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United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)

Official Name: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

LAST UPDATED: MARCH 29, 2016

Embassy Messages

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Quick Facts

- **PASSPORT VALIDITY:**
Must be valid for [duration of your stay](#) (6 months recommended)
- **VACCINATIONS:**
None
- **BLANK PASSPORT PAGES:**
1 page
- **CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY:**
None
- **TOURIST VISA REQUIRED:**
Not required for stays under 90 days
- **CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT:**
None

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Embassies and Consulates

[U.S. Embassy London](#)**24 Grosvenor Square
London, W1K 6AH****United Kingdom****Telephone:** +(44)(20) 7499-9000**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(44)(20) 7499-9000**Fax:** +(44) (20) 7495-5012SCSLondon@state.gov**CONSULATES****[U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh, Scotland](#)****3 Regent Terrace,
Edinburgh EH7 5BW
Scotland****Telephone:** 013-1556-8315 / from the United States: +(44)(13) 1556-8315**Emergency Telephone: Outside office hours:** 020-7499-9000 / from the United States: +(44)(20) 7499-9000**Fax:** 0131-557-6023 /from the United States: +(44) 131-557-6023Edinburgh-Info@state.gov**[U.S. Consulate General Belfast, Northern Ireland](#)****Danesfort House, 223 Stranmillis Road,
Belfast BT9 5GR
Northern Ireland, UK****Telephone:** 028-9038-6100 / from the United States: +(44)(28) 9038-6100**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** 07545-507738 / from the United States: +(44) 7545-507738**Fax:** 028-9068-1301 /from the United States: +(44)(28) 9068-1301**Destination Description**

See the Department of State's [Fact Sheet on the United Kingdom](#)_for information on U.S.-UK relations.

Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements

- No minimum passport validity is required for U.S. citizens entering the United Kingdom.
- **Travelers transiting through the UK on their way to a continental European country should have a passport that is valid for 6 months.** Please see our [Schengen fact sheet](#) for additional details.
- **Visas must be obtained prior to travel for specific categories of visitors.** Visit the [UK Visas and Immigration \(UKVI\) website](#) to determine whether you need a visa to enter the United Kingdom. We cannot intervene on your behalf when applying for a visa, nor can we assist if you are denied entry into the United Kingdom.
- Students and prospective students should visit [the UKVI website](#) to determine if they need a visa.
- Unpaid and paid workers, interns, volunteers, charity workers, and temporary workers can find information on obtaining a visa on [the UKVI website](#) .
- Visitors traveling to the United Kingdom to get married, even if they do not plan to reside in the United Kingdom, must obtain a visa in advance. See the [UKVI website](#) for visa information.
- **Surcharges apply to certain categories of visas, generally those involving work, study, or residency of more than six months.** Please visit [the UKVI website](#) for additional information or see our Health section below.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for foreign visitors or residents.

See our website for information about [dual nationality](#) and the [prevention of international child abduction](#). For information about customs regulations, please read our [customs information page](#).

Safety and Security

The United Kingdom is politically stable and has a modern infrastructure but shares with the rest of the world an elevated threat of terrorist incidents of international origin. The UK, like other foreign governments, has taken actions to guard against terrorist attacks of this nature, including arrests of suspected extremists allegedly involved in terrorist plots. Credible information indicates terrorist groups continue plotting possibly near term attacks in Europe. All European countries remain potentially vulnerable to attacks from transnational terrorist organizations. There is also the potential for isolated violence related to the political situation in Northern Ireland.

- The Police Service of Northern Ireland assesses there is a continued threat of violence from dissident republicans in Northern Ireland, focused primarily on police and military targets and may involve the use of firearms and explosives. Tensions may be heightened during the summer marching season (April to August), particularly during the month of July (around the July 12th public holiday).

Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. Avoid areas of demonstrations if possible, and be careful within the vicinity of demonstrations. Stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

The UK Security Service, commonly known as MI5, publishes specific reasons for any changes in the threat level and recommended actions for the public via its [UK threat levels website](#).

The phone number for police/fire/ambulance emergency services – **the equivalent of 911 in the United States – is 999 in the United Kingdom and 112 in Gibraltar**. You should also use this number to report security threats or suspicious packages.

