

# Directory

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Countrywide practical information is given in this Directory chapter. For details on specific areas, flip to the relevant regional chapters.

## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Britain is as varied as the sights you visit, and – whatever your budget – is likely to be your main expense. From hip hotels and grand castles to tiny cottages and basic barns, the wide choice is all part of the attraction, and from our research across the country we've made the numerous recommendations throughout this book.

## B&Bs & Guesthouses

The B&B (bed and breakfast) is a great British institution. Basically, you get a room in somebody's house, and at smaller places you'll really feel part of the family. Larger B&Bs may have four or five rooms and more facilities. 'Guesthouse' is sometimes just another name for a B&B, although they can be larger, with higher rates.

In country areas your B&B might be in a village or isolated farm; in cities it's usually a suburban house. Wherever, facilities usually reflect price – for around £15 to £20 per person you get a simple bedroom and share the bathroom. For around £25 you get extras

## PRACTICALITIES

- Be ready for a bizarre mix of metric and imperial measures in Britain; for example, petrol is sold by the litre, but road-sign distances are given in miles.
- Read up on current events in the *Sun* or *Mirror* tabloids, or get a more incisive view in the (from right to left, politically) *Telegraph*, *Times*, *Independent* or *Guardian* quality papers.
- Relish the satire, then cringe at tales of corruption, in weekly no-frills mag *Private Eye*.
- Use plugs with three flat pins to connect appliances to the 220V (50Hz AC) power supply.
- Turn on the TV, and watch some of the finest programmes in the world from the multi-channel BBC, closely followed by boundary-pushing Channel 4.
- Tune into BBC radio for a wide range of shows, and no adverts. Half the households in Britain have digital radio and TV, but for those still on analogue, the wavelengths are: BBC Radio 1 (98.8MHz FM); Radio 2 (88-92MHz FM); BBC Radio 3 (91.3 MHz FM); Radio 4 (93.5MHz FM). For content details see p67. The *Today* show on Radio 4 (mornings to 9am) is a national institution, the aural equivalent of browsing through the papers then personally grilling the politicians. National commercial stations include Virgin Radio (1215Hz MW) and pleasantly nonhighbrow classical specialist Classic FM (100-102MHz FM).

**BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE**

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

like TV or 'hospitality tray' (kettle, cups, tea, coffee) and a private bathroom – either down the hall or en suite.

B&B prices are usually quoted per person, based on two people sharing a room. Solo travellers have to search for single rooms and pay a 20% to 50% premium. Some B&Bs simply won't take single people (unless you pay the full double-room price), especially in summer.

Here are some more B&B tips:

- Advance reservations are always preferred at B&Bs, and essential during popular periods. Many require a minimum two nights at weekends.
- Many B&Bs are nonsmoking or only allow smoking in the lounge.
- Rates may rise at busy times and differ from those quoted in this book.
- If a B&B is full, owners may recommend another place nearby (possibly a private house taking occasional guests, not in tourist listings).
- In cities, some B&Bs are for long-term residents or people on welfare; they don't take passing tourists.
- In country areas, most B&Bs cater for walkers and cyclists, but some don't, so let them know if you'll be turning up with dirty boots or wheels.
- Some places reduce rates for longer stays (two or three nights).
- Most B&Bs serve enormous breakfasts; some also offer packed lunches (around £3) and evening meals (around £10).
- If you're in a hurry, B&Bs may give discounts for not having breakfast (possibly saving £5), but this is unusual. Bed-only rates are more common at ferry ports.
- If you're on a flexible itinerary and haven't booked in advance, most towns have a main drag or area where the B&Bs congregate; those with spare rooms hang up a 'Vacancies' sign.

- When booking, check where your B&B actually is. In country areas, postal addresses include the nearest town, which may be 20 miles away – important if you're walking! For those on foot, some B&B owners will pick you up by car for a small charge.

**Bunkhouses & Camping Barns**

A bunkhouse is a simple place to stay, handy for walkers, cyclists or anyone on a budget in the countryside. It will usually have a communal sleeping area and bathroom, heating, and cooking stoves, but you provide the sleeping bag and possibly cooking gear. Most charge £7.50 to £10 per person per night.

Camping barns are even more basic: usually converted farm buildings, providing shelter for walkers and visitors to country areas. They have sleeping platforms, a cooking area and basic toilets outside. Take everything you'd need to camp except the tent. Charges are around £4 per person.

Most bunkhouses and camping barns are privately owned, but the **Youth Hostels Association** ([www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk)) handles information and reservations on their behalf. Other bunkhouses and camping barns are listed in the *Independent Hostels* guidebook and website ([www.independenthostelguide.co.uk](http://www.independenthostelguide.co.uk)). For more details see the boxed text, opposite.

**Camping**

The opportunities for camping in Britain are numerous – great if you're on a tight budget or simply enjoy fresh air and the great outdoors. In rural areas, camping grounds (called camp sites in Britain) range from farmers' fields with

**DECISIONS, DECISIONS**

To help you choose where to stay, most sleeping sections throughout this book are divided into three price bands:

- Budget – under £20 per person per night
- Midrange – £20 to £50
- Top end – over £50

The exception is accommodation in London, where 'budget' in this book means up to £80 per person per night, midrange is £80 to £150, and top end is over £150.

**ACCOMMODATION CONTACTS**

Locally focused accommodation websites (eg Where to Stay Wessex, Reservations London) are listed in the individual regional chapters. For a countrywide view an excellent first stop is **Stillwell's** ([www.stilwell.co.uk](http://www.stilwell.co.uk)) huge user-friendly database for independent tourists, listing holiday cottages, B&Bs, hotels, camp sites and hostels. Stillwell's is not an agency – once you've found what you want, you deal with the cottage or B&B owner direct. From the website you can also order a hard-copy colour holiday cottage brochure. Other good agencies include **Hoseasons Country Cottages** (☎ 01502-502588; [www.hoseasons.co.uk](http://www.hoseasons.co.uk)) and **Bed & Breakfast Nationwide** ([www.bedandbreakfastnationwide.com](http://www.bedandbreakfastnationwide.com)), both with websites and colour brochures.

Recommended guidebooks include the annually published *Good Hotel Guide* and the *Which? Good Bed & Breakfast Guide*. Both are genuinely independent – hotels have to be good, they can't pay to get in. Both books are available in good bookshops and from online bookshops, and the *Which?* guide is available direct from [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk).

For details on hostels in England and Wales, contact the **Youth Hostels Association** (YHA; ☎ 0870 770 6113, 01629-592708; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk)). The YHA website also has information about bunkhouses, camping barns and YHA camp sites – even places where you can rent a tepee. In Scotland, contact the **Scottish Youth Hostels Association** (SYHA; ☎ 01786-891400; [www.syha.org.uk](http://www.syha.org.uk)). The **Independent Hostel Guide** ([www.independenthostelguide.co.uk](http://www.independenthostelguide.co.uk)) covers hundreds of hostels in Britain and beyond, and is by far the best listing available. It's also available as a handy annually updated book (£4.95) at hostels or direct from the website. North of the border, there's the excellent **Association of Independent Scottish Hostels** ([www.hostel-scotland.co.uk](http://www.hostel-scotland.co.uk)).

If you're planning to camp extensively, or tour Britain in a camper van (motor home), it's well worth joining the friendly and well-organised **Camping & Caravanning Club** (☎ 0845 130 7631; [www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk](http://www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk)), which owns almost 100 camp sites and lists thousands more in the excellent and invaluable *Big Sites Book* (free to members). Annual membership costs £30 and includes discounted rates on club sites and various other services – including insurance and special rates for cars on ferries.

a tap and a basic toilet, costing around £2 per night, to smarter affairs with hot showers and many other facilities, charging £5 or more per person. For an idea of just how smart some can be, we recommend *Cool Camping, England* by Jonathan Knight, a coffee-table book listing 40 exceptional camp sites, and proving that sleeping under canvas doesn't need to be damp and uncomfortable any more. Volumes covering Wales and Scotland are planned.

**Hostels**

There are two types of hostel in Britain: those run by the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) or Scottish Youth Hostels Association (SYHA), and independent hostels. You'll find them in rural areas, towns and cities; they're aimed at all types of traveller – whether you're a long-distance walker or touring by car – and you don't have to be young or single to use them.

**INDEPENDENT HOSTELS**

Britain's independent hostels and backpacker hostels offer a great welcome. In rural areas, some are little more than simple bunkhouses

(charging around £5), while others are almost up to B&B standard, charging £15 or more.

In cities, backpacker hostels are perfect for young budget travellers. Most are open 24/7, with a lively atmosphere, good range of rooms (doubles or dorms), bar, café, internet and laundry. Prices are around £15 for a dorm bed, or £20 to £35 for a bed in a private room.

