



Going on holiday with a lung condition

Everyone looks forward to going on holiday and getting away from the routine. If you're living with a lung condition, or looking after someone who is, it can take a bit more planning.

We've put together this information to make sure you have an enjoyable trip. It suggests things you might want to consider before you arrange a holiday in the UK or abroad. We also suggest issues you might want to talk to your health care professional about when you're thinking about going away, especially if you're thinking of flying or are on oxygen therapy. You can also find details of more resources that can help you.

The specialist nurses and advisers on our helpline are also dedicated to answering your questions.

Have a great holiday!

How do I know if I can travel?

Going on holiday in the UK does not usually present too many issues for anyone who has a lung condition. If you use oxygen, it is relatively easy to arrange for oxygen equipment to be delivered to any part of the UK. You will know yourself how you would cope with a long car journey to Cornwall or a coach trip to the Blackpool.

However travelling abroad can present some additional issues to consider, particularly if you are flying. And if you use oxygen, you will also need to plan ahead to ensure it's there when you need it.

Always speak to your doctor or health care professional to ask whether you are fit enough to travel as there may be some additional tests they want to carry out.

"We have had a fabulous holiday for nearly three weeks that has just been delightful. My husband has been well and has walked more during the holiday than he probably has all year." Tracey

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) provides useful guidance for planning a holiday. Visit www.abta.com/go-travel

Where can I holiday?

The world is your oyster. However, you should think about the following factors before you travel:

- **Climate:** many people with lung conditions prefer warm climates that have salty air such as by the Mediterranean sea. Lower oxygen levels at higher altitudes, such as in mountains, can make breathing difficulties worse.
- **Temperature:** extremes of hot and cold weather can affect your feelings of breathlessness and lead to a flare-up of your condition.
- **Terrain:** whether your destination is flat or on a hill, it could affect your ability to get around comfortably.
- **Transport availability:** the types of transport available at your destination.
- Whether you have **any special needs**, such as oxygen treatment or wheelchair access.

Holiday tips

- **Plan in advance:** if you leave things to the last minute, you could forget something crucial. Think about how far you can walk, how many stairs you can manage, access to toilets and what transport you can use.
- **Be realistic:** places you liked in the past may not be suitable now. Pick a trip you – and your carer – can cope with physically.
- **Shop around:** different insurance companies have different policies for people with lung conditions, so find the best deal for you. Many travel agents offer holidays for people with special requirements.
- **Ask questions:** travel firms are used to dealing with special requirements. They should be able to answer all of your queries and concerns. You can also ask other holidaymakers on many websites and our own web community at www.blf.org.uk/forum

Planning your holiday

Holidays in the UK

A holiday in the UK is generally much more straightforward than travelling abroad, particularly if you have never been to the country that you are planning to visit. The facilities in UK hotels, caravan parks and other destinations tend to be similar across the country, and you will be more aware of what to expect.

However, do remember to check things that are important for you when choosing your holiday accommodation in the UK. For example:

- If you have mobility problems, or get breathless: are there lifts or ramps that make the accommodation accessible?
- Is the accommodation easy to get to: is it on a bus route? Is it on a steep road? Does it have on-site parking?
- Is the accommodation suitable: is there a lift to the floor my room is on? Can I open the window in my room? Is there someone who will help with my luggage?
- If you use oxygen, will the accommodation supplier allow you to use oxygen? Don't assume that all will.

How do I choose my accommodation?

The National Accessible Scheme (NAS) allows tourism providers to promote the facilities they offer to disabled guests and older visitors. It rates accommodation by four mobility categories, plus an exceptional accolade:

- Category one – suitable for people able to climb a flight of stairs that have extra fittings to aid balance
- Category two – suitable for someone who needs a wheelchair some of the time but can manage a maximum of three steps
- Category three – suitable for people who depend on a wheelchair but who can transfer unaided from the wheelchair in a seated position
- Category four – suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair in a seated position but needs help from a carer or a mechanical hoist to transfer
- Access exceptional – meets the requirements of independent wheelchair users or assisted wheelchair users and also fulfils more demanding requirements

Each category has its own logo, which is displayed by accommodation providers that have been assessed. Further information about NAS can be found on Tourism for All's website:

www.tourismforall.org.uk

On page 12, there is a list of websites that may also help you to find suitable places to stay around the UK.

How do I get to my destination?

Coach

Several coach companies are working towards making their coaches accessible for people with disabilities.

