

Arriving in the UK

February 2010

IMMIGRATION

You must make sure you have your Student Visa/Entry Clearance BEFORE you travel to the UK. Please see information on [student immigration](#).

WARNING

It is NOT advisable to come to the UK as a Student Visitor: it is always best to obtain Entry Clearance in your home country in the immigration category of 'Student'.

If you come to the UK as a 'Student Visitor':

- you will **not** be able to stay in the UK for any longer than **six** months (you cannot make an application in the UK to stay longer as a Student) and
- you will **not** be allowed to do any work, even part-time or voluntary

So, although the 'Student Visitor' immigration category can seem tempting, especially if you are not a 'Visa national' (see [student immigration](#) for more information on this) but using it will cause you problems if you want to work while studying or if you end up deciding you want to study for longer than six months.

So, who is the 'Student Visitor' provision suitable for?

The 'Student Visitor' provision is only suitable for you if your course is less than six months, and if you are absolutely certain that you will not want to work in the UK **AND** you will not want to stay in the UK for longer than six months.

More information about the [student visitor category](#) is available from UK visas. Student visitors do not have to study full-time.

On arrival

If you travel to the UK by air, you will probably arrive at one of London's main international airports, Heathrow or Gatwick; or one of the big regional airports, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh or Glasgow. Some airports are large and have several terminals, and you will need to follow signs to find your way out. If you travel by sea you will probably arrive at one of the Channel Ports—Dover, Folkestone or Harwich are the most likely. It is also possible to arrive in London on the Eurostar train, which travels through the Channel Tunnel, or to bring a car through the Tunnel on a shuttle train. Please note that if you travel by Eurostar, you will go through UK Immigration Control in France before you board the Eurostar.

For more information on [immigration and visa](#) procedures; or information for [EEA students](#).

If you arrive at an airport, you pass through immigration control first (before collecting your luggage). There are usually two main queues: one for European Economic Area and Swiss nationals, and one for everyone else. Make sure you join the correct queue. An Immigration Officer will look at your passport and check your Visa/Entry Clearance. You should also have your documents relating to your studies (letter from your university/college/school) and finances in your hand baggage. Before leaving Immigration Control, check that the Immigration Officer has put a date stamp (if you had a Visa or Entry Clearance) in your passport; or (if you are a non-Visa national coming for a course of less than six months) check that you have been stamped in as a 'Student Visitor'. After immigration control, you will be able to collect your luggage. At most airports baggage is unloaded on to one of a number of moving belts ('carousels') in the baggage collection area. Look for your flight number and the name of the place your flight departed from on the screens or above the carousels and wait for each item of your baggage to appear. If any item does

not come through, find a representative of the airline you travelled on and fill in a lost baggage form.

When you have found all your luggage you must pass through Customs control. Join the queue for either the **Green** channel if you have **nothing to declare**, the **Red** channel if you have **goods to declare**, or the **blue** channel if you have arrived from an airport within the European Economic Area (EEA) where you have already cleared **all** your luggage through customs control.

If you are traveling to the UK from a country outside the European Union and are carrying 10,000 Euros or more in cash, bankers draft or cheque of any kind (about £6,750 in pounds sterling or the equivalent in other currencies) you will be required to declare this at customs.

Forms on which to make the declaration will be available when you arrive and you will be given a copy of the completed form, which you should keep safely as evidence that you have made a declaration. Please note that a penalty of up to £5,000 can be imposed if you do not make this declaration or provide incorrect or incomplete information.

Note: The countries of the EU are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, (including the Canary Islands), Sweden and the United Kingdom (not including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands).

If you are carrying more than the permitted duty or taxfree allowances, or any prohibited goods (eg drugs, offensive weapons, food or plants from outside the European Union, etc) you must pass through the **red** channel.

If you are not sure about what you can bring into the UK you should check with the British Embassy or High Commission in your home country **before** travelling to the UK.

The following information leaflets are also available to download the HMRC (Her Majesty's Customs and Revenues) website:

- **Carrying cash in and out of the United Kingdom**

[http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pageLibrary_PublicNoticesAndInfoSheets&propertyType=document&columns=1&id=HMCE_PROD1_027380]

- **Are you carrying 10,000 Euros or more?**

[http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pageImport_ShowContent&propertyType=document&columns=1&id=HMCE_PROD1_027378]

Normally, you should not bring food into the UK. Many of the foods you usually eat at home can easily be found in UK shops.

See the leaflet **Bringing food products into the UK**

[http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pageImport_ShowContent&propertyType=document&columns=1&id=HMCE_PROD_010856]

The leaflet gives information about controls on bringing meat, milk, fish, shellfish, plants, and their products, into the European Union and about what you should do if you have been visiting livestock premises overseas.

Even if you pass through the Green channel a Customs Officer can ask you to open your luggage for checking.

If you arrive at one of the Channel ports you will also have to pass through Customs Control. If you use the Channel Tunnel, Customs Control will be carried out either in France or on the train.

