that speaks to our age. The plot pits an impoverished Danish colony – Iceland in the 17th century – against the grand historical workings of Danish and Icelandic history. Three interconnected stories reveal the political and personal conflicts of the day in historical context.

***On Tycho’s Island: Tycho Brahe and his Assistants, 1570–1601*** by John Robert Christianson (1999, Biography/History) Chiefly famed as an astronomer, this book offers a fuller vision of Tycho Brahe as Renaissance man and scientist. From his private island in Denmark, Brahe assembled and manipulated the artists, nobility and the intelligentsia of the age to create breakthroughs in astronomy, science and research.

***Winter’s Tales*** and ***Seven Gothic Tales*** by Isak Dinesen (1934, Stories) Best known for *Out Of Africa*, her memoir of 20 years running and living on a coffee plantation in Africa, Karen Blixen (pen name, Isak Dinesen) also wrote short tales based in her homeland, Denmark. *Winter’s Tales* and *Seven Gothic Tales* are generally considered the high water marks of her shorter works.

***The Complete Fairy Tales*** by Hans Christian Andersen (1913, Folklore) There are several different anthologies of these fairy tales, written by Denmark’s famous poet, novelist, and writer of short stories. Considered a genius for his inventiveness and imagination, his works continue to captivate both children and adults.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### England

***All Is True*** (2019, Drama) After the Globe Theater is burned in a fire, William Shakespeare (Sir Kenneth Branagh) returns to Stratford-Upon-Avon and his stoic wife, Anne Hathaway (Dame Judi Dench). Fame is trailing him, as are the ghosts of his past, and the genius for wit and wordplay that he can no longer summon. Also starring Sir Ian McKellen.

***Atonement*** (2007, Drama) On the eve of World War II, a 13-year old girl irrevocably changes the lives of three people when she mistakenly accuses her sister's lover of a crime. The depiction of the manors and manners of the British gentry is at once searing and beautifully evocative. And the war scenes—notably the famous tracking shot on the beaches of Dunkirk—are harrowing. This Oscar winner stars Keira Knightley, James McAvoy and a young Saoirse Ronan.

***Gosford Park*** (2001, Drama) “Upstairs, Downstairs” meets Agatha Christie in this whodunit set in an English country estate in 1932. The powerhouse ensemble cast includes Helen Mirren, Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Kelly MacDonald and Clive Owen.

### British TV

***The Crown*** (2016, Historical Drama) A Netflix original drama following Queen Elizabeth II in the mid-20th century as she assumes the throne and the events that follow.

***The Great British Baking Show*** (2010, Reality Cooking Series) Sometimes known as *The Great British Bake Off*, this competition features 12 aspiring bakers from Britain as they take on challenges to create everything from traditional British treats to twists on the classics with their “showstopper” dishes before facing the judges.

***Prime Suspect*** (1991, Mystery) This gritty modern crime drama introduced Helen Mirren to wider audiences as the no-nonsense detective Jane Tennison. The show deals with some dark subject matter, such as crime and alcoholism.

### France

***Loving Vincent*** (2017, Biography) Van Gogh's paintings come to life in this remarkable, animated film created by 125 artists, who hand-painted each of the film's 65,000 frames in the style of Vincent Van Gogh. The plot follows the efforts of a postmaster's son to solve the mystery of van Gogh's life and death in Auvers-sur-Oise.

***Midnight in Paris*** (2011, Comedy) Screenwriter Gil Pender (Owen Wilson) escapes his romantic troubles by roaming the streets of Paris at night, where he is miraculously (and hilariously) transported back to 1920s Paris, where Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Salvador Dali, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the entire “Lost Generation” await him.



**Amelie** (2001, Romantic Comedy) This quirky gem tells the heartwarming story of a shy waitress in Paris who decides to change the lives of those around her for the better, while struggling with her own isolation. The award-winning film is a whimsical depiction of everyday life, sure to capture the hearts of its viewers time and time again.

**Chocolat** (2000, Drama/Comedy) In this warm and beautifully filmed romance, a lovely chocolatier (Juliet Binoche) falls in love with a handsome gypsy (Johnny Depp), disrupting life in a prim riverside village. Many scenes were filmed in the Dordogne region.

**Saving Private Ryan** (1998, Drama). Probably the best (and most riveting) depiction of the Normandy D-Day landings and their aftermath. It won Steven Spielberg an Oscar for Best Director.

## Belgium

**The Brand New Testament** (2015, Comedy) God is alive and living in a Brussels apartment, stomping around in his ratty bathrobe, tapping away at his outdated DOS computer, and gleefully inventing laws to frustrate humanity. (Dropped toast will always fall on the jam side. Whatever line you are in, the other will move faster.) His teenaged daughter Ea thinks Dad is doing a terrible job, so she hacks his computer, and leaks everyone's death date. People begin living their lives in unexpected and exhilarating ways. This religiously incorrect satire may offend some viewers, but others will appreciate its big-hearted message about freewill vs. determinism, and its uniquely Belgian irreverence.