Crime: The United Kingdom and Gibraltar benefit from generally low crime rates. As you would anywhere, you should:

- **Be cautious and aware of your surroundings.**
- **Be vigilant** as pickpocketing, mugging, and "snatch and grab" theft of mobile phones, watches, and jewelry can occur.
- **Do not leave bags unattended** in restaurants, pubs, hotel lobbies and parked cars.
- **Be alert to other criminal schemes**, such as imposters posing as undercover police officers and "fining" tourists for bogus minor offenses. A legitimate Metropolitan Police Services officer will never demand an immediate cash payment.
- **Use only licensed Black Cabs or pre-ordered car services** (minicabs). Unlicensed taxis or private cars posing as taxis may offer low fares, but in some instances, travelers have been robbed or sexually assaulted while using these cars. The Safer Travel at Night partnership among the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, and the mayor of London maintains a website with [additional information on cabs and car services](#) .
- **Avoid using ATMs that look temporary in structure or location**, since they may not be legitimate, or that are located in isolated areas. Use ATM machines located inside a bank branch.

Scams: Before sending any money to individuals you have never met in person, visit the Embassy London website for [more information about Internet financial scams](#) and how to protect yourself. Financial crimes conducted over the Internet have increased dramatically in the United Kingdom as scammers attempt to convince you to send them money. These

fraudulent schemes can include:

- Lotteries
- Online dating/social networking services
- Inheritance notices
- Work permits/job offers
- Bank overpayments
- Schemes that make it appear you are helping a loved one or a friend in trouble.

To view a common example of Internet financial scams, see [Embassy London's YouTube channel](#) . See the [Department of State](#) and the [FBI](#) pages for further information on scams.

Victims of Crime: Report crimes to the local police at 999 (United Kingdom) or 112 (Gibraltar) and contact the U.S. Embassy at +(44)(20) 7499-9000.

Remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime.

See our webpage on [help for U.S. victims of crime overseas](#).

We can:

- Help you find appropriate medical care
- Assist you in reporting a crime to the police
- Contact relatives or friends with your written consent
- Explain the local criminal justice process in general terms
- Provide a list of local attorneys
- Provide our information on victim's compensation programs in the United States
- Provide information on victim's compensation and support in the UK
- [The Victim Support website](#) is maintained by an independent UK charity to help people cope with the effects of crime. A Northern Ireland-based independent charity maintains a [similar victims' support website](#) . In Scotland, victims of crime should contact [Victim Support Scotland](#) .
- Provide an emergency loan for repatriation to the United States and/or limited medical support if you are destitute
- Help you contact airlines and family for assistance to replace a stolen or lost passport

Domestic Violence: U.S. citizen victims of domestic violence may contact the Embassy for assistance.

For further information:

- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Call us in Washington at 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- See the [State Department's travel website](#) for the [Worldwide Caution](#), Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts.
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) .

- See our [traveler's checklist](#) for other useful travel tips.

Local Laws & Special Circumstances

Criminal Penalties: You are subject to local laws. If you violate local laws, even unknowingly, you may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Some offenses are also prosecutable in the United States, regardless of local law. For examples, see our website on [crimes against minors abroad](#) and the [Department of Justice](#) website.

- You will be arrested if you bring pocket knives, blades, mace or pepper spray canisters, and any part of a gun into the United Kingdom. Please refer to "[A UK Customs Guide](#)," detailing which items visitors are prohibited from bringing into the United Kingdom.
- Penalties against alcohol-related and other in-flight crimes ("air rage") to and from the United Kingdom are stiff and are enforced with prison sentences. Please also see [our information on U.S. customs regulations](#) covering your return to the United States.

Arrest Notification: If you are arrested or detained in the United Kingdom, ask police or prison officials to notify the U.S. Embassy immediately. See our [webpage](#) for further information.

Special Circumstances:

- The legal drinking age in the United Kingdom is 18 years of age. Parents and organizers of school trips should read our [students abroad](#) website to help plan a safe and enjoyable experience.
- Scotland's "drink drive limit" law was recently amended to a lower level and is stricter than the rest of the UK. This means that driving after even one drink can result in a driving under the influence charge.
- **The United Kingdom has very strict gun control laws and importing firearms is extremely complicated.** Information on applying for a firearm and/or shotgun certificate can be found on the [London Metropolitan Police Firearms licensing web page](#). **Licenses from England or Wales may not be valid in Scotland; please check with the appropriate authorities.** For firearms certificates for Scotland, please check with [Police Scotland](#).

Faith-Based Travelers: See the [Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report](#).

LGBTI Travelers: There are no legal restrictions on same-sex sexual relations or the organization of LGBTI events in the United Kingdom.

See our [LGBTI travel information](#) page and section 6 of the [Department of State's Human Rights Report](#) for further details.