**YHA & SYHA HOSTELS**

Many years ago, YHA and SYHA hostels had a reputation for austerity, but today they're a great option for budget travellers. Some are purpose-built, but many are in cottages and country houses – even castles – often in wonderful locations. Facilities include showers, drying room, lounge and equipped self-catering kitchen. Sleeping is in dormitories, but many hostels also have twin or four-bed family rooms, some with private bathroom.

To stay, you must join the YHA (£16 per year; £10 for under-26s), SYHA (£8; £4 for under-18s) or another Hostelling International (HI) organisation. Accommodation charges vary – small hostels cost around £10,

larger hostels with more facilities are £13 to £19. SYHA hostels in Edinburgh and Glasgow cost from £15, while London's excellent YHA hostels cost from £25. Students, under-26s and over-60s get discounts. If you're not a YHA/SYHA/HI member you pay around £3 extra per night in England and Wales, and about £1 extra in Scotland.

Most hostels offer meals, and charge about £4 for breakfasts and packed lunches, and around £6 for good-value three-course dinners.

Hostels tend to have complicated opening times and days, especially out of tourist season, so check these before turning up. Smaller rural hostels may close from 10am to 5pm. Reservations are usually possible, and you can often pay in advance by credit card. For full details see [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk) and [www.syha.org.uk](http://www.syha.org.uk). For more details see the boxed text, p951.

One final warning: the YHA constantly monitors its hostels, and sometimes has to close them down – because they've become too expensive to operate, too old to maintain, or simply don't get enough guests. All the YHA hostels listed were open at the time of research, but be prepared for some more to close down (and some new hostels to open) over the lifetime of this book.

## Hotels

A hotel in Britain can be a simple place with a few rooms or a huge country house with fancy facilities, grand staircases, acres of grounds and the requisite row of stag-heads on the wall. Charges vary as much as quality and atmosphere, with singles/doubles costing £30/40 to £100/150 or beyond. More money doesn't always mean a better hotel, though – whatever your budget, some are excellent value while others overcharge. Throughout this book, we guide you to the best choices.

### REACH FOR THE STARS

As in most countries, most hotels and B&Bs (and even hostels) in Britain are awarded stars by the national tourist board and main motoring organisations, according to their levels of quality and service. Since 2005, and for the first time ever, star-ratings are unified (although it was pretty rare to find a place earning, say, five stars from one body and only three from another), but travellers in Britain shouldn't worry *too* much about big numbers as many one- or two-star places are small and owner-managed, where guests can feel especially welcome. Conversely, some five-star places have loads of facilities but can feel a bit impersonal. In addition, because they have to pay to register with the tourist board before they're awarded any stars at all, many B&Bs don't bother, even though their service is absolutely fine. The moral: if you use official accommodation lists as your only source, you might miss out on a real gem.

If all you want is a place to put your head down, and you're unconcerned about style or ambience, chain hotels (often along motorways and busy roads) can offer bargains. For example, **Travelodge** ([www.travelodge.co.uk](http://www.travelodge.co.uk)) offers rooms at variable prices based on demand: on a quiet night in November twin-bed rooms with private bathroom start from £15, and at the height of the tourist season you'll pay up to £45. Other chains include **Hotel Formule 1** ([www.hotelformule1.com](http://www.hotelformule1.com)), with rooms from £25.

In London and other cities you can find similar places – motorway-style, in the centre of town – that can be very good value, although totally lacking in atmosphere. These include **Premier Travel Inn** ([www.premiertravelinn.com](http://www.premiertravelinn.com)) and **easyHotel** ([www.easyhotel.com](http://www.easyhotel.com)), the latter with no-frills airline-style rates and rooms.

## Pubs & Inns

As well as selling drinks, many pubs and inns offer lodging and breakfast, particularly in country areas. Staying in a pub can be good fun – you're automatically at the centre of the community – although accommodation varies greatly, from stylish suites to threadbare rooms aimed at (and last used by) 1950s commercial salesmen. You'll pay around £15 per person at the cheap end, and around £30 for something better. An advantage for solo tourists is that pubs are more likely to have single rooms.

If a pub does B&B, it normally does evening meals, served in the bar or adjoining restaurant. Breakfast may also be served in the bar the next morning – not always enhanced by the smell of stale beer.

For more information on pubs, see p107.

## Rental Accommodation

If you want to slow down and get to know a place better, renting for a week or two can

### SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND?

Britain has a beguiling selection of hotels and cottages, and throughout this book we list many that stand out above the crowd. To widen the choice still further, and maybe discover a gem for yourself, contact the **Landmark Trust** (☎ 01628-825925; [www.landmarktrust.org.uk](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk)), an architectural charity that rents historic buildings; your options include medieval castles, Napoleonic forts and 18th-century follies.

Another option is **Distinctly Different** ([www.distinctlydifferent.co.uk](http://www.distinctlydifferent.co.uk)), specialising in unusual, bizarre or even vaguely risqué accommodation. Can't sleep at night? How about a former funeral parlour? Need to spice up your romance? Then go for the converted brothel or the 'proudly phallic' lighthouse. Feeling brave? We have just the haunted inn for you, sir.

Come back safely down to earth with the final option. The **National Trust** (NT; [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)) has more than 300 holiday cottages and 80 B&Bs, many on the land of NT-managed stately homes and working farms, in some of the finest locations in the country.

be ideal. Choose from neat town apartments, quaint old houses or converted farms (although always called 'cottages'), all with bedrooms, bathroom, lounge and equipped kitchen.

At busy times (especially July and August) you'll need to book ahead, and cottages for four people cost from around £200 to £300 per week. At quieter times £150 to £180 is more usual, and you may be able to rent for a long weekend. There are numerous cottage booking agencies with brochures and websites; Stilwell's (see the boxed text, p951) is a great place to start.

## University Accommodation

Many universities offer student accommodation to visitors during July and August vacations. You usually get a functional single bedroom with private bathroom, and self-catering flats are also available. Prices range from £10 to £30 per person. There's no central website, so you need to ask at the tourist offices in individual cities and towns.

## BUSINESS HOURS

### Museums & Sights

When it comes to sightseeing, large museums and major places of interest are usually open every day. Some smaller places will open just five or six days per week, usually including Saturday and Sunday, but may be closed on Monday and/or Tuesday. Much depends on the time of year, too; places of interest will open daily in high season, but may open just at weekends (or keep shorter hours) in quieter periods.

### Pubs, Bars & Clubs

Pubs in towns and country areas in England and Wales usually open from 11am to 11pm Sunday

to Thursday, sometimes to midnight Friday and Saturday. Most open all day, although some may shut from 3pm to 6pm. In Scotland, pubs tend to close later; 1am is normal, and 3am is not unusual. Throughout this book, we don't list pub opening and closing times unless they vary significantly from these hours.

In cities, some pubs open until midnight or later, but it's mostly bars and clubs which have taken advantage of new licensing laws in England and Wales ('the provision of late-night refreshment', as it's officially called) to stay open to 1am, 2am or later. As every place is different, we list opening hours for bars and clubs.

### Restaurants & Cafés

Restaurants in Britain open either for lunch (about noon to 3pm) *and* dinner (about 7.30pm to 10pm in smaller towns, up to 11pm or midnight in cities, as early as 8pm in country areas), or they might open for lunch *or* dinner only – depending on the location. Restaurants are usually open every day of the week, although some may close on Sunday evening, or all day Monday.

Cafés and teashops also vary according to location. In towns and cities, cafés may open from 7am, providing breakfast for people on their way to work. Others stay open until 5pm or 6pm. In country areas, cafés and teashops will open in time for lunch, and may stay open until 7pm or later in the summer, catering to tourists or hikers.

Throughout this book, many restaurants and cafés are listed and reviewed, and we indicate if they're open for lunch or dinner or both, but precise opening times and days are given only if they differ markedly from the pattern outlined here.

In winter months in country areas, café and restaurant hours will be cut back, while some places may close completely from October to Easter.

### Shops, Banks & Offices

Monday to Friday, banks generally operate 9.30am to 5pm; post offices 9am to 6pm; and most offices, businesses and shops 9am to 5pm (possibly 5.30am or 6pm in cities). On Saturday, shops and main post offices keep the same hours, and main bank branches open 9.30am to 1pm; Sunday shopping hours are around 10am to 4pm.

In smaller towns, shops tend to close at weekends and for lunch (normally 1pm to 2pm), and in country areas on Wednesday or Thursday afternoon too. In cities and large towns, there's usually 'late-night' shopping on Thursday – up to about 7pm or 8pm. London and large cities have 24-hour convenience stores. At the other end of the scale, in the Outer Hebrides some locals adhere strictly to the Scriptures, so on Sunday, most shops and pubs are closed, few ferries run and you might even find the public toilets are padlocked.

