

Everything You Need to Know About London (almost)



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Background Knowledge

Quick Facts

Place Names

Using the proper place names is important in the UK and Ireland. These distinctions are very important to the people living there; calling a Scotsman “English” is a mistake that will not be appreciated.

“Britain” refers to the island that contains Scotland, England, and Wales.

“The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”— usually just “the United Kingdom” or “the UK” — is the island of Britain, plus Northern Ireland. “Great Britain” refers to the same political body.

Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are all part of the United Kingdom, and can therefore be referred to as British, but not English.

“The Republic of Ireland” refers to the independent nation that occupies the southern portion of the Irish island.

“The British Isles” include the islands of Britain and Ireland.

Vocabulary

British English is slightly different than American English. It is not all “loos” and “lorries”, so be aware that what you say might mean something a little different, or the word might not even exist in British English. You might have to explain yourself a little more.

Common words/phrases:

Bap – bun/roll for sandwiches

Bathroom –lavatory, toilet, loo, water closet (signs are often marked “WC”)

Biscuit – cookies; there are both sweet and savory biscuits

Bloke – a guy

Rhymes with....

London place names can be a bit intimidating to say for the uninitiated. Here are some hints to help you out:

-Gloucester Road: [Gloss-ster Road]

-Leicester Square: [Lester Square]

-River Thames: [Tehmz] often: ‘The Thames’; never: ‘Thames River’

-Warwick Road: [Wor-ik Road]

-Grosvenor Square: [Grove-na Square]

-Berkley Square: [Bark-lee Square]

Cash point – ATM

Cheers – can be used to mean “thanks”, often used after transactions in shops

Chips – french fries (American “potato chips” are “crisps” in England)

Chuffed – happy or delighted

Doddle – something that’s easy

Dodgy – dubious person or thing

Fag – cigarette

Flat – apartment

Jammy – lucky

Jumper – sweater

Naff – unfashionable or in poor taste

Pants – underwear (what Americans would call “pants” English call “trousers”)

Quid – a pound (£) in currency

Skint – broke, no money

Telly – television

Trainers – tennis shoes/athletic shoes/sneakers

Currency

Unlike the majority of the European Union, the United Kingdom has not adopted the Euro and retains the British Pound as its currency.

As of December 12, 2014:

*One UK pound is worth \$1.57

*One US dollar is worth £0.64

*One Euro is worth \$1.25

*One US dollar is worth € 0.80

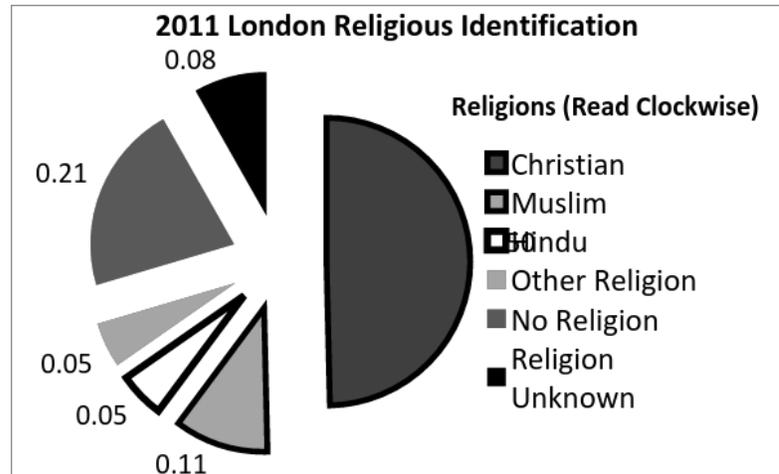
*One UK pound is worth € 1.26

*One Euro is worth £0.79

Exchange rates have been rather unstable as of late and they may change considerably between now and when you arrive in London (and even while you are there). Check websites like www.xe.com or www.x-rates.com for current rates.

Religion

Britain is not a particularly religious nation. If pressed, most people will admit to being “C of E” (Church of England), but reserve the right to do nothing about it. The Church of England was created in the fifteenth century when Henry VIII broke ties with the Roman Catholic Church because he wanted to divorce his wife. For most Brits, religious affiliation is regarded as an intensely private matter and evangelizing is most definitely frowned upon.



London itself is a very international and diverse city, however, and boasts of many religions including Sikhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and different denominations of Christianity. This chart shows religious identification of Londoners from the 2011 census data compiled by the UK’s Office for National Statistics (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html>).

Measurements

The UK, like the US, uses some metric measurements and some imperial. For example:

Temperature: centigrade
Speed and distance: miles
Weight: stone

Additionally, clothing and shoe sizes are different in the UK – for example, an American size 8 is a British size 7.

Conversions

1 kilogram = 2.2 lbs
1 stone = 14 pounds
1 liter = 2.113 pints
1 meter = 3.28 feet (or 1.09 yards)
Miles = kilometers x .62
Kilometers = miles x 1.61
Celsius = (Fahrenheit – 32)/ 1.8
Fahrenheit = (Celsius x 1.8) +32

Weather

Although London is thought of as a wet city, it is one of the drier European cities. It has very few sunny days compared to Appleton. Many of the days that rain, it drizzles or mists rather than outright pours. It is twice as sunny April through September as it is in dead of winter in December and January. October through January are the months with the most average precipitation.



Here is a website that has many graphs of monthly averages of things such as temperature, precipitation, rainy days, and sunshine hours: <http://www.weather-and-climate.com/>.