**The Monuments Men** (2014, Drama) Based on the real-life Army platoon whose mission it was to find and rescue the vast cache of priceless art stolen by the Nazis. Here, George Clooney, Matt Damon, Jean DuJardin, Bill Murray, Cate Blanchett and friends are on the hunt for two Belgian masterpieces: *The Mystic Lamb* altar panels of Ghent by Jan Van Eyck, and Bruges' *Madonna and Child* by Michelangelo.

**In Bruges** (2008, Comedy) In this dark comedy, Irish hit men Ken and Ray seek shelter in Bruges, Belgium, after a job gone wrong in London. While in Bruges, Ken gains a new appreciation for life as he takes in the sights of the medieval city. Meanwhile, things start to change for Ray when he meets a woman named Chloe. Both attempt to carve a new life for themselves, but can't escape their past as they are obligated to take the next order from their boss.

**The Factory of Facts** by Luc Sante (1999, Memoir) Born in Belgium in 1954 and transplanted to New Jersey at age five, Sante reminisces about his upbringing in evocative passages. The effect is a portrait of himself and also of his natal homeland.

**Peace in the Fields** (1970, Drama) A French-language Belgian film directed by Jacques Boigelot, *Peace in the Fields* takes place around 1925, and revolves around the troubles of a middle-aged farmer whose mother has been accused of being a witch.

## Netherlands

***Black Book*** (2006, Thriller) A young Jewish woman becomes a spy for the WWII resistance in German-occupied Holland, leading a dangerous double life. Paul Verhoeven's drama shows how an ordinary person is capable of doing extraordinary things when it's a matter of life and death.

***Girl with a Pearl Earring*** (2003, Drama) Griet (Scarlett Johanssen), a mysterious teenage girl, leaves her home to become a servant in the household of painter Johannes Vermeer (Colin Firth). Her thoughtful attention to detail catches Vermeer's notice. But she is also caught between the suspicions of Vermeer's wife, the predatory lust of Vermeer's greatest patron, and the cruel gossip of the town. Griet risks her reputation, but gains a place in history as the subject of one of the Northern Renaissance's most enduring portraits.

***Rembrandt*** (1999, Docudrama) Klaus Maria Brandauer stars as the Dutch Master who changed the art world with his advances in painting, drafting, and printing.

***Antonia's Line*** (1996, Comedy/Drama) This Oscar-winner is a delightful feminist fable about a widowed, prodigal daughter who returns to her small Dutch town after World War II. The townsfolk cannot understand why she wants to live independently. But Antonia takes several quirky souls under her wing, and brings warmth and joy over several generations through her growing and inclusive matriarchal community.

***A Bridge Too Far*** (1977, Drama) This World War II epic is based on the book by Cornelius Ryan about Operation Market Garden, a daring but ultimately failed attempt to break through occupied Belgium and the Netherlands into Germany. Success depended on the capture of key bridges, but the mission was stopped at Arnhem. Whoever was your favorite 1970s male actor, he is likely in this all-star cast which includes Dirk Bogarde, Sean Connery, Michael Caine, Laurence Olivier, Robert Redford, Ryan O'Neal, James Caan, Anthony Hopkins, and more.

## Denmark

***The Danish Girl*** (2015, Drama) The Danish artist Einar Wegener (later known as Lili Elbe) was one of the first people to undergo sex reassignment surgery. This biopic depicts Elbe's early career and marriage to artist Gerda Gottlieb, and the Bohemian worlds of Copenhagen and Paris in the 20s and early 30s.

***A Royal Affair*** (2012, Historical Drama) The mentally ill King Christian VII comes to rely on his friend and physician, Johann Struensee (Mads Mikkelsen), a radical Enlightenment thinker from Germany. So, too, does the lonely Queen Caroline (Alicia Vikander), who begins a passionate affair with the doctor. The king learns of their liaison, but protects them, and makes Struensee a Royal Advisor who essentially rules in the king's name. But his reforms are cut short when plotting aristocrats use the affair and Struensee's foreign status to bring a tragic end to this true story.

***The Danish Solution*** (2003, Documentary) Filmmakers Karen Cantor and Camilla Kjaerulff, with Garrison Keillor narrating, reveal how the citizens of Denmark protected their Jewish population against Hitler's attempt to impose export his final solution into Denmark.

***Pele the Conqueror*** (1988, Drama) Directed by Billie August, this Danish–Swedish production won the 1989 Oscar for Best Foreign Film, and star Max von Sydow was nominated for Best Actor. It follows the early 19<sup>th</sup>–century widower Lasse, who emigrates with his 12–year old son Pelle to the Danish island of Bornholm in search of a better life. That is not what they find.

