



Going on holiday with a lung condition

How and where

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

How do I know if I can travel?

Travelling with a lung condition in the UK doesn't usually present too many issues. If you use oxygen, it is relatively easy to arrange for your oxygen provider to deliver your oxygen equipment to any part of the UK. You will also know how you would cope with a long car journey to Cornwall or a coach trip to Blackpool.

But travelling abroad can present some additional challenges to consider, particularly if you're flying. And if you use oxygen, you will also need to plan ahead to make sure it's there when you need it.

Before planning a trip, 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.

Where can I holiday?

The world is your oyster. But think about things like:

- **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, 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.

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) has useful guidance for planning a holiday. Have a look at: www.abta.com/tips-and-latest/travel-tips

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, how accessible the toilets will be 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 agencies 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. Visit the online community at blf.org.uk/web-community Our friendly helpline team are also a great source of information. Give them a call on **03000 030 555**.

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.

But do 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?
- 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. Find out which category best describes you:

- **Older and less mobile guests:** suitable if you are able to climb a flight of stairs but banisters or grip handles would make this easier
- **Part-time wheelchair access:** suitable if you who need a wheelchair some of the time but can manage a maximum of three steps
- **Independent wheelchair users:** suitable if you depend on a wheelchair but can transfer unaided from the wheelchair in a seated position
- **Assisted wheelchair user:** suitable if you depends on the use of a wheelchair in a seated position but need 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 the NAS can be found at www.openbritain.net.

Find out more information on accessible places to stay around the UK at www.openbritain.net/places-to-go/.

If you are a member of Tourism for All you can get personalised advice on accessible travelling in the UK and abroad. They charge an annual £25 membership fee. Read more about them at www.tourismforall.org.uk/.

How do I get to my destination?

Coach

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

Almost all National Express coaches now feature a passenger lift which makes getting on and off board easier. Drivers and coach station staff will load and offload your luggage to and from the coach, if items weigh less than 20kg. Most on-board toilet facilities are now level with the coach seating. If you need help during your trip or need a wheelchair space on the coach, call National Express at least 36 hours before your journey to arrange it.

Translink, the public transport provider in Northern Ireland, operates coaches that are usually wheelchair friendly. Look at their access guide at www.translink.co.uk/Documents/footers/accessibility/Access-documents-2016/Access%20Guide.pdf for more information on their services for people with disabilities or call their contact centre on **028 9066 6630** to arrange assistance.

Smaller coach companies may not have the facilities you require. Phone them in advance and ask about getting on and off board, the accessibility of on-board toilets and if you can take and use oxygen on board.

Trains

If you're thinking of travelling by train, get the leaflet *Rail travel made easy*, available from most staffed railway stations or online. This tells you the minimum level of service you can expect throughout Britain's rail network. You can also call National Rail Enquiries on **03457 48 49 50** for more information.

Translink operates trains within Northern Ireland. If you need assistance when using their services, call their contact centre on **028 9066 6630** 24 hours before you travel so they can arrange assistance for you.

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 them 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 03457 48 49 50.

A Disabled Persons' Railcard is valid for 12 months and offers up to one third off a range of train tickets. If you are travelling with another adult, they will also be eligible for this discount. You can apply online or pick up an application form from your local station. Visit www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk or call **03457 48 49 50** for more information.

Useful contacts

Disabled Persons' Railcard

03457 48 49 50

www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

National Rail Enquiries

03457 48 49 50

www.nationalrail.co.uk

Translink contact centre

028 9066 6630

www.translink.co.uk

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 help from the crew before you travel.

Camping and caravanning

If you're planning to go camping or caravanning, check access arrangements to sites. The Camping and Caravanning Club has three accessibility categories:

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

Have a look at accessible campsites in the UK at www.lovecamping.co.uk/campsites/filter_disabled or call **0845 527 3362**.

There's also a list of companies that sell adapted motorhomes or that can make adaptations to vehicles. Find out more at: www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/helpandadvice/technicalhelp/mobility-camping/

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 of 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 the parking concessions each country provides. Find out more at www.gov.uk/where-registered-disabled-drivers-can-park.

Flying with a lung condition

Your lung condition doesn't 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 are planning a long-haul flight and use a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine to treat the sleep disorder, obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA), think if 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.