Additional Recreation References



Time Out: London (www.timeout.com/london)

The Original London Walks (www.walks.com)

Ticketmaster (www.ticketmaster.co.uk)

London Town (www.londontown.com)

Budget Britain (www.budgetbritain.com)

Londonist (www.londonist.com/)

ENJOYING AND EXPLORING LONDON

Samuel Johnson said, “When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.” London offers unlimited cultural events, historical sites, restaurants, galleries, and museums. Indeed, the best facet of London is its incredible diversity. Be sure to

Above all else, make the most of your time abroad and the endless, varied opportunities London offers.

visit the main tourist attractions, see main stage plays, and shop at famous stores. But do not miss out on discovering the rest of London, finding a deeper meaning in the city, and making your understanding of London unique. Spend time strolling through quieter neighborhoods, back street shops,

and the many parks on sunny days. Many of London’s true delights exist beyond the tourist realm and with ten weeks’ time, you have the chance to go beyond the basics and **become a Londoner**.

Theatre

Undoubtedly, the variety, number, and low price of theatre productions are some of the city’s greatest assets. Two premier theatre companies in London are that of the National Theatre (which performs on the Thames’ South Bank near Waterloo) and the Royal Shakespeare Company. In addition to these state-supported groups, there are dozens of other plays ranging from musicals to more experimental productions available at any given time. Many major theatres are loosely clustered around Piccadilly, Trafalgar Square, Covent Garden, and Shaftesbury Avenue; this area is collectively known as the West End. Smaller and more experimental theatres are known as Fringe theatres and are located throughout London. Seasonally, Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in Southwark, stages several productions per week and is a unique London experience.

To **find out** what plays are showing and how to get to the theatres, pick up a copy of *Time Out* or the Official London Theatre Guide (both are published weekly). *Time Out* is available from any newsstand and online; this publication also contains brief reviews for each listing. The Theatre Guide is available in the lobby of any West End theatre. The Student Services office at Foundation House also has plenty of information on entertainments in London.

There are several ways to **save money** on theatre tickets. First, always check if the theatre offers student rates (called concessions), standby seats, returns, etc. There is also a number listed in the Official Guide that you can call to find out if certain theatres are offering discounted seats on a particular day. Matinee performances are often less expensive than evening shows and often have more seats available. Almost all theatres offer some sort of bargain price unless the show is sold out. There is also a half-price theatre booth in Leicester Square which opens at noon and sells a number of same-days seats to a limited number of shows. The main drawback to this scheme, aside from waiting in long lines, is that you have no

control over which seats you buy and may end up paying more (even at half price) than you intended to spend. Try not to buy tickets from an agent, as these enterprises often charge a high commission.

Ballet and Opera

The main venue for opera and ballet is the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, home of both the Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera. Tickets, compared to theatre tickets, can be expensive, but student discounts are almost always available, as well as reduced same-day prices for unsold seats. Call the theatre for details. The English National Opera is located in the Coliseum Theatre, off of Trafalgar Square, and offers quality performances (always sung in English) often at *much* lower cost than at Covent Garden.

The ballet and opera productions in many foreign cities are often inexpensive and of very high quality and should not be overlooked as a potential highlight of a trip to another city or country.

Music

Once again, *Time Out* offers the best listings. Some of the major venues for classical performances are the Barbican Centre, the South Bank Centre, the Royal Albert Hall, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and the Wigmore Hall. These concert halls all offer reduced prices for students and for same-day performances. Even the worst seats allow you to hear everything.

There are many ways to enjoy **classical** music for free. The South Bank Centre and other venues in London offer free music series in lobbies and common areas. Many London churches, notably St. Paul's Cathedral (in the City of London) and St. Martin's-in-the-Fields (in Trafalgar Square), offer free lunchtime concerts. Sung services (called Evensong) are a tradition of English churches and are offered on a regular basis at most churches (St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Southwark Cathedral are a few of many worth attending). Check *Time Out* for special performances. Other notable venues include:

- Barbican Hall (Tube: Barbican)
- Burgh House (Tube: Hampstead)
- English National Opera – London Coliseum (Tube: Leicester Square or Charing Cross)
- Royal Albert Hall (Tube: South Kensington)
- Royal Opera House (Tube: Covent Garden)
- South Bank Centre (Tube: Waterloo)
- St. James' Church (Tube: Waterloo)
- Wigmore Hall (Tube: Bond Street)

Jazz clubs are numerous in London. The entrance fees range from free to rather pricey. Reduced rates are often available for students at certain shows. Check *Time Out* for listings. Many pubs and restaurants also offer free jazz nights which are advertised locally or in *Time Out*. Some venues include:

- 100 Club (Tube: Tottenham Court Road)
- 606 Club (Tube: Earl's Court then 31 bus, walk south)
- Bull's Head (Tube: Hammersmith)
- Jazz Café (Tube: Camden Town)
- Ronnie Scott's (Tube: Piccadilly Circus)
- Tufnell Park Tavern (Tube: Tufnell Park)