### CHILDREN

Who'd have 'em? No, really, travel with children can be fun, and kids are a great excuse if you secretly yearn to visit railway museums or ride the scariest roller coaster in the country. Many national parks and resort towns organise activities for children, especially in the school holiday periods (see p959), and local tourist offices are another great source of information on kid-friendly attractions. To help you further we've also included sections such as 'London for Children', 'Manchester for Children' and so on in the big-city sections.

Some hotels welcome kids (with their parents) and provide cots, toys and babysitting services, while others prefer to maintain an adult atmosphere, so you need to check this in advance. Likewise restaurants: some will have crayons and highchairs, and not mind if the menu ends up on the floor; others firmly say 'no children after 6pm'. Pubs and bars ban under-18s, unless they're specifically 'family-friendly' places – and many are, especially those serving food.

On the sticky topic of dealing with nappies while travelling, most museums and historical attractions have very good baby-changing facilities (cue old joke: I swapped mine for a

nice souvenir), as do smart department stores. Elsewhere, you find facilities in motorway service stations and city-centre toilets – although the latter can sometimes be a bit on the grimy side.

Breastfeeding in public remains mildly controversial, but if done modestly is usually considered OK. For more advice see [www.babygoes2.com](http://www.babygoes2.com) – packed with tips, advice and encouragement for parents on the move.

### CLIMATE CHARTS

For a discussion on Britain's changeable weather, see p24. See the climate charts (opposite) for the figures:

### CUSTOMS

The UK has a two-tier customs system – one for goods bought in another EU country where taxes and duties have already been paid, and the other for goods bought duty-free outside the EU. Following is a summary of the rules; for more details see [www.hmce.gov.uk](http://www.hmce.gov.uk) or under Customs Allowances at [www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com).

### Duty Free

If you bring duty-free goods from *outside* the EU, the limits include 200 cigarettes, 2L of still wine, plus 1L of spirits or another 2L of wine, 60cc of perfume, and other duty-free goods (including beer) to the value of £145.

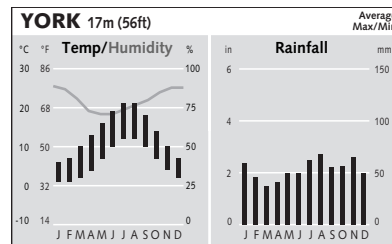
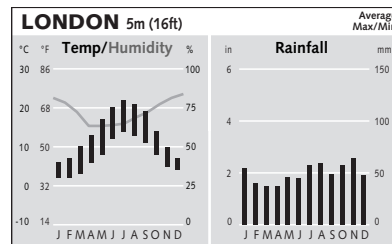
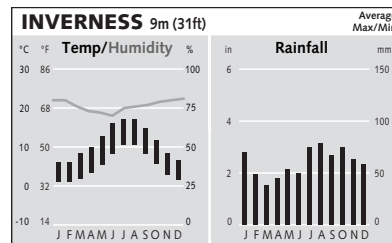
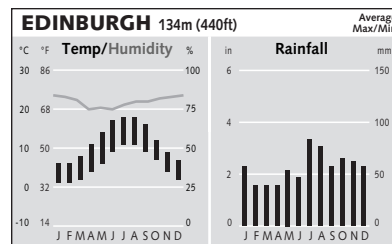
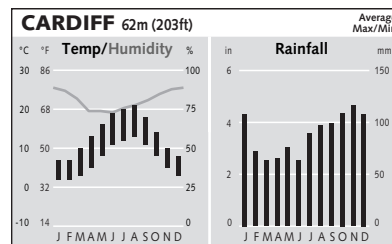
### Tax & Duty Paid

There is no limit to the goods you can bring from *within* the EU (if taxes have been paid), but customs officials use the following guidelines to distinguish personal use from commercial imports: 3000 cigarettes, 200 cigars, 10L of spirits, 20L of fortified wine, 90L of wine and 110L of beer – still enough to have one hell of a party.

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Britain is a remarkably safe country, considering the wealth disparities you'll see in many areas, but crime is certainly not unknown in London and other cities, so you should take care – especially at night. When travelling by tube, tram or urban train service, choose a carriage containing lots of people. It's also best to avoid some deserted suburban tube stations at night; a bus or taxi can be a safer choice.

As well as licensed taxis and minicabs (see p972 for the difference), unlicensed minicabs –



essentially a bloke with a car earning money on the side – operate in large cities, but these are worth avoiding unless you know what you're doing. Annoyances include driving round in circles, then charging an enormous fare. Dangers include driving to a remote location then robbery or rape. To avoid this, use a metered taxi or phone a reputable minicab company and get an up-front quote for the ride. London and other big cities have websites and central phone lines to help you find a licensed cab; details are in the relevant chapters of this book.

On the main streets of big cities, mugging or bag-snatching is rare but money and important documents are best kept out of sight and out of reach rather than in a handbag or shoulder bag. Pickpockets operate in crowded public places such as tube stations or busy pubs and bars (bags and jackets hanging on chair-backs are popular targets), so make sure your stuff is safe here too.

In large hotels, don't leave valuables lying around the room; put them in your bag or use the safe if there is one. There's no harm doing the same at city B&Bs too, although in rural areas there's far less risk. In hostels with shared dorms, especially in the independent/backpacker hostels in cities and large towns, you should keep your stuff packed away and carry valuables with you. Many hostels provide lockers, but you need your own padlock.

If you're driving, remove luggage from the car when parking overnight in cities and towns. The same applies even in some apparently safe rural locations. While you're out

### BEWARE TINY BITES

Between June and August, especially in northern England, and most notoriously in Scotland, millions of tiny biting insects called midges take to the air on cool windless evenings. They are not a danger, but their bites get very annoying if you're camping or enjoying outdoor activities. If you're staying in hostels or B&Bs they're no problem, but the gardens of country pubs can be a bit 'midgery' around sunset. Ways to counter the attack include wearing light-coloured clothing and using midge repellents (available in pharmacies and outdoor stores – brands without DDT include Mozi-guard and Swamp Gel). Or going inside.

walking in the countryside, someone may well be walking off with your belongings. Where possible, look for secure parking areas near tourist offices.

## DISCOUNT CARDS

There's no specific discount card available for visitors to Britain, although travel cards (see p969) are discounted for younger and older people. Membership of the YHA and SYHA (see p951) can get you discounts in bookshops and outdoor-gear shops, and on some public transport.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### British Embassies

Below is a selection of Britain's diplomatic missions (embassies, consulates and high commissions) overseas; for a complete list, see the website of the **Foreign & Commonwealth Office** ([www.fc.gov.uk](http://www.fc.gov.uk)), which also lists foreign embassies in the UK.

**Australia** (☎ 02-6270 6666; [www.britaus.net](http://www.britaus.net); Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

**Canada** (☎ 613-237 1530; 80 Elgin St, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5K7)

**France** (☎ 01 44 51 31 00; [www.amb-grande-bretagne.fr](http://www.amb-grande-bretagne.fr); 35 rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré, 75383 Paris Cedex 8)

**Germany** (☎ 030-204 570; [www.britischesbotschaft.de](http://www.britischesbotschaft.de); Wilhelmstrasse 70, 10117 Berlin)

**Ireland** (☎ 01-205 3700; [www.britischembassy.ie](http://www.britischembassy.ie); 29 Merrion Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4)

**Japan** (☎ 03-5211 1100; [www.uknow.or.jp](http://www.uknow.or.jp); 1 Ichibancho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8381)

**Netherlands** (☎ 070-427 0427; [www.britain.nl](http://www.britain.nl); Lange Voorhout 10, 2514 ED The Hague)

**New Zealand** (☎ 04-924 2888; [www.britain.org.nz](http://www.britain.org.nz); 44 Hill St, Wellington 1)

**USA** (☎ 202-588 6500; [www.britainusa.com](http://www.britainusa.com); 3100 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20008)

### Embassies in Britain

A selection of foreign diplomatic missions in London is given below. This will be of use to tourists from overseas if, for example, you've lost your passport. But remember that these embassies won't be much help if you're in trouble for committing a crime locally; even as a foreigner, you are bound by the laws of Britain.

