

Postcards from Brussels FAQs

What is Postcards from Brussels?

Postcards to Brussels is an international wide game. Participants will complete a series of activities around the city. Each activity is designated a number of points and given on completion of evidence. Which group can gain the most points and be top of the leaderboard by the end of the game? The event will be small challenges you can complete in your group. We can't reveal exactly what you'll be doing, but it's sure to be an amazing day!

When is it taking place?

The game will take place on Saturday 21 February 2026 from 10am – 3pm (approximate timings). This is the middle weekend of the school half terms.

How much does it cost?

Tickets cost £20 per person. Adult volunteers and young members are charged the same amount. This will cover all activities on the day and, of course, the event badge. It does NOT include meals, your transport, accommodation, or travel insurance.

Tickets will be on sale until 28 February 2025 unless they sell out. If they do sell out, we will work to increase capacity where possible. If we are close to selling out, we will be sure to communicate this on social media.

Who can take part?

This event is open to Guides, Rangers, young leaders, Inspire, adult members, and Trefoil Guild members. Preference is given to members of Girlguiding North East England, however it may be possible for members of other Girlguiding countries and regions to take part if space allows. We will update this section when tickets open to other countries and regions.

Can we attend as an adult only group?

Yes, adult-only groups such as Inspire and Trefoil are able to participate. If you are attending as an adult only group, the process you follow is slightly different. More information is available on the [Girlguiding website](#) and, while this is aimed at 18-30 residential events, we would recommend all adult groups [follow this process](#).

What is the code of conduct for adults on an international trip?

Every adult on a Girlguiding international trip must comply with all applicable UK laws and guidance, and the law of the country you are visiting, as per the [volunteer code of conduct](#). This is regardless of whether you are in uniform or not, and you should remember that you are representing Girlguiding North East England and you must not do anything which would reflect poorly on the organisation.

In addition, the [residential guidance](#) makes it clear that all adults must remain capable of dealing with an emergency or first aid incident at all times.

You can find out more about the [travel advice](#) on the Government website.

Is there a maximum group size?

No, however, it's our experience that taking part in the game itself is easier in groups of no more than 10. If you intend to travel in a larger group, you should be sure you will have appropriate adult to young member ratios to break into smaller groups for the game.

What qualifications do I need to take part?

As this is an international event, at least one adult volunteer per group will need to hold their going away with licence and the travelling abroad module AND have this recorded on GO. If you do not have this, you can still take part, provided an adult volunteer in your group is working towards their going away with travelling abroad module – they should have already completed the relevant modules of their going away with qualification for 'home' residentials. More information on what this involves is available [on the Girlguiding website](#).

If you want to start working on this qualification, get in touch with your county international adviser (or county team if you don't have a local adviser) for support as quickly as you can. Each group taking part will need to ensure they have appropriately qualified adult members who hold a safe space, first response, and have their DBS. You must ensure all qualifications are current and recorded on GO. You will also need to ensure you meet the adult/young member ratio appropriate to your section.

What forms will I need to complete?

As this is an international trip, you will need to complete the [international residential event notification \(REN\) form](#). This comes in three sections – permission to plan, part 1, and part 2. The permission to plan should be submitted as early as possible, so **submit your permission to plan form now** – it does not tie you into running the trip and you can always withdraw if you decide not to go ahead with the trip!

Forms should be submitted on GO. These will be checked by the region international adviser and sent to the region chief commissioner for final approval. Currently ALL parts of the international REN must be submitted for approval by the region international adviser and the region chief commissioner.

Please email international@girlguidingnortheast.org.uk to confirm submission on GO. This will ensure forms are seen and dealt with promptly.

As part of the international REN process, you will need to produce and submit a [risk assessment](#). You should start thinking about this as soon as you can and there's an international [risk assessment checklist](#) you can download to help you plan your trip. Your county international adviser will be able to support you with completing the international REN and developing your risk assessment before you submit it for final checks and approval.

You will need to collect the [usual consent and health forms](#) for young members. Please ensure that the **International** versions of the forms are completed as these are different to those for UK events and include parental consent for travel outside the UK in the Information & Consent form. Please note the original of this document with a 'wet' signature is required to be carried on the trip in case required at Immigration – a copy completed digitally is not sufficient.

