

Useful information when traveling to England:

What to bring:

I recommend packing like you are taking a trip to the Pacific Northwest in June: cool or warm rather than really hot, with the high probability of rain showers.

Layering is always prudent. Please include a waterproof rain jacket with hood (umbrellas are hard to manage in windy weather and/or narrow sidewalks) and comfortable, waterproof shoes with good traction for traversing lawns, garden paths and worn stone steps. Please pack as light as possible. You'll be glad you did and there will be opportunities for hand washing items or using the hotel laundry.

Please also pack a refillable water bottle.

Baggage:

Refer to your carrier for weight and/or size limits for both carry-on and checked luggage.

Please pack any medications in your carry-on bag just in case your bag is lost for a time.

Passports:

All U.S. visitors to the U.K. must have a valid passport with at least 6 months of validity from your arrival date. I recommend making a copy of your passport and carrying it in a separate area from your passport. Should it get lost or misplaced, it is much easier to have replaced if you have a copy available.

Medical records:

Anticipate the need to prove you are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 in order to book flights, board a plane, and possibly to enter some establishments. Regulations continue to evolve. Carry a photocopy of your vaccination card (front and back) with you at all times. I also keep digital copies on my phone. You can do this by either taking a photograph and/or using the Notes app to take a scan. Store in a "medical" album/file to find it quickly.

Prohibited items:

Since we are flying from the U.S., the usual restrictions for liquids, sharp items aerosols... apply here. Check your carrier for more information.

Currency:

In the U.K. (Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England), the official currency is the Pound Sterling. 1 pound (£) is equal to 100 pence or pennies (also referred to as just p).

I'd recommend getting a couple of hundred pounds in advance through your bank or AAA if you are a member although personally, I use a debit card more often than cash these days.

Credit Cards:

All international credit cards are accepted. Visa and Mastercard are more widely accepted than Amex or Diners. Check with your issuing bank to see if they have foreign currency exchange fees. Many cards have done away with those fees, but it's good to know in advance.

Also, notify your card company that you will be out of the country so they don't freeze your card for unusual transactions.

Contactless payments are the norm in England now.

ATMs:

ATMs are readily available and will work if they are encoded with a four-digit PIN. This is a great way to withdraw cash overseas as needed. Fees will apply but will be less if an ATM outside of a bank is used. In the U.K., they are called "cashpoints".

Communication:

Assuming that you all have smart phones, I would recommend either checking with your carrier to see what plans they offer or one of the following for communicating with loved ones back home:

Skype to go account

You can put money into the account and call anyone - cell phones or land lines. The person you are calling doesn't need to have an account.

Or

Download the What's app or Messenger app

This one is a little different in that everyone you call must have downloaded the app as well. You must have wi-fi access to make the call but it's free and easy to use. You can also text for free.

Please remember when calling, we will be 8 hours ahead of PST.

All of the hotels we are staying in have free WI-FI.

Tipping:

Unlike the U.S., the U.K. doesn't have a strong tipping culture. It is customary to tip the coach driver though. £1-2 per person per day would be appropriate. If you enjoy excellent service during your stay, it is perfectly okay to tip though not required nor expected in most places and certainly not the amount we tip in the U.S. Rounding up to the nearest Pound (but no more than 10%) would be more appropriate.

Electricity:

The U.K.'s electricity supply operates on 230/240 volts, 50 hertz.

An adapter or converter is necessary to operate all electrical equipment. Only an adapter is necessary for cell phones and iPads.

I have found that UK hotels, especially older ones, have relatively few outlets for charging devices. I find that an adapter with multiple USB ports (for phone, iPad, camera batteries) to be indispensable.

Driving:

In the U.K. they drive on the left-hand side of the road, so please be especially careful when crossing the street! This dates back to jousting days when battles were fought with on horseback swords and horses, and most men were right-handed!

Tea time:

Yes, it's true – the entire country does stop for tea and we swear it is the solution to all the world's problems! If you are used to green tea or herbal teas at home you may want to stick to coffee as these will rarely be offered. Traditional English tea is black (usually a blend or Darjeeling), and is drunk piping hot with/without a splash of cold milk (not creamer or cream) and with/without sugar.

Speak like a local:

In case you had any doubt, we really are two countries separated by a common language! A few examples to amuse you:

American English	British English
Bathroom	Loo or toilet
Sidewalk	Pavement
Pavement	Road
Cookie	Biscuit
Biscuit	Scone
Dessert	Pudding, dessert, or afters
Two weeks	Fortnight
Garbage can, trash can	Bin, dustbin, rubbish bin
Garbage	Rubbish
Yard	Somewhere to hang the laundry or walk the horses!
Vegetable garden	Kitchen garden
Faucet	Tap