**Australia** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 020-7379 4334; [www.australia.org.uk](http://www.australia.org.uk); Strand, WC2B 4LA)

**Canada** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 020-7258 6600; [www.canada.org.uk](http://www.canada.org.uk); 1 Grosvenor Sq, W1X 0AB)

**China** (☎ 020-7299 4049; [www.chinese-embassy.org.uk](http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk); 49-51 Portland Pl, W1B 4JL)

**France** (☎ 020-7073 1000; [www.ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org); 58 Knightsbridge, SW1 7JT)

**Germany** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 020-7824 1300; [www.german-embassy.org.uk](http://www.german-embassy.org.uk); 23 Belgrave Sq, SW1X 8PX)

**Ireland** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 020-7235 2171; 17 Grosvenor Pl, SW1X 7HR)

**Japan** (☎ 020-7465 6500; [www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp); 101 Piccadilly, W1J 7JT)

**Netherlands** (Map pp120-1; ☎ 020-7590 3200; [www.netherlands-embassy.org.uk](http://www.netherlands-embassy.org.uk); 38 Hyde Park Gate, SW7 5DP)

**New Zealand** (Map pp130-1; ☎ 020-7930 8422; [www.nzembassy.com/uk](http://www.nzembassy.com/uk); 80 Haymarket, SW1Y 4TQ)

**Poland** (☎ 0870 774 2700; [polishembassy.org.uk](http://polishembassy.org.uk); 47 Portland Pl, W1B 1HQ)

**USA** (Map pp122-3; ☎ 020-7499 9000; [www.usembassy.org.uk](http://www.usembassy.org.uk); 24 Grosvenor Sq, W1A 1AE)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Countless festivals and events are held around the country all year. Below is a selection of biggies that are worth trying in with your travels, and some of the smaller (and, frankly, more bizarre) events that are also worth catching. In addition, many towns have annual fairs or fêtes; many of these are listed in the regional chapters. Events are listed roughly chronologically, and where appropriate specific dates are given.

### January

**New Year Celebrations** (1 January; city centres nationwide) Get drunk and kiss strangers as the bells chime midnight. The biggest crowds are in London's Trafalgar Sq.

**Up Helly Aa** (last Tuesday of January, Lerwick, Shetland Islands) The islanders honour their Nordic heritage by dressing up as Vikings and burning a longship.

### February

**Jorvik Viking Festival** (mid-February; York) Horned helmets galore, plus mock invaders and Viking longship races. See p533.

**Shrove Tuesday Football** (Shrove Tuesday; Ashbourne, Derbyshire) It's football, Jim, but not as we know it: day-long match, 3-mile pitch, hundreds of players, very few rules.

### March

**Crufts Dog Show** (early/mid-March; Birmingham) Highlight of the canine year. Top dogs abound.

**University Boat Race** (late March/early April; London) Traditional rowing contest on the River Thames, between Oxford and Cambridge University teams.

### April

**Grand National** (first Saturday in April; Aintree, Liverpool) The most famous horse race of them all, with notoriously high jumps.

**Beltane** (30 April; Edinburgh) Wild, weird and whacky fire and fertility festival, with dancing crowds, tribal drumming, body paint and lashings of sexual innuendo.

**Cheltenham Jazz Festival** (late April/early May; Cheltenham) One of the largest jazz gatherings in the country; big names, up-and-comings, concerts and funky club-dance evenings.

### May

**Obby Oss celebrations** (1 May; Padstow, Devon) Ancient fertility festival, now an excuse for dressing up, pinching behinds and general good times.

**FA Cup Final** (early May; Wembley Stadium, London) Gripping end to venerable football tournament.

**Brighton Festival** (Brighton) Lively and innovative three-week arts feast. See p236.

**Chelsea Flower Show** (late May; London) Blooming marvellous.

**Cheese Rolling** (late May; Gloucestershire) Simple concept, centuries old: a big lump of cheese is rolled down a very steep hill, chased by hundreds of locals. The winner keeps the cheese. Losers may have broken legs.

**Bath International Music Festival** (mid-May to early June; Bath) Top-class classical music and opera, plus jazz and world music, with art-full Fringe attached. See p260.

**Glyndebourne** (end May to August; Lewes, Sussex) World-class opera in country-house gardens.

### June

**Beating Retreat** (early June; London) Military bands march down Whitehall.

**Derby Week** (early June; Epsom, Surrey) Horse racing and people-watching.

**Aldeburgh Festival** (Aldeburgh, Suffolk) Classical music at the spiritual home of Benjamin Britten – Britain's best 20th-century composer.

**Cotswold Olimpics** (early June; Chipping Camden) Since 1612 the locals have competed in events such as shin-kicking, sack-racing and climbing the slippery pole.

**Trooping the Colour** (mid-June; London) Whitehall again; bearskins and pageantry for the Queen's birthday parade.

**Royal Ascot** (mid-June; Ascot, Berkshire) More horse racing, more people-watching, plus outrageous hats. See p66.

**Mela** (mid-June; Bradford, Yorkshire) Multicultural festival with South Asian focus – music, dance food and more. One of the largest events of its kind in Britain.

**Isle of Wight Festival** (mid-June; Isle of Wight) Successful revival of the 1960s' rip-roaring hippy happening. See p225.

**Wimbledon – Lawn Tennis Championships** (late June; London) Two weeks of rapid-fire returns.

**Royal Highland Show** (Edinburgh) Scotland's national display piece with big-horned cattle, cabers, bagpipes, kilts – the lot.

**Glastonbury Festival** (late June; Pilton, Somerset) Huge open-air musical happening, with hippy roots. See p269.

**Royal Regatta** (late June/early July; Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire) Premier rowing and social event. No hippies here. See p355.

**Pride** (June/July; London) Formerly Mardi Gras and Pride in the Park, and occasionally EuroPride – Britain's major gay and lesbian festival.

### July

**Hampton Court Palace International Flower Show** (early July; London) Does exactly what it says on the tin.

**Buxton Festival** (Buxton, Derbyshire) Relaxed and eclectic mix of opera, music and literature. See p448.

**Royal Welsh Show** (Builth Wells) National agricultural and cultural gathering.

**T in the Park** (early July; Balado) Open-air pop, rock and dance music. Scotland's answer to Glastonbury. See p796.

**World Mountain Bike Bog Snorkelling Championships** (early July, Llanwrtyd Wells) The name says it all. Cowes it ain't.

**Sesiw'n Fawr** (Dolgellau) Three-day rock, folk and beer bash in Mid Wales. Fast-growing and free.

**International Eisteddfod** (mid-July; Llangollen) Lively mix of cultures from Wales and far beyond. See p717.

**Cowes Week** (late July; Isle of Wight) World-class yachting spectacular and high point of society calendar.

**International Flying Display** (late July; Farnborough, Surrey) World's largest aeroplane show.

**Cambridge Folk Festival** (late July; Cambridge) A long-standing favourite, with artists from the realms of roots, world, blues, acoustic, American hillbilly and 1960s pop – as well as top folk names.

**Womad** (late July; Reading, Berkshire) Global gathering of frontier-crossing world and roots music; laid back and family-friendly.

**York Early Music Festival** (late July; York) Travel back in time, with medieval choirs and concerts.

**Truck** (late July; Abingdon, Oxfordshire) A low-key, off-beat, anticorporate music festival – and jolly good fun indeed.

**Eden Sessions** (July/August; Eden Project, Cornwall) The famous biomes are transformed into the county's most spectacular live music venue.

### August

**Royal National Eisteddfod** (early August; alternates between south and north Wales) The ancient bardic tradition continues; a festival of Welsh language, music and literature at its most powerful.

**Military Tattoo** (Edinburgh) Three weeks of pageantry and soldierly displays.

**Edinburgh International Festival** (Edinburgh) World-class arts gathering, overshadowed only by its own Fringe.

**Three Choirs Festival** (early August) Britain's premier, and the world's oldest, choral festival, held once every three years at the cathedrals of Gloucester, Hereford or Worcester.

**Sidmouth Folk Festival** (early August; Sidmouth, Devon) A week of traditional music, workshops, concerts, ceilidhs and barn dances.

**V Festival** (mid-August; Staffordshire & Chelmsford, Essex) More rock and pop, if you just can't get enough.

**Green Man Festival** (mid-August; Crickhowell) Old-school gathering of camp fires and late-night guitar strumming, featuring the best of the UK modern folk scene plus international acts from the alternative world.

**Whitby Folk Week** (mid-/late August; Whitby, Yorkshire) More traditional music and dance. Grab your partner, or sit and listen to the band.

**Notting Hill Carnival** (late August; London) Spectacular multicultural feast, Caribbean style.

**Reading Festival** (late August; Reading, Berkshire) Three-day rock, pop and dance extravaganza. A true original but now with a major corporate feel.

**Leeds Festival** (late August; Leeds, Yorkshire) Dubbed the 'Reading of the North', and pretty much the same type of thing.

**World Bog Snorkelling Championships** (late August; Llanwrtyd Wells) Following July's filthy cycling event, now it's the swimmers turn to snorkel through the mire. Crazy, but the crowds love it.

**The Big Chill** (late August; Herefordshire) Recover from summer's excesses; an eclectic and relaxed mix of live music, club events, DJs, multimedia and visual art.

## September

**Braemar Gathering** (first Saturday in September; Braemar, Deeside) With more than 20,000 people, including the royals, 'gathering' is an understatement for this famous Highland knees-up.