If you use an electric mobility aid such as an electric wheelchair or a scooter, contact the airline in advance to let them know. Also check if your airline has any restrictions relating to equipment – this can vary between airlines.

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 help 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, including portable oxygen concentrators, and medical devices such as CPAP machines
- the exact length of the flight, and if 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 on to the plane; the use of wheelchairs, and whether oxygen is available at the airport

Find more information about:

- facilities at UK airports at www.caa.co.uk/Passengers/PRM/Special-assistance-guidance-from-airports-and-airlines/
- facilities at airports outside the UK at www.azworldairports.com/cfm/homepage.cfm

Insurance

You should arrange full travel insurance for yourself before going on holiday abroad. If you're 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 your medical conditions. You need to have the right insurance for your individual circumstances – there is no one insurance provider that is the appropriate choice for every individual with a lung condition. 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. For example, it could cost £25,000 if you had a moped accident in Greece, and needed surgery and repatriation to the UK.

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.

European Health Insurance card

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 go back to the UK.

The EHIC is **not** a replacement for travel insurance. It won't cover any private medical health care 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. 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 online. Beware of other websites which may charge if you apply through them. To find out more, visit: www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic.aspx.

You can also apply by post by downloading and filling in a form, or by phoning **0300 330 1350**.

The European Commission has also produced an app that is a portable guide on how to use the EHIC. Download it here: www.ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559

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

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, take this 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. Discuss with your GP whether you need emergency antibiotics.

Take a list of your medication and doses with you, and remember to carry your medication in your hand luggage when you're 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. If you take certain medication you may need to carry a letter from your doctor when you travel. Alternatively, contact the British Embassy in the country you're visiting for further information. You can find details at gov.uk/government/world/organisations or by calling **020 7008 1500**.

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. Also remember to take your repeat prescription with you in case of emergencies such as your medication getting lost. 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

Before you book a holiday, discuss your health needs with your respiratory specialist or GP.

In the UK

You can arrange oxygen for travelling within the UK through your oxygen provider. You will need to tell them your holiday details, including the dates and where you will stay.

Give as much notice as you can - if possible - six weeks. This is most important during busy times like Easter. But two weeks' notice is often enough at less busy times of year.

Make sure 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.

Flying

If you plan to fly, you may need a fitness-to-fly test to confirm your need for in-flight oxygen.

You may not normally need oxygen but may need it while flying due to the higher altitude. You may also need it if you go to an area at a higher altitude than you're used to. You can test if you need oxygen at higher altitudes during the fitness-to-fly test. Your GP can help you to complete this test.

Airlines have their own rules about supplying oxygen and some charge to provide oxygen in-flight. Check with your airline before you book. Also check whether 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 European Lung Foundation maintains a database of dozens of airline oxygen policies for passengers.

Travelling abroad

If you need oxygen on your holiday, you'll need to arrange oxygen at your destination before you travel. UK companies generally don't allow their equipment to be taken outside the UK. Your respiratory specialist or oxygen supplier can give you details of oxygen providers abroad. You'll need to organise and pay for this yourself.

You can buy or hire portable concentrators but make sure you have a spare battery pack or back-up cylinder. And remember your international plug adapters. Keep one in your hand luggage and carry a spare!

If you are going to Europe, you can arrange oxygen 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.

Useful contacts

Tourism For All

www.tourismforall.org.uk/

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

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/

Ferries

P&O Ferries

www.poferries.com/en/portal

0800 130 0030

Brittany Ferries

www.brittany-ferries.co.uk/
0330 159 5015

Channel Tunnel

Eurostar

www.eurostar.com/uk-en
03432 186 186

Euro Tunnel

www.eurotunnel.com/uk/
08443 35 35 35

Coach and train

National Express

www.nationalexpress.com
0371 781 8181

National Rail Enquiries

www.nationalrail.co.uk/
03457 48 49 50

Flying

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

www.caa.co.uk/home/

GOV.UK

The latest travel advice by country, your rights at the airport and getting help abroad

Get in touch with us to find support near you.

Helpline: 03000 030 555

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Ringing our helpline never costs more than a local call and is usually free, even from a mobile.

helpline@blf.org.uk

blf.org.uk

British Lung Foundation

73-75 Goswell Road
London EC1V 7ER

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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 **blf.org.uk**



Holiday checklist



Our helpful checklist will ensure that you are fully prepared for an enjoyable holiday.

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