London is also home to a large and flourishing **rock** scene. Spanning the gamut from Indie to Pop, there are a multitude of venues within and around the city that play host to a wide variety of music. Larger popular music concerts are held at a number of venues around London (such as the Apollo Hammersmith, Brixton Academy, the Forum, and the London Astoria). Really big concerts are often held at Wembley Arena (a sports complex in an outlying suburb), Earls Court (walking distance from the Centre) or the Shepherds Bush O2 Empire. For Indie or **experimental** music, some of the main venues are the ICA (Institute for Contemporary Arts), the Barbican, and the Garage. Tickets to most concerts can be bought at either the venue's box office or from Ticketmaster (which are available online at www.ticketmaster.co.uk or in larger record shops). Once again, many venues offer student discounts and the best place to look for listings is in *Time Out*. Here is a small list to get you started:

- Academy Brixton (Tube: Brixton)
- Borderline (Tube: Tottenham Court Road)
- Palladium (Tube: Oxford Circus)
- Camden Place (Tube: Camden Town)
- Hammersmith Odeon (Tube: Hammersmith)
- Mean Fiddler (Tube: Tottenham Court Road)
- Rock Garden (Tube: Covent Garden)

Cinema

Movies, on the whole, are expensive in London (although an ISIC will usually get you a sizable discount). Popular movies are shown throughout the city; the Cineworld cinema (with several screens) on Fulham Road in Chelsea is fairly close to the Centre, as is the Odeon on Kensington High Street. The Prince Charles in Leicester Square offers second-run films for a lower cost. Coronet Cinema in Notting Hill Gate is a couple of Tube stops from the Centre and has special discount nights: Student Night Mondays (£3.50 entry with student ID) and Half Price Tuesdays (£3.50 for everyone). The National Film Theatre (on the South Bank) and the Barbican Centre screen art-

The cinema club at Imperial College can offer amazing deals and showings of movies still in theatres.

house and classic films, as well as first-run films, at reasonable ticket prices. Check *Time Out* for listings. (Note: Movie theatres are always called “cinemas” and they show “films” – not “movies”.)

Pubs

A visit to a pub (or public house) is an essential component of any visit to London or Britain. There is a pub on just about any corner in London. These establishments are quite unlike American bars; each has its own atmosphere and regular clientele. Pubs offer a variety of beverages such as wines, beers, ales, Guinness, strong British lagers, sweet and dry cider (always alcoholic in Britain and more potent than it may seem), sodas, and juices. Mixed drinks are much less common and more expensive than in the United States (although they are typically available in clubs). Pubs also serve relatively inexpensive food for lunch and dinner. Try to visit different pubs in different locations around the city; each will be a unique experience. Until recently, pubs closed at 11pm on weekdays and midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. From November 2005, there has been a new licensing scheme for pub opening hours which has resulted in pubs being able to stay open later. But closing times vary from pub to pub. Also know that it is illegal to smoke in any enclosed public space (including pubs).

Restaurants

London offers a tremendous variety of food options. The *Time Out Eating & Drinking* guide offers, among others, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, North African, and Turkish restaurants to choose from. Immigrants from all over the world have flocked to London and brought their recipes with them and ‘traditional’ pub menus now commonly offer Chicken Tikka Masala alongside typical British dishes like fish and chips and sausage and mash. Be sure to explore the variety of inexpensive Indian, Thai, Chinese, and Middle Eastern culinary offerings around central and East London. There are also many chains of sandwich bars, food stands, and grocery stores that offer inexpensive meals. ‘Take-away’ indicates the same behavior that ‘Take-out’ signifies in the US; you are often charged less for take-away items than if you choose to eat in the restaurant.

English afternoon tea is held at several upscale restaurants and hotels around the city between 3 and 5 on weekdays. Traditional English afternoon tea includes a choice of teas, finger sandwiches, scones with clotted cream and jam, as well as cakes and pastries. Tea is usually an expensive and memorable experience that requires more formal dress and often needs reservations. The Orangery in Kensington Gardens serves tea with a view of Kensington Palace. The Georgian room in Harrod’s department store, The Ritz Hotel, Brown’s Hotel, and other hotels, restaurants, and department stores also serve afternoon tea.

Nightclubs

Nightclubs offer both comedy and variety shows as well as live bands and dance clubs often feature theme nights. Check *Time Out* for listings. Clubs are often open all night, but generally have extremely pricey cover charges, particularly on weekends. The most economical way to experience London night life is to either go out on weeknights (class schedule permitting) or to look for bars that also offer dancing as these makeshift “clubs” are often far less expensive. Cover charges tend to be cheaper (and sometimes free) the earlier you go to the club. Some of London’s most well-known (and, consequently, most expensive) clubs are Ministry of Sound, Fabric, Heaven, and Cargo.

Sport

Most of the major sporting venues are located in outlying suburbs. The most popular spectator sport in England is football (soccer). Games can range from two neighborhood teams to national championships. Rowing is also popular and contests are sometimes held on the Thames. Rugby, cricket, and boxing tournaments are also held at arenas around the city. Here again, check *Time Out* for listings. Perhaps the most authentic ways to watch sporting events is on television in a pub - particularly those pubs catering to local (rather than tourist) crowds.

Walking Tours

London is a great city for walking. Walking tours usually last about two to three hours, are led by local expert guides, and focus on a local neighborhood or theme. Some more popular walking tours are Jack the Ripper, Shakespeare, and Beatles walks. In good weather, these provide an inexpensive way to visit and learn the local history of several areas or aspects of London. The Original London Walks are perhaps the best well known and most reputable (www.walks.com). Check *Time Out* and ask for student discounts.

Tourist Attractions

Although these popular sights are usually crowded, their historical significance and importance to contemporary London and England make for an interesting and educational visit.