## October

**Horse of the Year Show** (early October; Birmingham) Top show-jumping event. No long faces here.

## November

**Guy Fawkes Day** (5 November) Bonfires and fireworks around the country.

## December

**New Year Celebrations** (31 December) That's another year gone! Get ready for midnight – see January.

## FOOD

For a flavour of Britain's cuisine, see the Food & Drink chapter (p101). For a real taste, visit the restaurants we recommend throughout this book. Most eating sections are divided into three price bands: budget (under £10), midrange (£10 to £20) and top end (over £20). These costs are for meals only; drinks

will be extra. In London 'budget' is under £15, midrange is £15 to £40 and top end over £40. For more guidance, see p24.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Britain is a generally tolerant place for gays and lesbians. London, Glasgow, Manchester, Cardiff and Brighton have flourishing gay scenes, and in other sizable cities (even some small towns) you'll find communities not entirely in the closet. That said, you'll still find pockets of homophobic hostility in some areas, and you only need read the *Daily Mail* to realise the limits of tolerance.

For info, listings and contacts, see monthly magazines (and websites) *Gay Times* ([www.gaytimes.co.uk](http://www.gaytimes.co.uk)) and *Diva* ([www.divamag.co.uk](http://www.divamag.co.uk)), or the twice-monthly newspaper *Pink Paper* ([www.pinkpaper.com](http://www.pinkpaper.com)). In the capital, a useful source of information is the **London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard** (☎ 020-7837 7324; [www.ligs.org.uk](http://www.ligs.org.uk); ☎ 24hr); there are similar services in cities and regions across the country. See also the boxed texts of specific gay and lesbian information in the sections on major cities throughout this book.

## HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS

For many visitors, a highlight of a journey through Britain is visiting the numerous castles and other historic sites that pepper the country. Membership of Britain's heritage organisations gives you free entry to properties, reciprocal arrangements with similar bodies, maps, information handbooks and so on.

The main organisations are: National Trust (NT), and its partner organisation National Trust for Scotland (NTS); English Heritage (EH) and its equivalent organisations Historic Scotland (HS) and Cadw. You can join at the first site you visit. If you are a member of a similar organisation in your own country, this may get you free or discounted entry at sites in Britain. We have included the relevant initials (NT, EH etc) in the information after every property listed in this book.

**Cadw** (☎ 0800 074 3121; [www.cadw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk))

This is the Welsh historic monuments agency. (The name means 'to keep' or 'to preserve'.) Membership costs adults £32 per year, 16 to 20 years £18 and children £14. Family membership costs £55, or £37 for a single-parent family. Cadw members are also eligible for half-price admission to EH and HS sites.

**English Heritage** (☎ 0870 333 1181; [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)) This state-funded organisation is respon-

sible for the upkeep of numerous historic sites in England. Some are free, while others cost £1.50 to £6. Annual membership costs £38/65 per adult/couple (£26/42 for seniors). Alternatively, an Overseas Visitors Pass allows free entry to most major EH sites for seven/14 days for £18/22 per person (with cheaper rates for couples and families), and half-price for HS and Cadw sites.

**Historic Scotland** (☎ 0131-668 8600; [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)) This organisation manages more than 330 historic sites, and goes to great lengths to make things engaging and interesting for kids and adults, as well as accessible for less able visitors. A year's membership costs £36 for adults (£46 if you join from overseas), giving free admission to HS sites and half-price admission to EH and Cadw properties. 'Explorer' passes cost £18 for three days in five, £25 for seven days in 14, or £30 for 10 days in 30. Students and seniors get 25% discount on passes.

**National Trust** (☎ 0870 458 4000; [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)) This venerable body protects hundreds of historic buildings (normally around £5 to enter) plus vast tracts of land with scenic importance in England and Wales. Membership costs £40 per year (£18 for under-26s, and £55 to £73 for families), reduced by about 25% if you pay by direct debit. Alternatively, a NT touring pass gives free entry to NT and NTS properties for seven or 14 days (£17/22 per person); families and couples get cheaper rates.

**National Trust for Scotland** (☎ 0131-243 9300; [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)) The NT's sister organisation north of the border cares for more than 100 properties and around 290 sq miles of countryside. A year's membership costs £37 (£15/27/60 for under 25s/seniors/family),

## HOLIDAYS

### Public Holidays

In Britain, most businesses and banks close on public holidays (hence the quaint term 'Bank Holiday'). In Scotland, Bank Holidays are just for the banks, and many businesses stay open. Instead, Scottish towns normally have a spring and autumn holiday, but the dates vary from town to town.

Holidays for the whole of Britain (unless specified) are as follows:

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Good Friday** March/April

**Easter Monday** (Except Scotland) March/April

**May Day** First Monday in May

**Spring Bank Holiday** Last Monday in May

**Summer Bank Holiday** (Scotland) First Monday in August

**Summer Bank Holiday** (England & Wales) Last Monday in August

**Christmas Day** 25 December

**Boxing Day** 26 December

In Scotland, 2 January is also a holiday – so everyone can recover from Hogmanay.

Across Britain, if a public holiday falls on a weekend, the nearest Monday is usually taken instead. Some small museums and places of interest close on public holidays, but larger attractions specifically gear up, and this is their busiest time. Generally speaking, if a place closes on Sunday, it'll probably be shut on Bank Holidays as well.

Virtually everything – shops, banks, offices, attractions – is closed on Christmas Day, although pubs are open at lunchtime. There's usually no public transport on Christmas Day, and a very restricted service on Boxing Day.

## School Holidays

The main school holidays are generally as follows:

**Easter Holiday** The week before and week after Easter.

**Summer Holiday** Third week of July to first week of September.

**Christmas Holiday** Mid-December to first week of January.

There are three week-long 'half-term' school holidays – usually late February or early March, late May and late October. At school-holiday times, especially in the summer, roads and resorts get busy, and prices go up.

## INSURANCE

Travel insurance is highly recommended for all overseas visitors to Britain; see p975. For car insurance, see p970.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Places with internet access are reasonably common in Britain, but you won't find them on every corner. Internet cafés in bigger cities charge around £1 per hour; out in the sticks you can pay up to £5 per hour. Public libraries often have free access, but only for 30-minute slots.

If you plan to use your laptop to get online, your connection cable may not fit in British sockets, although adaptors are easy to buy at electrical stores in airports or city centres.

An increasing number of hotels, hostels and coffee shops (even some trains) have wi-fi access, charging anything from nothing to £5 per hour. Throughout this book, we use the ☑ icon to show if a place has PCs for public use, and the word 'wi-fi' if it has...you guessed it...wi-fi.

**LEGAL MATTERS****Driving Crimes & Transport Fines**

Drink-driving is a serious offence. For more information, and details about speed limits and parking rules, see p971.

On buses and trains (including the London Underground), people without a valid ticket for their journey may be fined – usually around £20 – on the spot.

**Drugs**

Illegal drugs are widely available, especially in clubs. All the usual dangers apply and there have been much-publicised deaths associated with ecstasy. The government reclassified cannabis in 2002: possession remains a criminal offence, but the punishment for carrying a small amount is usually a warning. Dealers face far stiffer penalties, as do people caught with any other ‘recreational’ drugs.

**MAPS**

For a map of the whole country, a road atlas is handy – especially if you’re travelling by car. The main publishers are Ordnance Survey (OS) and Automobile Association (AA), with atlases in all sizes and scales. If you plan to use minor roads, you’ll need a scale of about 1:200,000 (3 miles to 1in). Most road atlases cost £7 to £10 and are updated annually, which means old editions are sold off every January – look for bargains at motorway service stations.

For more detail, the OS *Landrangers* (1:50,000) is ideal for walking and cycling. OS *Explorer* maps (1:25,000) are even better for walking in lowland areas, but can sometimes be hard to read in complex mountain land-

scapes. Your best choice here is the excellent specialist series produced for rambblers, walkers, mountaineers and other outdoor types by **Harvey Maps** ([www.harveymaps.co.uk](http://www.harveymaps.co.uk)), covering upland areas and national parks, plus routes for hikers and bikers.

**MONEY**

The currency of Britain is the pound sterling. Paper money comes in £5, £10, £20 and £50 denominations (and £1 in Scotland), although £50s can be difficult to change because fakes circulate. Other currencies are not accepted if you’re buying goods and services, except for a few places in southern England which take euros.

In England and Wales, notes are issued by the Bank of England, and in Scotland by Clydesdale Bank, Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank of Scotland. All are legal tender on both sides of the border, but if you have any problems, ask a bank to swap them.

A guide to exchange rates is given on the inside front cover, and for some pointers on costs, see p24.

**ATMs**

Debit or credit cards are perfect companions – the best invention for travellers since the backpack. You can use them in most shops, and withdraw cash from ATMs (often called ‘cash machines’) – which are easy to find in cities and even small towns. But ATMs aren’t fail-safe, and it’s a major headache if your only card gets swallowed, so take a back-up.

**Credit & Debit Cards**

Visa, MasterCard and Amex cards are widely accepted in Britain, and are good for larger hotels, flights, long-distance travel, car hire etc. Smaller businesses, such as pubs or B&Bs, often only take cash or cheque.