Many National Express coaches now feature kneeling suspension, which makes boarding and alighting easier. Drivers and coach station staff will load and unload your luggage onto and from the coach, if items weigh less than 20kg. Most on-board toilet facilities are now level with the coach seating. If you give notice of your requirements when booking, you can get help with boarding and with folding wheelchairs.

Smaller coach companies may not have the facilities you require. Telephone them in advance and ask about boarding and alighting, the accessibility of on-board toilets and whether you will be able to take and use oxygen.

Trains

If you are thinking of travelling by train, get the leaflet *Rail travel made easy*, available from most staffed railway stations or online at **www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk**, or call National Rail Enquiries on **08457 48 49 50**. This tells you the minimum level of service you can expect throughout Britain's rail network.

Different train companies have different policies regarding people with disabilities, so plan your route in advance and find out which companies' trains you need. All companies offer assistance to customers if pre-booked. Visit www.disability-onboard.co.uk for details of train companies' passenger assistance service and how to book it. It also gives train travel tips, including detailed information about the layout and accessibility of every train station.

When you contact a train company, tell it where and when you want to travel; your disability; how you intend to get to and from the station; whether you are travelling alone or with a companion or group, and whether you need a wheelchair. If you do not know which company to contact, call National Rail Enquiries on **08457 48 49 50**.

A Disabled Persons' Railcard is valid for 12 months and offers up to one-third off a range of train tickets. You may be eligible and you can ask your local station for a form. Visit www.disabledpersonsrailcard.co.uk or call **08457 48 49 50** for more information.

Useful contacts

Disabled Persons' Railcard

08457 48 49 50

www.disabled-persons-railcard.co.uk

National Rail Enquiries

08457 48 49 50

Details of passenger assistance

www.disability-onboard.co.uk

Ferries

If you plan to visit one of Britain's islands or travel to or from Northern Ireland, you may go by ferry. Many ferry companies have lifts, toilets and wheelchair facilities and some can supply wheelchairs at terminals. A few have special cabins for disabled people or offer discounts. Check before and when you book, especially if you need oxygen. Don't forget to ask for extra assistance from the crew before you travel.

Camping and caravanning

If you're planning to go camping or caravanning, check access arrangements to sites and if you can park next to your tent or caravan. The Camping and Caravanning Club has three stages of accessibility. These are:

- no accessible facilities
- accessible to those who can move around a little but not wheelchair accessible
- fully accessible including shower blocks and facilities

A list of accessible campsites in the UK can be found at www.lovecamping.co.uk or call **0845 527 3362**.

A list of companies that sell adapted motorhomes or that can make adaptations to vehicles can be found at www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

Holidays abroad

Many people with a lung condition think they cannot travel abroad, but this is not true. As in the UK, packages differ, so shop around. Always check with your doctor or health care professional to make sure you are well enough to travel before deciding where to go, and always check and plan your arrangements in advance.

How do I get there?

Ferries

Many ferry companies have lifts, toilets and other facilities accessible to people with disabilities. They can also give priority loading and special parking spaces to vehicles with disabled passengers.

Trains

Eurostar trains have been designed to cater for passengers with special requirements. Some coaches have wheelchair access and allow oxygen containers on board. If you are travelling further afield in Europe, contact the relevant European train company for its policy on travelling with oxygen.

Car

Check whether your insurance company requires a green card – a document that makes it easier for vehicles to move freely across foreign borders.

In the UK, Blue Badges allow drivers or passengers with severe mobility problems to park close to where they need to go. Blue Badges are recognised across the European Union, so you can take advantage of parking concessions each country provides. Find out more at

www.gov.uk/where-registered-disabled-drivers-can-park

Margaret's advice: "Don't give up. Get on the phone and talk!"

"Margaret enjoys cruising around the world. Over the years, she's seen the Canaries, the West Indies and the Mediterranean from the deck of a cruise ship. Margaret has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and uses ambulatory oxygen. Taking her mobility scooter helps her explore places like Venice, Dubrovnik and Agadir.

Early in 2014, Margaret was diagnosed with lung cancer. After radiotherapy treatment, she was cleared to travel by her chest consultant and oncologist, and a note was made in her records.

When she booked a cruise to Norway and Iceland, she called the insurer recommended by the cruise company. She was turned down. But Margaret persisted, and the company asked a different broker: "They then quoted me £2,797.27. I love the 27p! After hoots of laughter I approached an insurer recommended by my oncologist. They gave me cover for a fraction of that price."