Adult members are also encouraged to complete a health form and hand it in a sealed envelope to your group first aider, in case the information is required.

You will be responsible for arranging your own insurance, travel, risk assessments, home contact, lunches, snacks and other activities during the weekend. That sounds like a lot, but it will allow you to gain your international module.

For more support for leaders wishing to take young members away look in the other sections of the FAQs for links to relevant parts of the Girlguiding website, talk to your local international commissioner or county team, or get in touch with other leaders who have their international module for advice, hints and tips!

How do we budget for the trip and justify the cost to parents?

There's no getting round it – international trips are expensive. However, it's important to look at ways of managing this cost to help make it accessible to everyone.

- Be up front with parents about the expenses involved so they know why the trip costs as much as it does.
- Make sure parents are aware of whether you will be doing any fundraising to help bring the cost of the trip down, and what support you will need from them to achieve this.
- Have a clear payment plan and try to spread the cost as much as possible.
- Remember that you might need more money for the initial deposit to cover the cost of booking travel.
- Factor in termly subs and any other unit payments needed so that there's only one payment for parents to make each month to try and make it more manageable.
- Keep parents informed on how the budget is looking, costs incurred so far, and how fundraising efforts are going.
- Have clear terms and conditions so everyone knows what happens if someone wants to pull out, such as losing any payments made so far. There is guidance on the Girlguiding website on [setting expectations](#) and writing terms and conditions for your trip.

There is advice on the Girlguiding website on how to [manage finances for overseas trips](#).

Can we fundraise for the trip?

Yes, in fact we recommend that you do as this will help make the trip more accessible to everyone in your group!

There is lots of advice in the [fundraising toolkit](#) on the Girlguiding website, but here are a few reminders:

- Even if businesses and organisations in your local area can't support your group with a cash donation, they may be able to provide other help, such as items for raffles and venues for fundraisers.
- Make sure you get parents on board to help with fundraising – the more they help, the more it brings down the cost of the trip for them.
- Keep sharing updates on how the fundraising is going so that everyone can see the benefits of what they're doing.

- Read the [fundraising policy](#) before you start and the fundraising regulator [code of practice](#) to make sure that any fundraising you do is legal, open, honest and respectful.

Are there any grants we can apply for?

The [travelling abroad grant](#) is for adult leaders working on the travelling abroad module of the going away with scheme. You can apply for a grant of £100 towards your travel and accommodation. A £200 grant is available if you're meeting Guides from another country or doing a community project.

The [Leslie Sell Charitable Trust](#) is an independent trust fund which makes small grants to groups to help with the cost of making repairs, purchasing sundry items of equipment, or going on trips in the UK or overseas. Please note, they are unable to consider applications for trips submitted within four months of the proposed departure or event date due to processing times.

It is worth checking if there are any trusts or grants available in your local area that might support your trip in some way, such as those dedicated to towns or counties, or even those related to local windfarms.

There is guidance on the Girlguiding website about applying for [grants from trusts and foundations](#).

How do we get to Brussels?

Booking travel for your group is your responsibility, and there is advice on what to consider on the [managing finances for overseas trips](#) page of the Girlguiding website.

One sustainable way to travel to Brussels is by ferry. You can enjoy onboard facilities and entertainment. There is a route from Hull to Rotterdam and then trains available to Brussels. Travel by train is straightforward and uses up to 80% less CO2 emissions than flying. Eurostar offers high speed trains that depart St Pancras International Station with multiple daily trains direct from London to Brussels. It takes just over 2 hours to get from city centre to city centre. There are no extra charges for luggage or limits on liquids. The cost of the journey depends on the time of day you travel, with later journeys in the day cheaper.

Alternatively, most airports offer budget airlines with regular daily flights to Brussels. KLM fly from both Leeds Bradford and Newcastle but you have to go via Schipol. Ryanair fly from Manchester direct to Brussels Charleroi airport, an hour south by public transport to Brussels. It's important to take into account the cost of luggage with budget flights - every airline has its own rules on the weight and size of luggage with some airlines being more generous than super strict airlines (like Ryanair). The cheaper the flight, the more taking luggage tends to cost, so work out the whole cost of your flights including seats and taxing before booking. The airlines all have very clear websites which tell you all their rules and regulations.

How to get from Brussels airport to the city centre by train

The train system is directly connected to Brussels airport, which will conveniently bring you straight to the city centre.

