

📍 Palace of Westminster & Big Ben, London

# Trip Notes: United Kingdom

## 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.



📍 Edinburgh Castle, Scotland



📍 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>