The insurance covered Margaret and her husband. It made provision for him to stay with her if she became ill and needed to go to hospital anywhere during her holiday.

Margaret recommends that you persist and ask to speak to a manager about your personal circumstances when finding insurance. She's used to being turned down initially, but always gets a good deal in the end."

Flying with a lung condition

Your lung condition does not necessarily prevent you from flying. Discuss your travel plans involving flying with your doctor. Most people with a lung condition, even if they use oxygen, can travel on planes. If you use oxygen therapy, you should ask your doctor if you might need additional oxygen on the plane. You may need to have a fitness to fly test to assess your oxygen need at altitude before you fly.

Once your doctor has given you the go-ahead, contact individual airlines to discuss your requirements and find out their policy about carrying and using oxygen on planes.

The European Lung Foundation provides information about the oxygen policies of over 100 airlines at **www.europeanlung.org/en/lung-disease-and-information/air-travel/airline-index**

If you are planning a long-haul flight and use a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine to treat the sleep disorder obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA), you should consider whether you might need to use your machine during the flight. Some airlines have restrictions on what machines are permitted for use on board. Others may require you to fill in a form before you travel.

Many airlines have a medical officer or dedicated unit for disabled passengers or those with special medical requirements. Contact the airline before you book to discuss your needs.

When you contact the airline, find out what assistance is available at the airport as well as on the plane. Important things to know include:

- the airline's policy on carrying and using oxygen and medical devices such as CPAP machines
- if the flight is code-sharing. This is when a flight has one airline's code and flight number, but is operated by another one. You will need to check with each airline involved about their own oxygen policy
- the exact length of the flight, and whether delays are likely
- how you confirm your fitness to fly
- the facilities available at the outgoing and incoming airports. These might include assistance to get you from the airport lounge to the departure gate and onto the plane; the use of wheelchairs, and whether oxygen is available at the airport

You can find out about facilities at UK airports at **www.airportguides.co.uk**

Information about facilities at airports outside the UK can be found at **www.azworldairports.com**

"The airline was brilliant when we went to Tenerife last month. I was allowed to ride my scooter all the way to the plane. Then they loaded it on, and when we arrived they got it out of the hold for me to ride through the airport." A member of our web community

Practicalities

Insurance

You should arrange full travel insurance for yourself before going on holiday abroad. If you are travelling with a friend or family member, check they are fully covered too. By taking out travel insurance you can avoid huge medical bills if you are taken ill or if you have an emergency during your trip. Look into the cost of this well in advance as you may find it's too expensive or you may need to find a specialist provider.

Make sure your insurance policy covers all of your medical conditions. If you don't declare relevant medical information to your insurance firm, your policy may not be valid, leaving you facing a huge medical bill if you are taken ill while on holiday. The price of an emergency air ambulance from the US east coast could cost up to £45,000 for example.

When you're travelling, keep your travel insurance documents in a safe place, such as your hand luggage. On reaching your accommodation, put them in a secure place like the hotel safe.

The European Health Insurance card (EHIC) entitles you to reduced cost – sometimes free – medical treatment if you fall ill when travelling in the European Union. Keep it with you at all times. With your EHIC, you should be able to get the same treatment as a resident of the country you're visiting. In some countries you may have to pay a patient contribution, also known as a co-payment. Since 1 July 2014, you can no longer be reimbursed for co-payments once you get back to the UK.

The EHIC is not a replacement for travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs, such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. So you should take out full travel insurance before travelling outside the UK. Some insurers now insist that you hold an EHIC, and many will waive the excess if you have one.

You can apply for the EHIC free of charge by applying online at **www.ehic.org.uk**. Beware of other websites which may charge if you apply through them.

You can also apply by post by downloading a form from **www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card#otherways-to-apply**, or by phoning **0300 330 1350**.

The European Commission has produced a new app that is a portable guide on how to use the EHIC at **ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559**

Contact our helpline on **03000 030 555** for advice on where to find suitable travel insurance

Medication

Give yourself plenty of time to organise medication for the duration of your trip. You may need to ask for extra to cover potential delays or emergencies. If you have a rescue pack or emergency antibiotics, take them away with you too. If you take prescription medication, you should discuss your trip with your GP or practice nurse at least two months before you plan to travel. Your GP may write you a repeat prescription if your medication is due to end during your holiday. For extended trips, a maximum three months' supply can be prescribed if you have a stable long-term condition.