Since early 2006, nearly all credit and debit cards use the ‘chip & pin’ system; instead of signing, you enter a PIN (personal identification number). If you’re from overseas, and your card isn’t ‘chip & pin’ enabled, you sign in the usual way.

**Moneychangers**

Finding a place to change your money (cash or travellers cheques) into pounds is never a problem in cities, where banks and bureaux compete for business. Be careful using bureaux, however; some offer poor rates or

levy outrageous commissions. You can also change money at some post offices – very handy in country areas, and rates are usually good.

**Tippling & Bargaining**

In restaurants you’re expected to leave around 10% tip, but at smarter restaurants in larger cities waiters can get a bit sniffy if the tip isn’t nearer 12% or even 15%. Either way, it’s important to remember that you’re not obliged to tip if the service or food was unsatisfactory (even if it’s been added to your bill as a ‘service charge’). At smarter cafés and teashops with table service around 10% is fine. If you’re paying with a credit or debit card, and you want to add the tip to the bill, it’s worth asking the waiting staff if they’ll actually receive it. Some prefer to receive tips in cash.

Taxi drivers also expect tips (about 10%, or rounded up to the nearest pound), especially in London. It’s less usual to tip minicab drivers. Toilet attendants (if you see them loitering) may get tipped around 50p.

In pubs, when you order and pay for drinks or food at the bar, tips are not expected. If you order food at the table and your meal is brought to you, then a tip may be appropriate – if the food and service have been good, of course. For more advice see p108.

Bargaining is rare, although occasionally encountered at markets. It’s fine to ask if there are student discounts on items such as theatre tickets, books or outdoor equipment.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques (TCs) offer protection from theft, so are safer than wads of cash, but are rarely used in Britain these days, as credit/debit cards and ATMs become the method of choice for most people. If you do prefer TCs, note that they are rarely accepted for purchases (except at large hotels), so for cash you’ll still need to go to a bank or bureau.

**POST**

Although queues in main post offices can be long, the Royal Mail delivers a good service. Within the UK, 1st-class letters cost 32p and usually take one day; 2nd-class (23p) up to three days. Letters by airmail cost 44p to EU European countries and 72p to the rest of the world (up to 20g). Postcards are 50p. For details on all prices, see [www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk).

**TELEPHONE**

Britain’s iconic red phone boxes can still be seen in city streets and especially in conservation areas, although many have been replaced by soulless glass cubicles. Either way, public phones accept coins (minimum charge 20p), and usually credit/debit cards, although with the advent of mobile phones (cell phones), many phone booths have been removed and not replaced at all.

Area codes in Britain do not have a standard format, and vary in length, which can be confusing for foreigners (and many Brits). For example ☎ 020 for London, ☎ 029 for Cardiff, ☎ 0161 for Manchester, ☎ 0113 for Leeds, ☎ 01629 for Matlock and ☎ 015394 for Ambleside, followed as usual by the individual number. Throughout this book, most area codes are listed at the start of each city/area section. For clarity, where area codes and individual numbers are listed together, they’re separated by a hyphen.

As well as the geographical area codes, other ‘codes’ include: ☎ 0500 or ☎ 0800 for free calls, and ☎ 0845 for calls at local rate, wherever you’re dialling from within the UK. Numbers starting with ☎ 087 are charged at national-call rate, while numbers starting with ☎ 089 or ☎ 09 are premium rate, and should be specified by the company using the number (ie in their advertising literature), so you know the cost before you call. (These codes and numbers are not separated by hyphen in this book, as you always have to dial the whole number.) Note that many numbers starting with ☎ 08 or ☎ 09 do not work if you’re calling from outside the UK, or if they do you’ll be charged for a full international call – and then some.

Codes for mobile phones usually start with ☎ 07; calls are more expensive than calling a land line.

**International Calls**

To call outside the UK dial ☎ 00, then the country code (☎ 1 for USA, ☎ 61 for Australia etc), the area code (you usually drop the initial zero) and the number.

Direct-dialled calls to most overseas countries can be made from most public telephones, and it’s usually cheaper between 8pm and 8am Monday to Friday and at weekends. You can usually save money by buying a phonecard (usually denominated £5, £10 or £20) with a PIN that you use from any phone

**LEGAL AGE**

The age of consent in Britain is 16 (gay and straight). You can also get married at 16 (with permission from parents), but you’ll have to wait two years for the toast – you must be over 18 to buy alcohol. Over-16s may buy cigarettes, so it’s legal to have a celebratory smoke instead.

You usually have to be 18 to enter a pub or bar, although the rules are different if you have a meal. Some bars and clubs are over-21 only, so you won’t see many high-chairs – although there may be a lot of school uniforms around.



by dialling an access number (you don't insert it into the machine). There are dozens of cards, usually available from city newsagents – with rates of the various companies often vividly displayed.

To make reverse-charge (collect) calls, dial ☎ 155 for the international operator. It's an expensive option, but what the hell – the other person is paying!

To call Britain from abroad, dial your country's international access code, then ☎ 44 (the UK's country code), then the area code (dropping the first 0) and the phone number.

Most internet cafés now have Skype or some other sort of internet-telephone system, so you can make international calls for the price of your time online.

### Local & National calls

Local calls (within 35 miles) are cheaper than national calls. All calls are cheaper from 6pm to 8am Monday to Friday, and from midnight Friday to midnight Sunday. From private phones, rates vary between telecom providers. From BT public phones the weekday rate is about 5p per minute; evenings and weekends it's about 1p per minute.

For the operator, call ☎ 100. For directory inquiries, a host of agencies compete for your business and charge from 10p to 40p; numbers include ☎ 118192, ☎ 118118, ☎ 118247, ☎ 118500 and ☎ 118811.

### Mobile Phones

Around 50 million people in the UK have mobile phones, and thus the ability to tell their loved ones they're on the train. The terse medium of SMS is a national passion, with a billion text messages sent monthly.

Phones in the UK use GSM 900/1800, which is compatible with Europe and Australia but not with North America or Japan (although phones that work globally are increasingly common). Even if your phone works in the UK, because it's registered overseas a call to someone just up the road will be routed internationally and charged accordingly. An option is to buy a local SIM card (around £10), which includes a UK number, and use that in your own handset (as long as your phone isn't locked by your home network).

A second option is to buy a pay-as-you-go phone (from around £50); to stay in credit, you buy 'top-up' cards at newsagents. A third option is to rent a phone – see p133.

### TIME

Wherever you are in the world, time is measured in relation to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT, or Universal Time Coordinated – UTC – as it's more accurately called), so a highlight for many visitors to London is a trip to Greenwich and its famous line dividing the western and eastern hemispheres.

To give you an idea, if it is noon in London, it is 4am on the same day in San Francisco, 7am in New York and 10pm in Sydney. British summer time (BST) is Britain's daylight saving; one hour ahead of GMT from late March to late October.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

Before leaving home, check the comprehensive and wide-ranging website of **VisitBritain** ([www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com)) or the more specific sites [www.enjoyengland.com](http://www.enjoyengland.com), [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) and [www.visitwales.com](http://www.visitwales.com). Between them they cover all angles of national tourism, with links to numerous other sites. Details about local and regional websites and tourist organisations are also given at the start of each main chapter throughout this book.

### Local Tourist Offices

All British cities and towns (and some villages) have a Tourist Information Centre (TIC). Some TICs are run by national parks. You'll also come across Visitor Welcome Centres, Visitor Information Centres or Visitor Information Points; for ease, we've used 'tourist office' throughout this book.

Whatever the name, these places usually have incredibly helpful staff, books and maps for sale, leaflets to give away and loads of advice on things to see or do. They can also assist with booking accommodation (sometimes free, sometimes for a small charge). Most tourist offices keep regular business hours; in quiet areas they close from October to March, while in popular areas they open daily year-round.

Look out too for Tourist Information Points – usually a rack of leaflets about local attractions set up in a post office or shop in a village not big enough to have its own full-on tourist office. And be aware that some Visitor Information Points are privately owned booking agencies – for local self-catering cottages or similar. You can often pick up leaflets here, but the staff rarely provide additional (or independent) tourism information.

For a list of all official tourist offices around Britain see [www.visitmap.info/tic](http://www.visitmap.info/tic).

### Tourist Offices Abroad

VisitBritain's main overseas offices are listed below. Those in other countries are listed on [www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com). Offices with a physical address can deal with walk-in visitors; for the others it's phone or email only. As well as information, they can help with discount travel cards, often available only if you book before arrival in Britain.