Travelling on to your destination in the UK

Check any information your college or university has sent you, as it may include information about how to get there from the main airports and other ports in the UK. Some colleges and universities also arrange

transport services for students at the start of the academic year. For example, some universities arrange to collect students from the airport or train station. Details of any services like this should be included in the information your college or university has sent you. If you want to use these services, you may need to book in advance.

If you are making your own onward travel arrangements, the information below will help you plan the next part of your journey .

Plan your onward journey before you leave home

- Check the information from your college or university for details about how to get there, including any transport arranged by your institution. Carry this information in your hand luggage
- The British government's tourist information service, Visit Britain ([VisitBritain](#)) may have an office in your country. Visit Britain can give you information and advice to help you plan your journey
- Some scholarship agencies (for example, the British Council) help their scholars with travel arrangements. If you are receiving a scholarship, check the information from your scholarship agency
- If you have arranged your international travel through a travel agent, ask the agent if they can help you arrange your onward journey in the UK
- Use the telephone numbers and website addresses at the end of this Information Sheet to find out more information about transport services to your destination
- Consult airport web sites or information from your travel agent for details about services at airports
- If you have any problem on arrival, go to the Information Centre or Helpdesk at the airport or train station

General information about UK public transport

Trains and coaches

Most long-distance public transport in the UK is by coach or train. Most UK airports have train and coach connections to nearby towns, where more connections can be made. In general, coach travel is cheaper than train travel but can take longer.

Arriving at airports near London

Most international flights to London arrive at Gatwick or Heathrow airport, but some flights, especially from continental Europe, may arrive at Luton or Stansted.

Depending on your final destination, you may need to travel into central London for the next stage of your journey. There are several major train stations in London, so you should make sure you know which one you need before planning that stage of your journey.

Heathrow

Heathrow is one of the world's busiest airports. There are coach connections, a Tube station (on the Piccadilly line, marked in dark blue on the Tube map) and the 'Heathrow Express' train service to Paddington station in London.

Gatwick

There are coach connections, and a train service from Gatwick to central London (Victoria or Kings Cross stations, depending on which train you catch). There is also a 'Gatwick Express' train service direct to Victoria station. The journey takes about 40 minutes.

Stansted

There are local connections and coach services and a 'Stansted Express' train service to Liverpool Street station in London.

Luton

There is both a coach service and a train service into central London.

There are special 'Express' train services from Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted Airports to central London. You can also travel from Heathrow to Central London on the 'Tube' (London Underground), which is much cheaper than the Heathrow Express train.

Travelling by train

Many train services offer either 'Standard', or 'First' Class' tickets (and therefore seating). First Class is much more expensive than 'Standard Class', which most people find perfectly comfortable. It is advisable to book a seat in advance on long distance journeys, especially if you plan to travel on a Friday.

Long distance coach and train services usually have good luggage facilities. Larger train stations may also have a 'Left Luggage' service where you can leave your bags for a few hours if there is a long wait between connections.

Train services are operated by a variety of different companies. Some companies offer special deals, especially if booked in advance, on certain routes (usually longer distance routes). For timetables and fares, see the [National Rail](#) website.

Local bus services

Local bus services generally cover shorter distances than coach services and are cheaper. In London, bus services are the cheapest form of public transport, but usually take longer than the Underground, due to the large amount of traffic on the roads. Many local bus services do not have much luggage space, although services from airports and train stations may have more.

Buses may be very busy at 'rush hour' on weekdays (Monday to Friday). 'Rush hour' is between approximately 8am and 9.30am and again between 5pm and 6.30pm. This is when most people are travelling to and from their place of work.

The London Underground (the 'Tube')

Many people use the Tube to get around London. There is a Tube station at Heathrow airport, but not at any other airports near London. The helpful Transport for London website features a [London Underground Journey Planner](#) and a [map of the London Underground system](#) which details the different Tube lines in different colours, and shows at which stations you can transfer from one line to another.

If you are planning to use the Tube, remember that you may have to change trains to get to your destination. At some stations this can be difficult if you have a lot of luggage, as most stations do not have a lift (elevator); although most do have escalators.

The Tube can be extremely crowded at 'rush hour' on weekdays (Monday to Friday), roughly 0700-0900 hours and 1630-1830 hours.

Taxis

'Public hire' taxis or 'cabs' are taxis that are licensed to pick up passengers without advanced booking. In London, as in many UK cities, these are usually the familiar black cabs. If you need a cab you can signal to ('flag down') any that are passing and ask them to stop (Please note, however, that if the 'Taxi' light on the roof is not lit, this means that they already have a passenger and so will not stop for you). Although very convenient, public hire taxis can be extremely expensive, especially in London, as the meter runs the whole time you are in the cab (including when you are stuck in traffic!).

'Private hire' taxis, or 'minicabs' are car services that must be booked by telephone (that is, you cannot simply flag one down in the street as you can a black cab), and in many cases can be found directly outside places such as train stations, or at designated 'Taxi Ranks'. Minicabs often do not have a 'Taxi' sign, although should display a company name or other official taxi identification. Generally, they are cheaper than the 'black cabs', as the fare is calculated on the distance travelled.