Trafalgar Square (Tube: Leicester Square or Charing Cross)

Once the final stop on St. Edward the Confessor's trek to Westminster Abbey for the funeral of his wife, Trafalgar Square is now home to Lord Nelson's victory monument, the National Gallery, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, political rallies, periodic festivals, a giant Christmas Tree gifted to Britain by the King of Norway each year, and is a great venue for people watching.

Tower of London (Tube: Tower Hill)

This infamous former royal palace and dungeon is fascinating for those interested in England's long and complicated history. Once inside, take a free tour led by the Yeoman Warders (known as Beefeaters) and be sure to see the Crown Jewels, the White Tower, the Armoury, The Bloody Tower, and the Traitor's Gate. Admission price is steep but well worth the few hours you will spend here.

Piccadilly Circus (Tube: Piccadilly)

Piccadilly is the heart of the West End theatre district and is always full of people, lights, restaurants, theatres, fountains, shops, and the statue of Eros.

Buckingham Palace (Tube: St. James's Park or Green Park)

The London home of the Queen, Buckingham Palace is located at the end of the Mall and is an essential London landmark. The changing of the guard is a spectacle that occurs daily at about 11.30 am in the summer and every other day out of season. Take your camera and be prepared to fight the hordes of tourists in the crowd.

Houses of Parliament (Tube: Westminster)

You can line up daily for admission to the House of Commons or the House of Lords. Walk over Westminster Bridge for an excellent view of the Houses and Big Ben. You can contact the US Embassy in London for tickets to get into the House of Commons visitors' gallery and watch the House in action or see the weekly Prime Minister's Question Time on Wednesdays.

Westminster Abbey (Tube: Westminster)

As much a cultural monument as a church, Westminster Abbey is overwhelming in size, beauty, and the number of noteworthy people buried there. Take a tour and stay for a sung mass. There are free organ recitals on Sunday evenings at 5.45pm. The Abbey has been the venue for every Coronation since 1066 including Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953.

10 Downing Street (Tube: Westminster or Charing Cross)

Although Downing Street itself is guarded and closed to the public, the official residence of the Prime Minister is a stop on a pleasant walk along Whitehall. Whitehall is the home of many government and bureaucratic offices as well as the 17th Century Banqueting House and a number of statues and memorials.

St. Paul's Cathedral (Tube: St. Paul's)

St. Paul's was designed by Sir Christopher Wren to replace the old cathedral that burned in the Great Fire of 1666. St. Paul's overwhelming edifice served as a symbol of national hope during the London Blitz in World War II. You can visit the central area, climb the dome to the Whispering Gallery or to the top, or descend into the crypt where Lord Nelson and William Blake, amongst many other notables including Wren himself, are buried. Admission to the Cathedral is a bit pricey but definitely worthwhile. Guided tours cost a bit more but are very informative. Services and Evensong are free.

Hard Rock Café (Tube: Hyde Park Corner)

The Hard Rock Café chain has spread around the world, but this is the original restaurant.

Museums

London abounds with museums both grand and small, from world-renowned archaeological and art museums to historical homes and specialty collections. See the larger museums but save time to discover smaller gems as well. Best of all, many of London's largest and most famous museums are free.

The British Museum (Tube: Holborn)

The British Museum contains what is undoubtedly one of the most important collections of archaeological artifacts. Do not miss the Elgin marbles, the Lindow man, the Sutton Hoo burial ship, or the Rosetta Stone. Free guided tours of certain parts of the museum are offered daily and listed on the British Museum website. Admission is free.

The National Gallery (Tube: Leicester Square or Charing Cross)

Located at the top of Trafalgar Square, the National Gallery houses Britain's premier collection of art from before 1900. Guided tours and lectures are frequently offered. Rent a headset which will tell you about certain paintings for a more satisfying visit. Open late on Wednesday evenings. The National Portrait Gallery is located behind the National Gallery and houses portraits of England's monarchs and many other important figures, including contemporary people. Admission to both galleries is free.

Tate Britain (Tube: short walk from Pimlico)

Tate Britain hosts fine collections from 1500-1900 as well as a special collection of paintings by J.M.W. Turner. The Tate offers gallery tours and admission is free.

Tate Modern (Tube: Blackfriars and a walk over the Millenium Foot Bridge)

Housed in a former power station, Tate Modern is Tate Britain's modernist counterpart. Here you can see works by Picasso, Matisse, Van Gogh, Rothko, Pollock, and Warhol, as well as special visiting exhibitions. Admission to the main galleries is free.

Spend time discovering London on your own as you will have a *profoundly* different experience than if you are with other Americans; walk through some non-touristy areas, stroll through the Royal Parks on a weekend afternoon, start up a conversation with someone at a pub, store, or restaurant.

The Museum of London (Tube: Barbican, then follow the signs)

The best presentation of the history of London, this museum is complete with the Lord Mayor's carriage, a replica of the Great Fire of London, and a chronological presentation of London's history from prehistoric 'London before London' to the present day. The modern galleries (post 1700) have recently received a £10 million refurbishment. Admission is free.

The Imperial War Museum (Tube: Lambeth North)

This is an educational and sombre experience for anyone interested in the history of Britain, London, or twentieth-century warfare in general. The museum presents artefacts, exhibits, and presentations about World Wars One and Two. There are also interactive recreations of life in the trenches of WWI and London in the Blitz of WWII. Admission is free.

