



# Western Europe

The following information must be viewed as a guide only. It is not intended, nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice.

Specific recommendations on vaccinations, antimalarial medications & targeted travel health advice is always provided on an individual basis taking into account:

- the personal health of the traveller including past medical & vaccination history;
- intended activities;
- precise itinerary;
- style of travel;
- type of accommodation;
- time of year;
- altitude; &
- length of stay.

As well, some vaccines are very much influenced by local disease risk. Future travel plans can also be taken into account because of the long term protection afforded by some vaccines. Specific face-to-face advice is particularly important when recommending antimalarial medications & those for presumptive treatment eg for travellers diarrhoea.

We strongly recommend travellers seek an appointment with a doctor trained in travel health prior to departure.

Medical & nursing staff at The Travel Doctor-TMVC are trained in international public health issues with a focus on immunisations & preventive medicine. Many have travelled extensively & a number have worked in less developed areas of the world for extended periods. Travellers should undergo individual risk assessments whether they are short term holiday makers, business people or the long term expatriate worker. The Travel Doctor-TMVC has clinics Australia wide. In Australia the local centre may be contacted on 1300 658 844, or by visiting [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au). It is recommended that you visit

a travel health professional 6-8 weeks prior to departure. However, if that time frame is not possible, remember – “It’s never too late to vaccinate”.

## Healthy Travelling in Western Europe

Western Europe has always been a popular travel destination with Australian travellers. Many travellers to this region do not seek travel health advice, but inadequate preparation can adversely affect the enjoyment of your holiday or productivity of your business trip. Even in developed countries almost 50% of traveller’s will report an illness during their trip.

Diarrhoeal illness is quite common around the Mediterranean countries, & outbreaks of waterborne illness are not infrequent. Hepatitis A is becoming less common, but still represents some risk to travellers. Influenza is a problem across Europe in winter months & tick-borne disease occurs through the summer months in rural areas of central & Northern Europe. Rabies does occur in several countries, & insects can transmit leishmaniasis in the dry areas of the south.

Healthy travellers have the most fun! Pre-travel preparation will help protect your health while you are away. To assist you in recognising & understanding some of the major travel health risks you may face while holidaying in Western Europe, The Travel Doctor-TMVC has prepared a summary of some of these issues in the following pages.

**Table 1** provides a brief description of some of the major travel health issues & vaccinations that should be considered for travel to Western Europe.

**Table 2** provides a summary of these major travel health issues & preventative measures that should be considered.

We hope you find this information useful in preparing for your trip. Remember it is advisable to consult a travel health specialist prior to departure.

**Table 1. Major Travel Health Issues & Considerations for Western Europe**

Hepatitis B	This is a viral disease of the liver that is transmitted via blood, blood products or bodily fluids. It is vaccine preventable. Hepatitis B immunisation is now part of the childhood immunisation schedule. Many adult travellers have missed this very important immunisation & travel may be a good reason for vaccination.
Tetanus, Pertussis & Diphtheria	Tetanus is caused by a toxin released by a common dust or soil bacteria, which enters the body through a wound. Diphtheria is a bacterial infection of the throat & occasionally of the skin. It is found world wide & is transmitted from person-to-person by coughing & sneezing. Pertussis (Whooping cough) is a highly infectious respiratory infection responsible for 300,000 deaths annually, mainly in children. Diphtheria & pertussis vaccines can be added to the tetanus vaccine. Because many adults no longer have immunity from childhood immunisation it is advised that travellers have a booster if they haven’t been vaccinated in the previous 10 years.
Measles, Mumps & Rubella	Childhood immunisation coverage to measles in parts of Europe is disappointing. As such, travellers whose birth date is after 1966 should check they have had 2 doses of measles vaccine. Since 1990 this may have been as the combination vaccine MMR (measles, mumps & rubella). Those born prior to 1966 are most likely to have long term immunity from previous exposure as a child.
Chickenpox	This very common infectious disease can now be prevented through immunisation. Many people miss the disease in childhood only to have a significant illness as an adult. Travel puts one at higher exposure & if one cannot elicit a history of having had the illness a test can show whether at risk.
Influenza	Individuals intending to travel out of an Australian winter might consider the current flu vaccine at the beginning of the season. Exposure to illness in airports & commuter transport is common & exposure may ruin a much needed break. In fact, influenza is likely to be the most common vaccine preventable disease faced by travellers.



Meningitis	Meningitis is an inflammation of the membrane overlaying the brain. It can be caused by bacteria, a virus or a fungus. Bacterial meningitis is the form of most concern to travellers. It is a serious disease & can rapidly become life threatening. It is transmitted from person-to-person through close contact (ie droplet infection – the same way you catch a cold). Vaccination for type C meningitis might be considered for those backpacking or staying in crowded hostel style accommodation. This vaccine was offered to all Australians aged less than 19 years in 2003, but some young travellers may not have been vaccinated.
Rabies	Rabies is a deadly viral infection of the brain transmitted to humans. The disease itself is rare in travellers, but the risk increases with extended travel & the likelihood of animal contact. The best way to avoid rabies is to avoid all contact with animals. In Europe the main vectors are wild life (including foxes & bats). Pre-exposure vaccination is recommended for extended travel & those who work with, or are likely to come in contact with animals.
Tick- borne Encephalitis (TBE)	Travellers who walk through infected area during tick season (spring to early autumn) may warrant vaccination. Insect repellents & appropriate clothing will also provide some protection. The vaccine is not licensed in Australia, but can be obtained through the Special Access Scheme for those at high risk. Alternatively vaccination is readily available in Europe for those spending an extended period in the continent.
Traveller's Diarrhoea	Up to 40% of tourists may develop 3 or more loose bowel motions a day within the first week of travel. A variety of germs can be responsible for this infection & a traveller's medical kit containing appropriate therapy can rapidly improve the symptoms.

**Table 2: Summary of travel health issues for Western Europe & preventative options available**

	Vaccine Available	Healthy Eating & Drinking	Insect Avoidance	Animal Avoidance
Hepatitis B	✓			
Tetanus, Pertussis & Diphtheria	✓			
Measles, Mumps & Rubella	✓			
Chickenpox	✓			
Influenza	✓			
Meningitis	✓			
Rabies	✓			✓
Tick- borne Encephalitis (TBE)	✓		✓	
Traveller's Diarrhoea	+/-	✓		

+/- The new oral cholera vaccine has been shown to provide limited protection against some forms of traveller's diarrhoea. You should discuss this with your travel health specialist  
 ✓ indicates preventative considerations

A **travellers' medical kit** is recommended for travellers through Western Europe. These kits range in complexity, although a 'Tour Kit' is generally appropriate for low risk destinations such as Western Europe. Travel Doctor-TMVC tour kits contain a broad spectrum antibiotic for the treatment of common respiratory or skin infections, as well as a variety of other medications for ailments such as motion sickness, diarrhoea, sore throats. It also contains a few first aid items. An International Health Guide is also provided for all our clients. This guide also acts as a medical authority for the carrying of prescription medications for personal use.

**Yellow Fever** vaccination may be required for all travellers arriving from or transiting through Yellow Fever infected areas, such as Africa or the Americas.


Remember to check the DFAT 'Smartraveller' website [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) prior to departure



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Clinics Australia Wide. To find your nearest clinic call **1300 658 844** or visit [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au)