Brussels is very well connected by train to many other European cities. You may wish to extend your adventure by starting or finishing in a neighbouring country.

Do we need passports?

Yes, all those travelling out of the UK require a Passport to enter Belgium (or whichever country is your first entry point into the EU). Exact entry requirements can be found on the Government's [Foreign Travel Advice webpage](#).

It is likely that, by the time groups are travelling in February 2026, the European Entry/Exit System (EES) will be in place for non-European nationals crossing an external European border. This involves fingerprint scanning and a photo of your face being taken at passport control. These images will be stored by EES along with personal details obtained from an individual's passport. You can find out more on the [European Union website](#).

At departure, UK and EU passport holders exit via the same channels. You exit these gates one at a time, therefore we suggest one adult goes at the front of your group and one at the end, to ensure all young members exit safely.

If you have group members with passports not issued by the UK or an EU member state, it is your responsibility to check if there are any additional entry requirements for them.

While it is possible to get group passports, [Girlguiding advises](#) that you use individual passports as it means that individuals can travel separately to the group if necessary.

How do we travel responsibly to help the environment?

There are lots of ways to travel responsibly and reduce your impact on the environment – it's not all just avoiding planes!

If taking a ferry or train isn't suitable, some airlines will give you an option to pay a little extra to offset the carbon emissions from your flight. Packing light helps with fuel economy, as well as avoiding excess baggage fees. You can try prioritising accommodation that supports green initiatives and make sure you don't have your towels replaced every day. Take a refillable water bottle with you and give solid bars of shampoo and soap a go to avoid single use plastics. Ask your group if they have any ideas on how to make your trip more sustainable and check out the [hints and tips](#) on the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) website.

Will we need to be able to speak another language?

There are three official languages in Brussels. French, Dutch and a small amount of German. You might want to learn some basic phrases so you can say hello, good morning, excuse me, thank you, and do you speak English, for example, so that you can be polite to anyone you meet. There are translation apps available which can translate images if you're trying to read a menu, for example, or that can say the phrase you entered in the target language, and it might be worth having one available just in case. [Google Translate](#) and [DeepL](#) are both free and might be an option in a pinch!

Do we need a different currency?

Yes! Brussels uses euros as their currency, so make sure that members of your group have either euros in cash or have checked their individual bank for overseas spending.

You may wish to consider using banking apps such as Monzo or Revolut, which enable you to convert sterling into euros and pay using a smartphone app. Many of these accounts also issue payment cards, which might be easier to pass among the leadership team if it's a unit account rather than a personal account. Often these cards will not charge you bank fees for overseas transactions, unlike many credit or debit cards, so it's worth doing some research on the options available and weighing up the pros and cons.

Contactless and card payments are used widely across Brussels and appear to be the preferred option by most shops and businesses. However, a few outlets may only take cash, so it is worth having a small supply of euros available. When paying by card or contactless and given the choice, it is usually best to pay in euros rather than pounds as this can save you money. There is some advice on prepaid cards and bank charges under [managing finances for overseas trips](#), and more on prepaid cards in the [finance policy](#) on the Girlguiding website.

Do we need insurance?

Yes – you must purchase suitable travel insurance for this trip. As we are not licensed brokers, Girlguiding North East England is not permitted to recommend policies and you will have to research the most appropriate policy for your group and your needs. You must purchase insurance before arranging travel or booking accommodation. The Girlguiding website has some advice on what to think about when looking for [travel insurance](#).

Global health insurance cards (GHIC) are not an alternative to travel insurance but are a useful addition to travel documents. They allow an individual to receive necessary state healthcare in an EU country on the same basis as a resident of the country. There may or may not be a payment required. Cards are free and you should apply for the card through the [NHS website](#).

Where do we stay?

Booking accommodation for your group is your responsibility.

You will need to think about the specific needs of your group, such as whether you have particular accessibility requirements, and your likely budget. As with travel, the sooner you are able to book accommodation, the better. To make it as easy as possible to take part in the game, you should focus your search on Brussels city centre and try to identify accommodation with good local transport links.

The best budget option for accommodation in Brussels is hostels.