The British Library (Tube: Kings Cross/St Pancras)

The British Library, which used to be housed in the British Museum, moved to this location on Marylebone Road in 1998. The library contains original manuscripts, letters, and documents encompassing England's vast literary history ranging from the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Magna Carta to Virginia Woolf's original draft of Mrs. Dalloway. Admission to the Library, exhibition galleries, and tours of the building are free and open to the public. Access to the reading rooms requires advance application and is rigorously screened.

Sir John Soane's Museum (Tube: Holborn, then walk to Lincoln's Inn Field)

This museum is housed in the quirky architect's rather unusual house and contains original paintings by Hogarth and sarcophagi of Egyptian pharaohs, among many other wonderful and surprising things. This is a fascinating place to explore (be sure to ask a guide about the trick wall!). Open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 5pm and the first Tuesday of each month the museum is open from 6pm - 9pm and parts of the museum are lit with candles. Admission is free although donations are strongly suggested.

Exhibition Walk - South Kensington

The London Centre is located only a short distance from three of London's finest museums. All are located along Cromwell Road, east of Foundation House.

The Victoria & Albert Museum

Without a doubt, the V & A is the world's pre-eminent museum of decorative art. You will find everything from fashion to musical instruments to a plaster copy of Michelangelo's *David* in the museum's seven miles of galleries. It is a world-class museum less than 10 minutes walk away—always a good way to spend a few hours. And admission is free.

The Natural History Museum

This museum houses dinosaurs, underground geological displays, a rare mammal collection, and other testaments to the glory of nature. Admission is free.

The Science Museum

The Science Museum is dedicated to technology and advances in engineering, medicine, physics, and aerospace. The medical exhibits trace developments in medicine beginning with prehistoric cultures and ending with the advent of modern technology - this section is particularly fascinating for anyone interested in medicine or anthropology. Go early to avoid school groups. Admission is free.

Many other special-interest and smaller museums also deserve a visit. Following is a partial list of further suggestions. See guidebooks or ask the Centre staff for further details.

Art

- The Saatchi Gallery (Tube: Sloane Square)
- Leighton House Museum (Tube: High Street Kensington)
- Kenwood House (Tube: Archway & 210 Bus)
- Dulwich Picture Gallery (Rail service to North or West Dulwich)
- Courtauld Collection, Somerset House (Tube: Holborn)
- The Wallace Collection (Tube: Bond Street)
- Serpentine Gallery (in Hyde Park)
- Hayward Gallery (Tube: Embankment)

Science, Medicine, and Technology

- Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons (Tube: Holborn)
- Chelsea Physic Garden (Tube: Sloane Square)
- London Transport Museum (Tube: Covent Garden)
- Florence Nightingale Museum (Tube: Westminster or Waterloo)
- The Wellcome Collection (Tube: Euston Square)

Historical Sites and Homes

- Keats House (Tube: Hampstead)
- Dickens House (Tube: Russell Square)
- Freud Museum (Tube: Finchley Road)
- Marx Memorial Library (Tube: Clerkenwell Green)

Archaeology

- Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology (Tube: Russell Square)
- Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art (Tube: Euston or Goodge Street)

Other Museums

- Cabinet War Rooms and Churchill Museum (Tube: Westminster or St. James's Park)
- Bramah Tea and Coffee Museum (Tube: London Bridge)
- Geffrye Museum of the British front room (Tube: Old Street)
- National Army Museum (Tube: Sloane Square)
- Jewish Museum (Tube: Camden Town)
- Shakespeare Globe Exhibition (Tube: Mansion House or Southwark)

Parks and Gardens

London is renowned for its expanses of green space breaking up the urban sprawl. Well-maintained and landscaped, London's parks and gardens are perfect for an afternoon stroll, a picnic, or simply watching the British at play.

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

This area is only about a mile from the Centre. Highlights include the Peter Pan statue, Kensington Palace, the Albert Memorial, the Serpentine Gallery, the Princess Diana Memorial Fountain, and the Round Pond with swans. Be sure not to miss Speaker's Corner near the Marble Arch on the northeast corner of Hyde Park Sundays from late morning to early afternoon. This is the spot where the Tyburn gallows once stood and the tradition of Speaker's Corner dates from allowing condemned men and women speak their mind before execution. Today, colorful speakers and their attendant hecklers argue about any number of political, social, and religious issues.

The Regent's Park (Tube: Baker Street or Regent's Park)

Home of the London Zoo, this large park is located in the northern part of central London and also includes a boating pond and floral beds that are particularly vivacious in springtime.

Hampstead Heath (Tube: Hampstead or Hampstead Heath)

This large green hill in north London provides a great view of the city. Kenwood House (on the Heath) is well worth a visit. The Heath is also famous for being inspirational to writers, including John Keats. Keats' House and Freud's House museums are located in the surrounding neighborhood. The village of Hampstead is filled with trees, pleasant residential neighborhoods, and sidewalk shops. This may be one of the best "undiscovered" areas in London and is ripe for exploration.

Green Park and St. James's Park (Tube: Green Park or St. James's Park)

These adjacent royal parks are located near Buckingham Palace. There are lawn chairs available for rental which make for a nice break on a beautiful day.

Richmond Park (Tube: Richmond)

Once a royal hunting ground, Richmond Park is located in South West London and is enormous and perfect for cycling, running, or wildlife watching.