***Babette’s Feast*** (1988, Comedy) Set on the rugged coast of 19th century Denmark, this film is from a short story by Isak Dinesen. Two beautiful daughters grow up with a clergyman father, who preaches self–denial. After his death, the sisters uphold his inflexible practices until the arrival of a French refugee, Babette. She cooks and for them, and introduces them to the deep pleasure of a gourmet French meal. Winner of the 1987 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.

## Useful Websites

### Overseas Adventure Travel

[www.oattravel.com](http://www.oattravel.com)

### Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### Foreign Exchange Rates

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### ATM Locators

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### World Weather

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### Packing Tips

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### U.S. Customs & Border Protection

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### Transportation Security

#### Administration (TSA)

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### National Passport Information Center

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### Holidays Worldwide

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

### History & Culture

[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App, Skype, or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

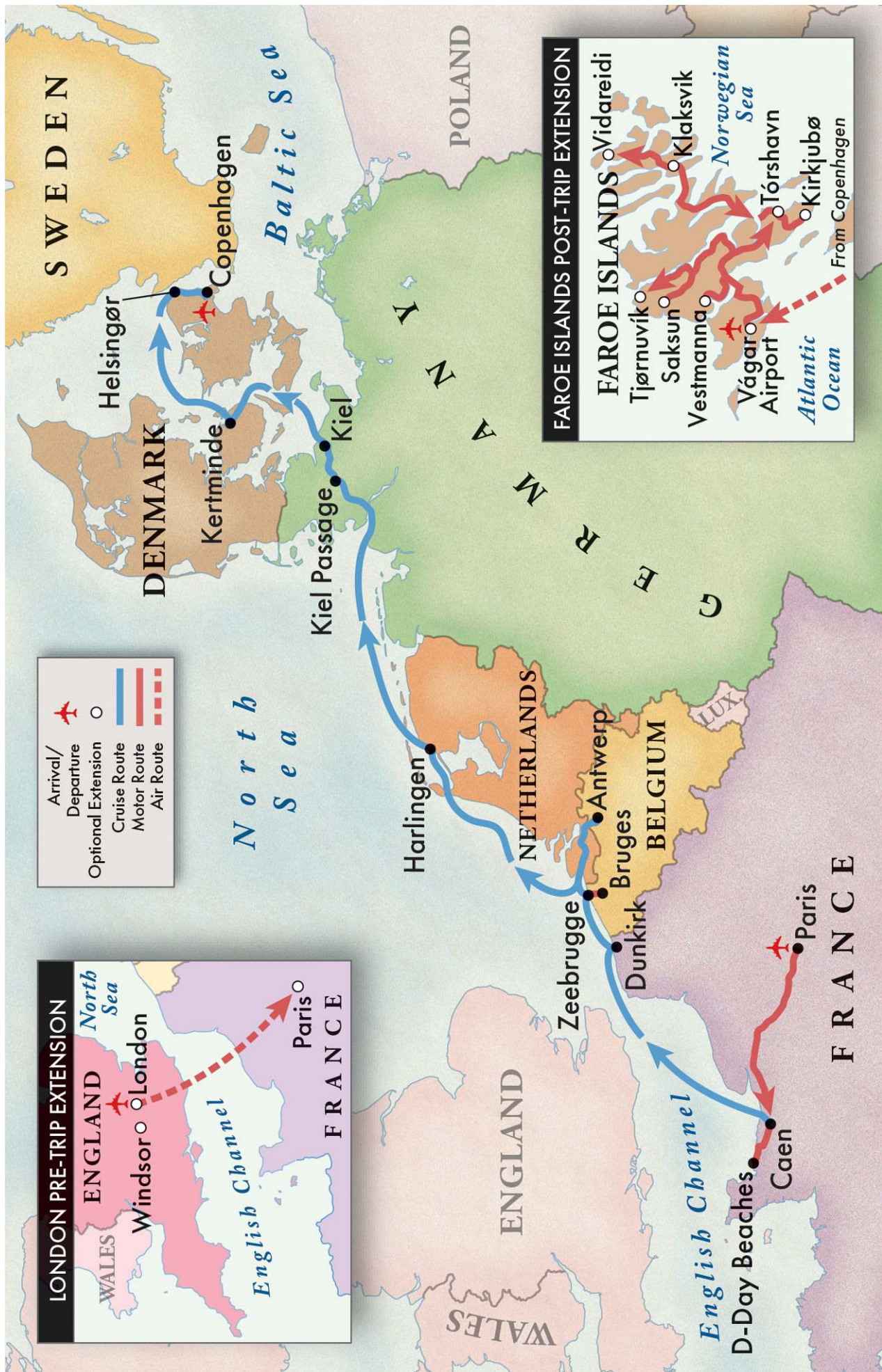
### **GeoSure**

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23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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