Take a list of your medication and doses with you, and remember to carry your medication in your hand luggage when you are travelling. A doctor's letter is required if you take liquid medicines exceeding 100 millilitres into an aircraft's cabin.

If you're travelling outside the EU, check with your GP whether your medication can be obtained at your destination and whether there are any restrictions on your medication in your destination country. Alternatively, contact the British embassy in the country you are visiting. You can find details at www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations or by calling **0845 850 2829**.

You will need a letter from your doctor confirming that you need the medication, and you should also keep a list of all the medication you take in case you need to get more during your stay. List the proper names – not just the brand names – and keep all medication in its original packaging. You should also keep a written record with you of any other medical condition you have.

If you are given medication abroad, check whether it can be brought back into the UK. If you are in any doubt, declare the medication at customs.

Holidaying with oxygen

In the UK

Oxygen for travel in the UK is supplied by the NHS. If you rely on oxygen, you can arrange oxygen for travelling within the UK to be provided by the NHS through your oxygen provider. You will need to let your usual oxygen provider know the details of your holiday, including the dates you are going and returning, and where you will be staying. They will arrange everything for you.

You should aim to give as much notice of your needs as you can - if possible, six weeks. This is most important during busy times like Easter as last minute arrangements can be difficult. However, two weeks' notice is often enough at less busy times of year. Oxygen suppliers in the UK will only provide oxygen for travel and stays within the UK.

You should ensure that the owner of the accommodation where you plan to stay is happy to have oxygen equipment and cylinders there, and get their permission to store it.

"We arrived at our holiday destination in Cornwall to find that I was fully kitted out to attack those steep hills that surround Polperro bay. With this lot I was ready for just about anything Cornwall could throw at me and I wasn't alone. I met another oxygen breather while walking around the harbour and we had a bit of a chat as you do." Anthony

If you are planning to travel by plane, it is important to check your airline's oxygen policy. The European Lung Foundation has details of the oxygen policies of over 100 airlines at www.europeanlung.org/en/lung-disease-and-information/air-travel/airline-index

Abroad

If you need oxygen for use throughout your holiday, you will need to make arrangements for the oxygen to be provided at your destination before you travel. Your home supplier will not be able to provide oxygen for you if you are travelling overseas.

If you are holidaying in Europe, oxygen can be arranged through the European Health Insurance card (EHIC) scheme. You will need a valid EHIC, and you will have to use the authorised oxygen company for the country you are travelling to. For more details, visit www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/countryguide. Our helpline on **03000 030 555** can also help.

"I went on a great holiday in Alcudia, Majorca. I was able to organise wheelchair assistance at both airports, oxygen on the flight, liquid oxygen delivered to and collected from my hotel through the EHIC system, and hire a wheelchair, which was delivered and collected from my hotel. Even though we have serious illness some things are still possible." Brian

If you are travelling outside Europe, you will need to contact an oxygen company that supplies the country you will be visiting. To find an oxygen provider you could ask your UK supplier or contact the British embassy in the country you are travelling to. Details are at www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations or call **0845 850 2829**. Our helpline on **03000 030 555** can also help you.

Some travellers have found that hiring a portable oxygen concentrator in the UK to take abroad is an alternative to arranging oxygen supplies for the majority of their holiday.

You need to consider arranging a back-up supply of oxygen for emergencies. If you are travelling by plane, bear in mind that airlines have different policies for using and carrying oxygen and medical devices such as portable oxygen concentrators on board. Always check with the airline you are travelling with before you book.

Contact our helpline on **03000 030 555** for advice on where to find companies that may be able to provide oxygen for your holiday. There are also tips in our information on oxygen therapy available online at www.blf.org.uk/oxygen or from our shop at www.blf.org.uk/shop

What if I get a chest infection or fall ill abroad?

- Any chest infection should be completely treated before you fly home. You should have medical approval before flying home.
- Check what your medical insurance covers.

Preparation

Preparation is the key. Plan your trip in advance, think through everything you need, ask as many questions as you can of as many people as possible, then decide what is best for you. Always tell a friend or relative where you are and when you expect to return. It's useful to make a list before you travel and check it off as you go. A checklist is included in this booklet to help you.

Our web community is a very useful source of information about other people's experiences. Visit www.blf.org.uk/forum

Peter plans carefully

Despite living in Torbay, Peter, 77, is always looking to get away. He relies on oxygen therapy 24/7 for his idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) but he is always planning his next trip.