Kew Gardens (Tube: Kew Gardens)

These world-famous tranquil botanical gardens located alongside the Thames offer a wide array of natural and cultivated plants outdoors and in glass greenhouses. This is one of the most important centers of botanical research in the world. Fairly steep admission fee (ask for the student concession price) but you can easily spend a whole day here.

Shopping and Markets

London is one of the fashion capitals of Europe and, therefore, features upscale department stores and designer shops. But London is also home to many other (more affordable) shops and outdoor markets selling everything from antiques to Pez dispensers.

There are several **shopping areas** in central London. The most upscale area is located in Knightsbridge and includes Harrod's department store which is, perhaps, the ultimate testament to the art of shopping and extravagance. Check out the Egyptian elevators, food halls, pets department, and many other specialty areas of the store. High Street Kensington has a selection of stores ranging from the affordable to pricey. Regent Street contains the Victorian Liberty's department store. Oxford Street contains dozens of larger department stores. Carnaby Street was the epicenter of Mod fashion in the 1960s and is located just behind Oxford Street on the south side.

There are also a number of smaller stores and designer shops in **Covent Garden**, as well as an open market that is often popular with Lawrence students. Covent Garden is also home to many street performers (called buskers) and musicians – especially on Saturdays. A Saturday afternoon can easily be spent watching performers, looking through shops, and enjoying some of the food for which Covent Garden is famous.

More interesting than department stores are the colorful (and often crowded) **outdoor markets** held on weekend mornings. Covent Garden covered market features original arts and crafts. Portobello Road Market – located in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea – is held early on Saturday mornings and is most famous for antiques and crafts. Petticoat Lane (on Middlesex Street in East London) holds an outdoor market on Sunday mornings where you can buy clothing and any number of other items and Spitalfields Market is close by. Ask about the 10p bagel store a few blocks away. The northern edge of Hyde Park along Bayswater Road is

lined with artwork on Sunday mornings (although many of these “works” are nothing more than cheap reproductions). Finally, the sprawling Camden Lock market (Tube: Camden Town) is north of Regent’s Park. This market is filled with crowds, junk, ethnic food, and the occasional fantastic bargain. Hang onto your purse or wallet, dive in, and be ready to bargain.

Budgeting

While things in London are more expensive than you are used to in Appleton, **economizing and sticking to a budget** certainly makes things manageable. Some costs you might anticipate are: food, laundry, travel, entertainment, and cell phones. Budgeting can be a tricky thing for most students. It is no surprise that London is more expensive than Appleton. Many students have never lived on a day to day budget before, especially one in a city with so many opportunities. The first step is to consider the amount you have to work with. Next, determine your fixed expenses. Obviously, your amounts will vary, but here is an example of a weekly budget:

Food	£15 – 25	(careful shopping & home cooking keeps cost down)
Entertainment	£20	(admissions, cover charges, tickets, etc.)
Phone Charges	£5	(using a phone card, being frugal)
Laundry	£7	
Miscellaneous costs	£30	

This student will need to have £75-85 per week at the minimum for living expenses. If you like to eat out, or have a gelato, magazine, or Starbucks habit, you will need to plan accordingly with more money in those budget areas.

At first you might find yourself a bit dismayed by how much everything costs, but you will learn how to stretch your budget creatively. One way to save money is by shopping at street markets for food and clothing, or checking sales at the grocery store. Another money-saver is books; most of your books and readings will be provided for you by the Centre. You will also need a separate travel budget based on your proposed trips.

Budget busters to avoid ...

- Starbucks and other coffee chains on a regular basis. You can generally find cafes that will be cheaper and have more character.
- Eating out frequently – This adds up quickly. It is cheaper to cook at home, and fun to get together to share home-cooked food with friends.
- Going out frequently – Even bigger money drains are clubs; mixed drinks and cover charges are far more expensive than in the US. A more frugal alternative is pubs, which have the added bonus of being a fun and important cultural institution of the UK.
- Restaurant ‘extras’ can mount up. Sometimes even the rolls on your table will cost extra and salad, soup, etc are not usually included in the price of your entrée. Water will be charged for unless you ask specifically for tap-water. It is perfectly OK to ask

what is included in the meal price. Expect to add 10% to your restaurant bill for the waiting staff, but **always** check to see if an 'optional service charge' or 'gratuity' has already been included.

- Phone charges. You may be used to having a cell phone at your fingertips but, it might be worth living without for the term to save money for other things.

Academic Resources

Imperial College, University of London

The London Centre provides students with **Students' Union membership** at this nearby university. Imperial College is located about a ten minute walk from the Centre and offers many useful entertainment options. Their term schedule differs from Lawrence's so it is useful to inquire about the timing of their events and offerings. On the IC campus you can find student restaurants, bars, inexpensive films, and the Science library (which is the only library on campus available to students and has materials on science and the history of science). The Union also runs many student organizations and activities that Lawrence students can choose to take part in.

Libraries

While the Centre has a small library of reference books, you may need to do some outside research for your courses. This is particularly true of students doing independent study projects. Currently, FIE provides access to the University of London's Birkbeck College library. However, some of the electronic resources provided by the Seeley G. Mudd Library are still available overseas. Some databases are accessible off-campus, depending on the license, although fewer course eReserves are available (due to copyright). You can find more information by going to http://www.lawrence.edu/library/help/connect_from_off-campus.

