

📍 Palace of Westminster & Big Ben, London

Trip Notes: England

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)

Starting in April 2025, US travelers visiting the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) must apply for an ETA. An ETA costs **£16** and is **valid for 2 years** (or until your passport expires). It allows multiple short stays (up to 6 months each) for tourism, study, or visiting family.

Apply online before travel at:

<https://www.gov.uk/eta>

Passport

A valid US passport is required for entry. The passport must be valid for the entire duration of your stay (six months validity recommended).

Note: The UK is not part of the EU or Schengen Area. EU entry/exit rules, EES, and ETIAS do not apply when visiting the UK.

CURRENCY & CREDIT CARDS

Across England and the wider United Kingdom, the official currency is the **British Pound Sterling (£)**, internationally recognized as GBP and commonly referred to as the pound. One pound is divided into 100 pence (p). Common coins are 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1, and £2, while banknotes are issued in £5, £10, £20, and £50 denominations.

- Credit cards are widely accepted (Visa, MasterCard, AmEx).
- Contactless payments common, even for small purchases.
- ATMs widely available; some may charge fees.
- Inform your bank before travel to avoid fraud alerts.
- Cards widely accepted, but small towns may prefer cash.
- ATMs available; notify bank before travel.
- Credit card required for hotels/car rentals.



The National Gallery, London



Stonehenge



Buckingham Palace

INTERNATIONAL LUGGAGE ALLOWANCE

Varies by airline and route. Check with your carrier for exact baggage rules and fees.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Dial **999** for police, ambulance, or fire.

Dial **111** for non-emergency medical advice (NHS helpline).

PHONES & INTERNET

- To dial the UK from the US: 011 + 44 + local number (drop the leading 0).
- To dial the US from the UK: 00 + 1 + area code + number.
- SIM/eSIMs: EE, O2, Vodafone, Three.
- Wi-Fi is widely available in hotels, pubs, cafés, and public spaces.

HOTELS

- Standard check-in: 2–3 PM
- Check-out: 11 AM–12 PM
- Exact times may vary by hotel.
- Early check-in/late check-out often available on request.

TIPPING

- **Restaurants:** 10–12.5% service charge may be included; if not, leaving 10–15% is appreciated for good service.
- **Pubs:** Tipping not expected unless table service is provided.
- **Taxis:** Round up to nearest pound.
- **Hotels:** £1–2 per bag for porters; £2–5 per night for housekeeping.

FOOD & WINE

England's food and drink culture blends hearty classics with beloved traditions.

- Famous for fish & chips, Sunday roasts, Cornish pasties, and full English breakfast.
- Afternoon tea is a cultural tradition.
- Legal drinking age: 18.
- Popular drinks: beer (especially ales), cider, gin, Scotch whisky.

SHOPPING & VAT

- Typical hours: 9 AM–6 PM (department stores often until 8–9 PM).
- Many shops open Sundays, though with reduced hours.
- **VAT: 20%.** VAT refunds for non-EU visitors are not currently available post-Brexit.



📍 Afternoon tea, London



📍 Windsor Castle



📍 Westminster Abbey

Popular Souvenirs

- Tea, biscuits, and marmalade
- Harris tweed & cashmere
- British gin & whisky
- Umbrellas (London icons)
- Harry Potter & Royal Family memorabilia

TIME

UK is on **Greenwich Mean Time** (GMT) and British Summer Time (GMT+1) from late March–late October.

POWER

230V, 50Hz. UK uses **Type G** plugs. Bring a universal adapter with surge protection.

CLIMATE

- Generally mild but variable.
- Winter: Damp and cool (35–50°F / 2–10°C).
- Summer: Mild to warm (60–75°F / 16–24°C).
- Rain is frequent — carry an umbrella or rain jacket year-round.

LANGUAGE

Official language: **English.**

Common Terms (US to UK English)

- Sweater → *Jumper*
- Gasoline / Gas → *Petrol*
- Candy → *Sweets*
- French fries → *Chips*
- Chips (snack) → *Crisps*
- Cookie → *Biscuit*
- Apartment → *Flat*
- Pants → *Trousers*
- Underwear → *Pants*
- First floor → *Ground floor* (in the UK, the first floor is one level above ground)

ETIQUETTE

- **Greetings:** Handshake for formal settings; friends often say hello with a hug or kiss on the cheek.
- **Queueing:** Standing in line politely is taken very seriously.
- **Dining:** Keep hands visible; tipping is modest compared to the US.
- **Pubs:** Order and pay at the bar unless table service is offered.



📍 Bourton-on-the-Water



📍 Broadway Tower



📍 Arlington Row, Bibury

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

1 January – **New Year’s Day**

Good Friday & Easter Monday (dates vary)

First Monday in May – **Early May Bank Holiday**

Last Monday in May – **Spring Bank Holiday**

Last Monday in August – **Summer Bank Holiday**

25 December – **Christmas Day**

26 December – **Boxing Day**

DRIVING

- Drive on the **left-hand side**.
- **Speed limits:** 30 mph (urban), 60 mph (rural roads), 70 mph (motorways).
- Seat belts required by law.
- US driver’s license is valid for short visits; **International Driving Permit (IDP)** recommended.
- Congestion charges apply in central London; limited parking in cities.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

US State Department Travel Advisories

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

US Embassy London:

<https://www.usembassy.gov/united-kingdom>

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

<https://step.state.gov>

US Passports

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>

International Travel Guidance

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>