**Australia** (☎ 02-9021 4400; [www.visitbritain.com/au](http://www.visitbritain.com/au); 15 Blue St, North Sydney, NSW 2060)

**Canada** (☎ 1 888 847 4885; [www.visitbritain.com/ca](http://www.visitbritain.com/ca))

**France** (☎ 01 58 36 50 50; [www.visitbritain.com/fr](http://www.visitbritain.com/fr))

**Germany** (☎ 01801-468 642; [www.visitbritain.com/de](http://www.visitbritain.com/de); Hackescher Markt 1, 10178 Berlin)

**Ireland** (☎ 01-670 8000; [www.visitbritain.com/ie](http://www.visitbritain.com/ie); 22-24 Newmount House, Lower Mount St, Dublin 2)

**Japan** (☎ 03-5562 2550; [www.visitbritain.com/jp](http://www.visitbritain.com/jp); 1F Akasaka Twin Tower, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052)

**Netherlands** (☎ 020-689 0002; [www.visitbritain.com/nl](http://www.visitbritain.com/nl))

**New Zealand** (☎ 0800 700741; [www.visitbritain.com/nz](http://www.visitbritain.com/nz))

**USA** (☎ 800 462 2748; [www.visitbritain.com/us](http://www.visitbritain.com/us); 551 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10176)

### TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

If you happen to use a wheelchair or crutches, or just find moving about a bit tricky, you'll find Britain a mixed bag. All new buildings have wheelchair access, and even hotels in grand old country houses often have modern lifts, ramps and other facilities added, although smaller B&Bs and guesthouses are often harder to adapt, so you'll have less choice here. In this book we've used an icon (♿) to indicate hotels, restaurants and so on that are 'wheelchair friendly'. For us that means the whole package. It's no good, for example, having a ramp to the door, but then tables so close together that even the able-bodied have trouble squeezing through, or toilets up a flight of steps with no lift.

In cities, old-style buses had conductors to lend a hand when getting on or off, but new buses have a driver only. The new buses do have low floors for easy access, although this 'disabled friendly' development seems to have absolved the rest of the travelling public from offering assistance. Many taxis take wheelchairs, or just have more room in the back, so that might be a better way to go.

For long-distance travel, coaches present problems if you can't walk, but staff will help

where possible (see the 'Why choose us?' section of [www.nationalexpress.com](http://www.nationalexpress.com)). On trains there's usually more room and better facilities, and often station staff around; just have a word and they'll be happy to help. If possible, make advance arrangements, and you'll find a staff-member expecting you and ready to help.

Useful organisations and websites include the following:

**All Go Here** ([www.allgohere.com](http://www.allgohere.com)) Comprehensive info on hotels and travel.

**Disability UK** ([www.disabilityuk.com](http://www.disabilityuk.com)) Excellent resource, includes details of shopmobility schemes.

**Good Access Guide** ([www.goodaccessguide.co.uk](http://www.goodaccessguide.co.uk)) The name says it all.

**Holiday Care Service** (☎ 0845 124 9971; [www.holidaycare.org.uk](http://www.holidaycare.org.uk)) Publisher of numerous booklets on UK travel.

**Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation** (Radar; ☎ 020-7250 3222; [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk)) Published titles include *Holidays in Britain and Ireland*.

### VISAS

If you're a European Economic Area (EEA) national, you don't need a visa to visit Britain (you can also work here freely). Citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA are given leave to enter Britain at their point of arrival for up to six months, but are prohibited from working. (If you intend to seek work, see p964.)

Visa and entry regulations are always subject to change, so it's vital to check with your local British embassy, high commission or consulate before leaving home. For more information, check [www.ukvisas.gov.uk](http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk).

For more information about entering the country, see p965.

### WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Britain is in transition when it comes to weights and measures, as it has been for the last 20 years – and probably will be for 20 more. Most people still use imperial units of inches, feet, yards and miles, although mountain heights on maps are given in metres only.

For weight, many people use pounds and ounces, even though since January 2000 goods in shops must be measured in kilograms. And nobody knows their weight in pounds (like Americans) or kilograms (like the rest of the world); Brits weigh themselves in stones, an archaic unit of 14 pounds.



**TRACE THE ANCESTORS**

If you're a visitor with ancestors who once lived in Britain, your trip could be a good chance to find out more about (or simply find) long-lost relatives. Here are a few guidelines to get you started.

The **Family Records Centre** (☎ 0845 603 7788; [www.familyrecords.gov.uk](http://www.familyrecords.gov.uk); 1 Myddelton St, London EC1R 1UW), a helpful department of the Public Records Office (PRO), is familiar with the needs of ancestor-hunters and has publications (available by post) outlining the process. You'll need a passport as ID to see original records, although documents referring to individuals are closed for 100 years to safeguard confidentiality.

The **Association of Genealogists & Researchers in Archives** ([www.agra.org.uk](http://www.agra.org.uk)) lists professional researchers. For a fee they can search for ancestors or living relatives on your behalf.

When it comes to volume, things are even worse: most liquids are sold in litres or half-litres, except milk and beer, which come in pints. Garages sell petrol priced in pence per litre, but measure car performance in miles per gallon. Great, isn't it?

In this book we have reflected this wacky system of mixed measurements: heights are given in metres (m) and distances in miles. For conversion tables, see the inside front cover.

**WOMEN TRAVELLERS**

The occasional wolf whistle from a building site or groper on the London Underground aside, solo women will find Britain fairly enlightened. There's nothing to stop women going into pubs alone, for example – although you may feel conspicuous in a few places. Restaurants may assume you're waiting for a date unless you specify a table for one, but once you've clarified, it's no big deal.

The contraceptive pill is available free on prescription in Britain, as is the morning-after pill (also on sale at chemists). Most big towns have a Well Woman Clinic that can advise on general health issues; find its address in the local phone book.

Safety is not a major issue, although commonsense caution should be observed in big cities, especially at night. Hitching is always unwise. See p954 for advice on travel by minicab. Should the worst happen, most cities and towns have a Rape Crisis centre, where infor-

mation or counselling is free and confidential; see [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk) for details.

**WORK**

Nationals of most European countries don't need a permit to work in Britain, but everyone else does. If you're a non-European, and this is the main purpose of your visit, you must be sponsored by a British company.

Exceptions include Commonwealth citizens with a UK-born parent; a Certificate of Entitlement to the Right of Abode allows you to live and work in Britain free of immigration control. If one of your grandparents was born in the UK you may be eligible for an Ancestry Employment Certificate allowing full-time work for up to four years.

Commonwealth citizens under 31 without UK ancestry are allowed to take temporary work during their holiday, but need a Working Holiday Entry Certificate – which must be obtained in advance and is valid for four years. You're not allowed to engage in business, pursue a career (evidently serving in bars doesn't count as a 'career') or work as a professional athlete or entertainer. Au pair placements are generally permitted.

Useful websites include: [www.workingintheuk.gov.uk](http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk) (the official government site); [www.bunac.org](http://www.bunac.org) (advice on six-month work permits for students from the USA); and [www.workingholidayguru.com](http://www.workingholidayguru.com) (aimed mainly at Australians coming to Europe).

# Transport

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

London is an international transport hub, so you can easily fly to Britain from just about anywhere in the world. In recent years, the massive growth of budget ('no-frills') airlines has increased the number of routes – and reduced fares – between Britain and destinations in Ireland or mainland Europe.

Your other main option for travel between Britain and mainland Europe is ferry, either port-to-port or combined with a long-distance bus trip – although journeys can be long and savings not huge compared with budget airfares. International trains are much more comfortable, and the Channel Tunnel allows direct rail services between Britain, France and Belgium.

### THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Getting from England to Scotland and Wales is easy. The bus and train systems are fully integrated and in most cases you won't even know you've crossed the border. Passports are not required – although some Scots and Welsh may think they should be!

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

## ENTERING THE COUNTRY

British immigration authorities are always polite and professional, but if they suspect you're entering Britain for more than a holiday they can be tough, and you may need to prove that you have funds to support yourself, details of any hotels or local tours booked, or personal letters from people you'll be visiting. Having a return ticket helps too.

## Passport

All visitors to Britain need a valid passport. For details of who needs a visa see p963.

## AIR Airports

London's Heathrow and Gatwick are the two main airports for international flights. Also near London, Luton and Stansted airports deal largely with charter and budget European flights, while London City Airport specialises in business flights. For more details on getting between the London airports and central London see p179.

Some 15 miles west of central London, **Heathrow** (LHR; ☎ 0870 000 0123; [www.heathrowairport.com](http://www.heathrowairport.com)) is the world's busiest airport, often chaotic and crowded, with four terminals (plus a fifth under construction and a sixth mooted). If you're leaving Britain via Heathrow, make certain you know which terminal your flight is departing from, and allow plenty of time to stand in queues for security checks or get lost in the labyrinth of shops and soulless eateries.

Smaller than Heathrow, but increasingly busy, **Gatwick** (LGW; ☎ 0870 000 2468; [www.gatwickairport.com](http://www.gatwickairport.com)) is 30 miles south of central London, and served by scheduled, charter and budget airlines.