Another option is to join a public library on your own. The **Central Reference Library**, part of the Westminster library system, located behind the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, is also a good place to start your research. The Victoria and Albert Museum, located a few blocks to the east of Gloucester Road on Cromwell Road, has the **National Art Library**, which you may join, and is useful for researching any topics in art. There are also two specialist **music libraries** which you can join; find out more information on this from the office. In some libraries, you ask the librarian for the book you want rather than getting it yourself and you are not allowed to take the books outside of the library.

Laundry

Coin operated laundry rooms (located in the Lower Ground floor and 5th floor) are found in Metrogate House with washer-dryers. The front desk does not have a lot of change to exchange for pounds, but laundry money is easily acquired if you use cash to do your shopping. Using the laundry facilities at Metrogate is expensive, but still cheaper than Laundromats. It is typically about £2 to wash a small load and £1.50 to dry it. Detergent is not provided at Metrogate, so students typically buy a small bottle at the grocery store to share.

There are also Laundromats nearby, including Bobo's Bubbles, near Sainsbury's. Laundromats are typically more expensive, but they also sell cheap detergent. You can also try your hand at washing laundry in your bathroom sink. 'Sink laundry' works with varying degrees of success but has become a tradition among Lawrence's London Centre participants through the years.

Post offices are located across the city; the closest one to Foundation House is on the corner of Gloucester Road and Cromwell Road. Post office signs are red with gold letters and they offer services nearly identical to those offered in the United States. They will sell stamps or weigh your post for a specific shipping cost. The post office is typically open from 9am to 5:30pm on weekdays and from 9am to 12:30pm on Saturdays.

Postcards and letters can also be mailed in the large red cylinders located on street corners, located on most main roads. Be sure to mark 'air mail' on anything being sent to the United States. There are several post boxes near student residences, including one on the corner of Queen's Gate Terrace and Gloucester Road and one on the corner of Queen's Gate and Queen's Gate Place. You can search for the nearest post boxes using this website:

<http://www.shiply.com/postbox-finder.php>.

Telephones

Most students use **Skype** or other similar internet face-to-face chatting services to stay in touch with people at home. It is usually cheaper and easier than using a phone. Internet connection can be slow, but it is free and also allows you to see the other caller(s). Check before you go to see if you have a working camera and microphone in your laptop. If not, an external webcam can be purchased cheaply.

Other options available for **long-distance contact** include: buying an international phone from a previous London Centre-attende, using an international calling card, buying an international cell phone in London, or bringing an international cell phone from home. Be careful in buying an international phone; make sure you have sufficient coverage in the areas you plan to be. It is advisable not to buy a phone until you reach London unless you are buying one from another Lawrentian who has gone abroad. If buying a calling card, make sure to do so in the UK and not before you leave because those bought in the country you will be using it are more likely to work.

There are **landlines** in each residence which allow free calls within the FIE residence network and which take calling cards to make outside calls. A local call costs about 20 pence (100 pence to the pound); long distance costs more. Phone cards from home (such as MCI or AT&T cards) are generally not the cheapest or easiest way to call the United States from abroad. These cards from the US may work but you will need to have an 0800 access number that you can dial toll free from United Kingdom phones. Your best bet, however, will be to purchase international calling cards once you have arrived in London. These cards should offer rates to the US of about 3 to 10 pence per minute. There are a variety of cards and you should ask at newsagents and convenience stores for the card with the cheapest rates to the US.

Pay phones in other countries operate similarly to British pay phones; calling cards such as AT&T can often be used from other countries as well, although the access number used to dial into the service will differ from country to country. If you plan on using cards from the US in other countries, get a list of these international access numbers from the company or from their website.

If you plan on bringing a **mobile phone** from the US make sure that you have done sufficient research about possible charges. Smartphones and purported international cell phones might have hidden fees or nearly useless coverage for where you will be. And even if a phone is not being used, it might still rack up charges for roaming data. It might be best to leave your phone at home, or if you plan on bringing it to contact people while you are traveling to and from the US, make sure you know how to turn it completely off.

The main reason students bring or purchase mobile phones abroad is to keep in contact with fellow London Centre students and plan meet-ups – both socially and for class trips. Pay as you go phones can be purchased fairly cheaply in London or from former attendees. Many students choose to buy them, but many other students choose not to and are able to plan and communicate fine, although with less flexibility.

Computing and Internet Access

Metrogate House has a 32-station PC lab with internet/email access available 24 hours per day. There are also laptop hookup stations in the PC lab where you can connect to work or print from your personal laptop. There is a charge for printing and copying. Due to limited storage space, students cannot store pictures on Centre computers and must transfer pictures to a **USB drive** or other external storage device.

At times of midterms, papers, and final projects, demand for machines in the PC lab can be high so **bringing personal laptops is encouraged**. Many students with laptops choose to work on their computers in alternative locations and use the computer room for printing.

Exercise

You will be more active in everyday life in London than on campus and will walk a lot, especially in your exploring. Many students also exercise by going for a run in the nearby parks or joining a recreational club or student group through Imperial College (we have had people involved with Frisbee, swimming, and outdoor rec, among other things).

Additionally, FIE has special arrangements with a local gym for reduced rates. If you need special facilities or locations (such as a pool), you should look into this in advance. FIE's website has more information on its London Student Center page. You can also contact their Student Life office for more information. Athletes should talk with coaches to plan for the best way to keep up out-of-season training in a different environment.