"You've got to remain positive and find ways round things," Peter says. He's just back from four weeks in New Zealand and has a trip planned next winter to travel through southern Africa, including visiting Victoria Falls.

He's also explored the Arctic, seeing polar bears on the ice; cruised through the Panama canal during a trip to Costa Rica, and travelled through Latin America. "I always have something to look forward to," says Peter. Most immediately, it's a trip down the Rhine to enjoy the wine and the music.

Peter advises careful planning. He takes a battery-powered scooter with him, as he can't walk too far, and has several pieces of equipment to ensure a constant oxygen supply. His tips are to keep all your batteries charged in case of delays and to always choose a seat on a plane with access to a plug. Keep a full set of plug adapters with you too.

He says flights take the most thought. "There's no standard procedure across airlines," he advises, "so watch out for code-sharing on a long haul flight." On his way to Australia, his airline changed at Dubai. Peter ended up talking to the pilot to be allowed on the flight after other, airport, staff were less helpful, despite Peter having a complete set of paperwork.

Checklist

Planning your holiday properly will help to make it a happy and relaxing time, and should help you to avoid any hidden costs. This checklist will help you make sure you've got everything covered.

Tick or cross the box against each point.

Before you book

- Check with your GP or health care professional that you are well enough to travel
- Is your preferred destination suitable for you? Think about terrain, access and the cost of travel insurance
- Research travel insurance costs. Remember to tell your travel insurer about all your pre-existing medical conditions
- If you plan to travel by coach or ferry, check if on-board facilities are accessible
- If you plan to fly, find out what the airline needs to confirm your fitness to fly

If you need oxygen

- Ask your supplier how you could get it while you're away
- If you plan to fly, check the policy of the airline you plan to use
- Take your oxygen alert card with you

Before you travel

- Plan your route from door to door. Think about how far you will have to walk unaided, how many stops you might have to make and what disabled access is like at your destination.
- The AA and RAC both offer free online route-planning services
- Make sure you will have enough of your regular medication to see you through your trip, including extra to cover any delays
- Arrange emergency antibiotics, if you might need them
- Make a list of the medication you take, including emergency antibiotics, in case you need more during your holiday or need to show a doctor if you're taken ill
- Send your travel provider any fitness to travel documents they have asked for
- Book any travel assistance you might need, such as help getting through the airport or boarding a train
- Consider any allergies you have. If you are allergic to feathers, ask your accommodation provider if hypoallergenic bedding is available

During your holiday

- When you arrive, locate the nearest medical facility and check its opening times
- Carry with you several copies of your list of medication, your medical letters and your European Health Insurance card, if you're in Europe. Keep your travel insurance documents and, if abroad, your passport in a safe place
- Carry with you a list of emergency contact numbers, including your GP's number
- If you start to feel unwell, seek medical advice quickly.
- If you're abroad, check if medication you are given is allowed back into the UK

Useful contacts

Tourism For All

A national registered charity providing information about accommodation and tourism services for older people and people with disabilities

c/o Vitalise, Shap Road Industrial Estate, Shap Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 6NZ

0303 303 0146

www.tourismforall.org.uk

These websites may help you to find suitable accommodation around the UK:

Visit England:

www.visitengland.com/plan-your-visit/access-all#

Visit Scotland:

www.visitscotland.com/accommodation/accessible

Visit Wales:

www.visitwales.com/explore/accessible-wales

Discover Northern Ireland:

www.accessibleireland.com

P&O Ferries

08716 64 21 21

www.poferries.com

Brittany Ferries

0871 244 0744

www.brittany-ferries.co.uk

Channel Tunnel

Eurostar

08432 186 186

www.eurostar.com

Euro Tunnel

08705 35 35 35

www.eurotunnel.com

National Express

08717 818178

www.nationalexpress.com

National Rail Enquiries

08457 48 49 50

www.nationalrail.co.uk

Disability Onboard

A website offering details of passenger assistance on trains: www.disability-onboard.co.uk

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

Information for air travellers
www.caa.co.uk

The European Health Insurance card (EHIC)

www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card
www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC

GOV.UK

The latest travel advice by country, your rights at the airport and getting help abroad
www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad



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We value feedback on our information. To let us know your views, and for the most up to date version of this information and references, call the helpline or visit www.blf.org.uk