Hostels:

<https://www.hostelworld.com/st/hostels/europe/belgium/brussels>

Campsites:

<https://www.camping.info/en/popular-region/brussels>

<https://www.ukcampsite.co.uk/sites/townlisting.asp?town=Brussels&county=belgium>

There is the option to book Airbnb accommodation. This offers you more privacy and the ability to cook meals for yourself but is generally more expensive.

If you are struggling to find suitable accommodation for your budget in Brussels and are willing to travel on the day of the game, it might be worth looking at the surrounding area. Often public

transport links are much better than they would be in the UK and a little extra on a travel pass that works slightly further out of the city, plus a 30-minute train ride might save you much more on accommodation costs.

A tourist tax applies in Brussels and the surrounding area. This is usually clearly included during bookings, but you should remember to factor that into your budgets. The rate for this year is 12.5% but this may increase for 2026.

What is tourist tax?

Brussels charges a tax to help support the extra spending needed to keep the city clean and safe, and to maintain the infrastructure. A tax is taken on all accommodation whether it's hotels, hostels or campsites. The rate for 2024 is 4 euro per person per night. Accommodation owners are free to either include tourist taxes into their advertised prices or charge them separately. You will need to remember to factor it into your budget and the potential for the rate to increase in 2026.

How do we get around Brussels?

There are several modes of public transport to get around the city such as buses, trams, trains for longer distances and the Metro which is similar to London underground and overground services.

Many of the game's activities and challenges will be in the centre of Brussels within walking distance of each other, so you won't need to rely completely on public transport. Brussels is a famously flat city, so hills are generally not something to worry about although a lot of steps can be covered in one day. Some of the activities will be further afield, so using public transport options is encouraged to enjoy the full extent of the game, as well as the beautiful city and outskirts of Brussels.

Please note, trains in Belgium are split into first and second class. You **must** sit in the appropriate area as you risk a fine otherwise.

Finally, remember they drive on the other side of the road in Belgium, so when crossing the road, you must ensure you have checked right, left, and right again.

What will the weather be like?

The weather in Brussels in February will be cool with temperatures reaching a daytime high of approximately 10 degrees but it can be as cold as 4 degrees at night. It tends to be a rainy month. This means you should be prepared for all eventualities. Layering is a good idea!

Will there be an event badge?

Of course, everyone taking part in the Postcards to Brussels event will receive a special badge! We respectfully ask that you do **not** copy this design for any event clothing you may order.

Uniform/event clothing

We would really like as many participants as possible to wear official Girlguiding uniform on the day in Brussels.

If you want to purchase special clothing for this event such as hoodies and t-shirts, this is up to you.

If you are using the Girlguiding trefoil on any clothing you order, you must check the design with the Girlguiding branding team to make sure you have followed all the [branding guidelines](#). We respectfully ask you do **not** copy the Postcards to Brussels logo or badge design for any event clothing you may order.

Can I volunteer at the event?

If we need helpers for small tasks, we'll ask for it on the day/week before? Please let us know if you'd be available to offer support on the day to the volunteering team. This shouldn't impact your involvement to the game and you should still have the appropriate ratio of adults to young people.

Terms and conditions

Please read our terms and conditions for this event:

- **Cancellation by Participant** – Cancellation must be made via email or in writing to the Girlguiding North East England office. No refunds are payable on cancellation by the Participant unless the place can be filled.
- **Cancellation by Girlguiding North East England** – Girlguiding North East England reserves the right to modify or cancel the event if unforeseen circumstances arise. In the event of cancellation being made by Girlguiding North East England a full refund of the event fee paid to Girlguiding North East England will be made to participants.
- **This event is open only to current members of the Guide section upwards** – unfortunately Rainbows and Brownies are unable to attend.
- **The £20 ticket price is for the Postcards to Brussels game only.** Ticket holders are responsible for arranging their own travel, accommodation, insurance, meals, etc.
- **If you reallocate any of your tickets to another group,** you must let sharron.little@girlguidingnortheast.org.uk know so that the numbers held at Girlguiding North East England can be updated. This is so that we can make up packs with the right number of badges, etc. and if you have not informed us then Girlguiding North East England cannot be held responsible for groups receiving the wrong number of items.
- **The Covid-19 situation will be monitored closely** to ensure the right balance between the running of the event and the current situation, and the event may be cancelled at short notice. Please be aware that Girlguiding North East England are unable to cover financial losses for equipment, transport, etc.