Persons with Mobility Issues: Individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from the United States.

- UK law requires that all public service providers (except in the transportation sector) make "reasonable adjustments" to ensure their services are available to persons with disabilities. **Nevertheless, code exemptions permit many older buildings to have steps up from the street.**
- Getting around in UK cities may be difficult at times because sidewalks can be narrow and uneven.
- Most London Underground and the UK's National Rail System stations are not readily accessible for people with disabilities. Very few stations have elevators, and most have stairways and long corridors for changing trains or exiting to the street. However, many UK buses are equipped with lowering platforms for limited-mobility or sight- or hearing-disabled travelers.
- Many taxis have swivel entry seats or retractable ramps to ease entry.

The [Transport for London](#) and [National Rail](#) websites provide information for passengers with disabilities.

Students: See our [students abroad](#) page and [FBI travel tips](#) .

Women Travelers: See our travel tips for [women travelers](#).

Health

While medical services are widely available, free care under the National Health System (NHS) is allowed only for UK residents, certain EU nationals, and some visa holders.

An NHS surcharge is assessed on certain visa applicants at the time of application. **Tourists and short-term visitors will not be assessed the surcharge but will be charged 150% of the cost of any medical treatment they receive from the NHS. Unpaid balances over £1000 can result in being barred from return to the UK.** Travelers to the United Kingdom should ensure they have adequate medical insurance to cover the cost of any treatment received.

- **Obtain [supplemental insurance](#)** to cover medical evacuation.
- **We do not pay medical bills.** Be aware that Medicare does not apply overseas.
- Carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with your doctor's prescription. Certain prescriptions available in the United States are classed as narcotics in the United Kingdom and not available.
- Make sure your health insurance plan provides coverage overseas. Most care providers overseas only accept cash payments. See our webpage for more [information on insurance providers for overseas coverage](#).
- Be up-to-date on all [vaccinations](#) recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For further health information, go to:

- [World Health Organization](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC)

Travel & Transportation

Road Conditions and Safety: Road conditions in the United Kingdom can differ significantly from those in the United States. UK penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs are stiff and often result in prison sentences.

- In contrast to United States, **UK traffic moves on the left.** Read [the Highway Code](#) before driving.
- Emergency call boxes (orange telephone booths with "SOS" printed on them) are found at half-mile intervals along motorways. White and blue poles point in the direction of the nearest call box. Call boxes dial directly to a motorway center. Use these phones rather than a personal cell phone, because motorway center personnel will immediately know your exact location.
- Be aware pedestrians generally do not have the right of way and should not expect vehicles to stop for them.

Many U.S. citizen pedestrians are injured, some fatally, every year in the United Kingdom because they forget that oncoming traffic approaches from the opposite direction than in the United States. You should exercise extra care when crossing streets; remember to remain alert and look both ways before stepping into the street.

Traffic Laws:

- Using a hand-held cell phone or similar device while driving is illegal in the United Kingdom. Only hands-free phones may be used. You will be fined, or in the case of an accident, arrested and serve time in prison.
- The speed limit on highways/motorways in the United Kingdom is 70 mph.
- **You will be detained and arrested if you cannot provide a UK address to receive a subpoena or are about to depart the United Kingdom and have to be brought to court quickly for a motoring offense.** The deposit is returned if you are found not guilty.
- In Central London, a congestion charge is levied on all drivers who pass through the zone. You will be fined or arrested if you do not pay the charge. See [Transport for London](#) for more information.

Public Transportation: Public transport in the United Kingdom is extensive.

- Information on [disruptions to London transportation services can be found on the Transport for London website](#) .
- Information about the status of National Rail Services can be found on the [National Rail Enquiries website](#) .
- Information on bus and train services in Northern Ireland can be found on the [Translink](#) website.
- Information on bus and train services in Scotland can be found on the [Traveline Scotland](#) website.

Please refer to our [road safety](#) page for more information. For specific information concerning UK driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, refer to the [UK Department for Transport website](#) or the [Driving Standards Agency website](#) .

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the United Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the UK's air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the [FAA's safety](#)

Please see Fact Sheet for this country.

Assistance for U.S. Citizens

U.S. Embassy London
24 Grosvenor Square
London, W1K 6AH
United Kingdom

- Telephone
+(44) (20) 7499-9000
- Emergency After-Hours Telephone
+(44) (20) 7499-9000
- Fax
+(44) (20) 7495-5012
- Email
SCSLondon@state.gov
- [U.S. Embassy London](#)

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