The rules for minicab drivers vary from town to town, but generally the driver will have an identity card on display in their car. It is best to agree the price with the company when you phone or with the driver before starting the journey. Be particularly careful if you are approached by a 'minicab' driver that you have not booked in advance. Some minicab companies are unlicensed and may be operating illegally. Using an

illegally operating minicab firm can be unsafe and expensive.

Information desks at airports, train stations and other travel interchanges may have telephone numbers for local minicab companies.

Transit accommodation

If you wish to stay overnight in London during your journey, you should try to arrange accommodation before you leave your home country. You can book accommodation (using a credit card) before you come to the UK by contacting an organisation such as VisitBritain, the London Tourist Board, the Youth Hostel Association, or International Students' House (see address list). More information can be found in our Information Sheet, 'Accommodation for international students' at [accommodation](#).

If you arrive in London without accommodation there are hotel booking agencies at all the major train stations, which can help you find accommodation. Alternatively, you may go to one of the London Tourist Board offices at Liverpool Street Station, Victoria Station or Heathrow Airport if you arrive there. Do not accept offers from agents who may approach you at train stations (especially Victoria) – use one of the offices mentioned above.

Money

If you are traveling to the UK from a country outside the European Union and are carrying more than 10,000 Euros with you in cash, cheques or a bankers draft you will need to declare this to customs. See the section [On Arrival](#)

British coins come in the following denominations: 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1 (100p), £2 (200p). Banknotes come in denominations of £5, £10, £20, £50 and £100.

Normal banking hours are from 09.30 to 16.30 Monday to Friday. Some are open on Saturday mornings. You can change currency and cash travellers' cheques at 'Bureaux de Change' offices, which are open for longer, and are often located in stations and airports. Try to avoid changing very small amounts of money as there is often a minimum commission charge which makes it expensive. Shops and services in the UK will accept payment in UK currency only. Credit and debit cards are also widely accepted. You may be able to withdraw money from cashpoint ('ATM') machines if you have a Personal Identification Number (PIN) for that card.

When you arrive in the UK, you should bring about £250 in cash and travellers' cheques for your immediate needs (meals, train fares, etc.). Avoid carrying any more cash in case it gets lost or stolen. Most shops and hotels will accept credit cards, and some will also accept payment in sterling travellers' cheques.

For information about [opening a bank account](#)

Telephones

You will find public telephones at all airports, sea ports, railway stations, bus stations and on some streets. Instructions on how to use them are displayed next to the telephone. Most red phone boxes have been replaced by newer modern clear glass ones, and there are different companies operating phone services. They accept coins from 20 pence upwards and many phone boxes also accept credit cards, or phone cards (these can be purchased from most convenience stores & newsagents, and come in many denominations from £2 to £20).

For making telephone calls overseas, it can be cheaper to use an international calling card. You can buy phone cards online or from some newsagents or kiosks in the UK. You can send emails from internet cafes and public access computers in public libraries. For a list of some [internet cafes](#) in the UK.

For information on Public Libraries in the UK, and to find libraries in your area, see www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/YourlocalcouncilandCouncilTax/YourCommunity/DG_4018790

Useful contacts and websites

If you are calling from outside the UK, do not dial the (0) in the telephone numbers below. If you are in the UK, do not dial +44, but do start the number with 0. For example, if you want to call Traveline from outside the UK, dial +44 870 608 2608. If you call Traveline from within the UK, dial 0870 608 2608. Textphone numbers are only for those who use a textphone (minicom) because of difficulties with speech or hearing.

Travel

Traveline

Web: www.traveline.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 871 200 2233

Textphone: +44 (0) 870 241 2216

lines usually open 8am to 8pm

Information on transport services throughout the UK.

Web site includes a travel planner facility.

National Rail Enquiries

Web: www.nationalrail.co.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7278 5240

08457 484950 (from within UK)

Information on all UK rail services

Airport express train services

Heathrow Express

web: www.heathrowexpress.com

Tel: +44 (0) 845 600 1515

Gatwick Express

web: www.gatwickexpress.co.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 845 850 1530

Stansted Express

web: www.stanstedexpress.com

Tel: 44 (0) 845 600 7245

First Capital Connect services to Gatwick

web: www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk

National Express coach services

Web: www.nationalexpress.com

Tel: +44 (0) 8705 808080

Textphone: +44 (0) 121 455 0086

Scottish Citylink coach services

Web: www.citylink.co.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 8705 505050

Transport for London

Web: www.tfl.gov.uk

Transport information:

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7222 1234

Textphone: +44 (0) 20 7918 3015

Covers bus, tube, train and other services in London

Door to door

Web: www.dptac.independent.gov.uk/door-to-door

Website of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, designed to give disabled and less mobile people advice about travel using all forms of transport.

Airports

The British Airport Authority

www.baa.com

Information about Heathrow, Stansted, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Southampton airports.

Accommodation and general tourist information

British Tourist Authority Web: www.visitbritain.com

www.visitwales.com
www.visitscotland.com
www.enjoyengland.com
www.visitlondon.com
www.discovernorthernireland.com

Other

Meeting in London www.meetup.com/London-International

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