Bookstores

There are many bookstores throughout London. Bookstores range in size from chain stores like Waterstones, to smaller used and new bookstores. Although the majority of the books you need for classes are provided at the Centre, you may need to buy books for class. London's biggest concentration of bookstores is located around Charing Cross Road (nearest Tube stations: Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road). There are Waterstones stores on Kensington High Street, and on the nearby Imperial College campus. The largest bookstore in Europe is the Waterstones at Piccadilly Circus. There is also a good used book store called Slightly Foxed at 123 Gloucester Road which offers discounted used books for £1.

Grocery Stores

Sainsbury's is a large, country-wide chain grocery store and offers the largest selection of the local stores and the best prices. The closest **Sainsbury's** store is located on the Cromwell Road two blocks west of Foundation House. The store operates a 'saver's club' scheme called Nectar that can save you money over the course of the term - particularly if a few students share a card. Ask for details at the store's information desk.

There is also a **Waitrose** supermarket in the Gloucester Arcade near the Tube station. It can be slightly more expensive than other stores in the area and does not have as large of a selection of products although you can often find better quality items here and deals are not unheard of. There is also a 24 hour chain grocery store across from the Tube station on Gloucester Road called **Tesco Express**. It is a smaller branch store of the **Tesco** chain, so does not have as big of a selection as Sainsbury's and Waitrose. Close to Metrogate House on Gloucester Road is **Partridges**, which carries some American brands but at a higher price.

Many students go to Tesco for essentials and emergencies, and use Sainsbury's for larger grocery trips. Taking your backpack to the grocery store allows you to carry more food home at once and helps cut down on the number of plastic bags you require. Check the dates on fresh

foods and dairy product as these foods tend to contain fewer preservatives than in the US and expire more quickly.

History

While Britain may be better known in the United States for its recent films, pop culture icons, and William and Kate, the country has a long history and often-turbulent relationship with its neighbors and citizens – issues that are still relevant today. The more you know about the politics and culture of Britain, the easier it will be for you to adjust and the more enriching your term will be.

A basic introduction to **the history of England, Scotland, and Ireland** may prove fascinating before you leave or once you have been in the country for a few days. Understanding the history and significance of what you are seeing and the places you are visiting will enrich your experience.

Culture and Media

You will probably find that British people know more about Americans than Americans know about the British. This is due to the media; American television shows and films are broadcasted or sold in larger quantities than foreign media is in the US. Foreigners gain a better understanding of American culture, although they are also exposed to a lot of stereotypes.

Exposing yourself to British culture beforehand can go a long way to rectifying this balance. Consuming British media is not only fun but can also give you things to talk about, get you excited for your term in London, and even help you get a handle on that elusive British humor.

Here are a few suggestions of ways to acquaint yourself with British culture before you leave:

- Watch British television – BBC news and an assortment of BBC dramas and British comedy are shown on public television in the U.S. and on BBC America. Old seasons of shows might also be available at the library, on Hulu, or on Netflix.
- Stream UK radio
- Read literature by British authors or about London and the UK – try *The Bumper Book of London* by Becky Jones and Clare Lewis – history and other facts about London, presented in a family-friendly format and a favorite of Christine Harris. Laura Zuege recommends *Imagined London* by Anna Quindlen – a fast read that takes you on a literary tour of London and its famous fictional characters. Or try *Londoners* by Craig Taylor for a book focusing on the diverse lives of the London population. *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith is also worth reading. Or pick up some other British literature: Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, John Keats, JK Rowling or see what the library has to offer. Additional suggestions are listed in the Recommended Reading section on page 23.

Reading & Current Affairs

Brits read a lot more than Americans do in general—especially newspapers—but Londoners read a lot even by British standards. Commuters on the Tube are almost all reading, whether it is a book or a magazine. This is especially because two free newspapers are distributed at Tube stations: the *Metro* in the morning and *Evening Standard* in the evening.

However there is an astonishing **variety of newspapers** available with everything from quality “broadsheets” to sensationalist “tabloids”. Different papers cater to different educational levels and cultural backgrounds and generally have a fairly fixed political stance. The news they carry tends to be far more international than the American press and, as a result, the British are likely to have a far greater understanding of international affairs. Buying and reading a newspaper every day or so will help you stay up to date on events, get a better understanding of the UK and Brits in general, and provide you with topics of conversation. The **FIE student common room** in Foundation House receives several papers to keep you up-to-date.

The **Lawrence library** receives several London newspapers - glancing through a few issues will help you learn more about current events in Britain and London and will help generate enthusiasm for your term abroad. You can also read London-based papers online before you get to London.

Recommended Reading

Notes From a Small Island – Bill Bryson

Londoners: The Days and Nights of London Now—As Told by Those Who Love It, Hate It, Live It, Left It, and Long for It – Craig Taylor

Imagined London – Anna Quindlen

London – A. N. Wilson

White Teeth and *NW* – Zadie Smith

The Night Watch – Sarah Waters

Neverwhere – Neil Gaiman

The Bumper Book of London – Becky Jones and Clare Lewis

A Traveller's History of London – Richard Tames

Guidebooks/Guidebook Series

Nicholson's London Guide

DK Eyewitness: London

Rick Steves' Europe Through the Back Door

Let's Go

Lonely Planet

United Kingdom - CultureGram Booklet

Can be purchased for \$4 from www.culturegrams.com

A-Z London