**DEPARTURE TAX**

Flights within the UK and to EU destinations attract a £10 departure tax. For other international flights from the UK you pay £20. This is usually included in the ticket price.

London's third-busiest airport, **Stansted** (STN; ☎ 0870 000 0303; www.stanstedairport.com) is 35 miles northeast of central London, and used mainly by charter and budget airlines – making it one of Europe's fastest-growing airports.

Some 35 miles north of central London, **Luton** (LTN; ☎ 01582-405100; www.london-luton.co.uk) is the main base of low-cost airline EasyJet, and also serves charter flights.

About 6 miles east of central London in Docklands, **London City Airport** (LCY; ☎ 020-7646 0088; www.londoncityairport.com), has flights to/from mainland Europe, Ireland and other UK airports.

Some planes on transatlantic and European routes zip direct to major regional airports such as Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester, while smaller regional airports such as Southampton, Aberdeen, Bristol, Newcastle, Nottingham East Midlands, Southampton and the new Robin Hood International are served by scheduled and charter flights to/from Continental Europe and Ireland.

**CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL**

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

**Flying & Climate Change**

Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO<sub>2</sub> (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

**Carbon Offset Schemes**

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com).

**Airlines**

Most of the world's major airlines have services to/from Britain, including the following (with their UK contact and reservation numbers):

**Aer Lingus** (EI; ☎ 0845 084 4444; www.aerlingus.com)

**Air Canada** (AC; ☎ 0871 220 1111; www.aircanada.ca)

**Air France** (AF; ☎ 0845 359 1000; www.airfrance.com)

**Air New Zealand** (NZ; ☎ 0800 028 4149; www.airnewzealand.co.nz)

**Alitalia** (AZ; ☎ 0870 544 8259; www.alitalia.com)

**American Airlines** (AA; ☎ 08457 789 789; www.americanairlines.com)

**bmi-British Midland** (BD; ☎ 0870 607 0555; www.flybmi.com)

**British Airways** (BA; ☎ 0870 850 9850; www.ba.com)

**Cathay Pacific** (CX; ☎ 020 8834 8888; www.cathaypacific.com)

**Continental Airlines** (CO; ☎ 0845 607 6760; www.continental.com)

**Delta Air Lines** (DL; ☎ 0800 414767; www.delta.com)

**Emirates** (EK; ☎ 0870 243 2222; www.emirates.com)

**Iberia** (IB; ☎ 0845 850 9000; www.iberia.com)

**KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines** (KL; ☎ 08705 074 074; www.klm.com)

**Lufthansa Airlines** (LH; ☎ 08708 377 747; www.lufthansa.com)

**Qantas Airways** (QF; ☎ 08457 747 767; www.qantas.com.au)

**Scandinavian Airlines** (SK; ☎ 0870 607 2772; www.scandinavian.net)

**Singapore Airlines** (SQ; ☎ 0870 608 8886; www.singaporeair.com)

**South African Airways** (SA; ☎ 0870 747 1111; www.flysaa.com)

**United Airlines** (UA; ☎ 08458 444 777; www.united.com)

**Virgin Atlantic** (VS; ☎ 0870 380 2007; www.virgin-atlantic.com)

Budget airlines flying between Britain and other European countries can offer real bargains. Fares vary according to demand, and are best bought online. The only downside is that some no-frills airlines land at minor airports a considerable distance from the centre of the city they claim to serve. Main players serving British airports:

**EasyJet** (U2; ☎ 0870 600 0000; www.easyjet.com)

**Jet2** (LS; ☎ 0871 226 1737; www.jet2.com)

**Ryanair** (FR; ☎ 0871 246 0000; www.ryanair.com)

**Virgin Express** (TV; ☎ 0870 730 1134; www.virgin-express.com)

To save trawling several sites, services such as [www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com) and [www.lowcostairlines.org](http://www.lowcostairlines.org) have information on many scheduled airlines. For budget airlines try [www.whichbudget.com](http://www.whichbudget.com).

Charter flights are another option. You can buy seat-only deals on the planes that carry tourists between, for example, Britain and numerous Mediterranean resorts. Contact high-street travel agencies, or specialist websites such as [www.flightline.co.uk](http://www.flightline.co.uk) and [www.cheapflights.co.uk](http://www.cheapflights.co.uk).

**Tickets**

You can buy your airline ticket from a travel agency (in person, by phone or on the internet), or direct from the airline (the best deals are often available online only). Whichever method you choose, it always pays to shop around. Internet travel agencies such as [www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com) and [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com) work well if you're doing a straightforward trip, but for anything slightly complex there's no substitute for a real live travel agent who knows the system, the options, the special deals and so on.

The best place to start your search for agencies or airlines is the travel section of a weekend newspaper. Scan the advertisements, phone a few numbers, check a few websites, build up an idea of options, then take it from there. Remember, you usually get what you

pay for: cheaper flights may leave at unsociable hours or include several stopovers. For quick and comfortable journeys, you have to fork out more cash.

**Australia & New Zealand**

To Britain from the southern hemisphere is a very popular route, with a wide range of fares from about A\$1500 to A\$3000 return. From New Zealand it's often best to go via Australia. Round-the-world (RTW) tickets can sometimes work out cheaper than a straightforward return. Major agencies include the following:

**AUSTRALIA**

**Flight Centre** (☎ 13 31 33; www.flightcentre.com.au)

**STA Travel** (☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au)

**NEW ZEALAND**

**Flight Centre** (☎ 0800 243544; www.flightcentre.co.nz)

**STA Travel** (☎ 0508 782 872; www.statravel.co.nz)

**Canada & the USA**

There is a continuous price war on the world's busiest transcontinental route. Return fares from the East Coast to London range from US\$300 to US\$600. From the West Coast, fares are about US\$100 higher. Major agencies include the following:

**CANADA**

**Flight Centre** (☎ 1888-967 5355; www.flightcentre.ca)

**Travel CUTS** (☎ 866 246 9762; www.travelcuts.com)

**USA**

**Flight Centre** (☎ 1866-WORLD 51; www.flightcentre.us)

**STA Travel** (☎ 800 781 4040; www.statravel.com)

**LAND BUS**

You can easily get between Britain and numerous cities in Ireland or mainland Europe via long-distance bus. The international bus network **Eurolines** ([www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com)) connects a huge number of destinations; the website has links to bus operators in each country, and gives contact details of local offices. In Britain, you can book Eurolines tickets on the phone or at the website of **National Express** (☎ 08705 808080; [www.nationalexpress.com](http://www.nationalexpress.com)), and at many travel agencies.

Bus travel may be slower and less comfortable than going by train, but it's usually

cheaper, especially if you're under 25 or over 60. Some sample single fares (and approximate journey times) are: London to/from Amsterdam €40 (12 hours); Barcelona €125 (24 hours); Dublin €30 (12 hours). Frequent special offers (called 'fun fares') can bring these prices way down, but it's still worth checking the budget airlines. You may pay a similar fare and knock a large chunk off the journey time.

## Train

### CHANNEL TUNNEL SERVICES

The Channel Tunnel makes direct train travel between Britain and Continental Europe a fast and enjoyable option. High-speed Eurostar (☎ 08705 186 186; www.eurostar.com) passenger services hurtle at least 10 times daily between London and Paris (three hours), and London and Brussels (2½ hours), via Ashford and Calais. A new high-speed rail link on the British side will be complete in 2007 which will slice another 30 minutes off the journey.

You can buy tickets from travel agencies, major train stations or direct from Eurostar. The normal single fare between London and Paris/Brussels is around £150, but advance deals can drop to around £70 return, or less. Seniors and under-25s get reductions. Bicycles must be in a bike bag.

If you've got a car, your other option is Eurotunnel (☎ 08705 353535; www.eurotunnel.com). You drive to the coast (Folkestone in England, Calais in France), drive onto a train, get carried through the tunnel, and drive off at the other end. The trains run about four times hourly from 6am to 10pm, then hourly. Loading and unloading is one hour; the journey takes 35 minutes. You can book in advance direct with Eurotunnel or pay on the spot (cash or credit card). The standard cost for a car (and passengers) is around £200 return, but cheaper promotional fares often bring the cost down closer to £100.

### TRAIN & FERRY CONNECTIONS

As well as Eurostar, many 'normal' trains run between Britain and mainland Europe. You buy a direct ticket, but get off the train at the port, walk onto a ferry, then get another train on the other side. Routes include: Amsterdam to London (via Hook of Holland and Harwich) and Paris to London (via Calais and Dover). Standard single fares for these

journeys are about £50, but cheaper deals are usually available.

Travelling between Ireland and Britain, the main train-ferry-train route is Dublin to London, via Dun Laoghaire and Holyhead. From southern Ireland, ferries travel between Rosslare and Fishguard or Pembroke, and there are train connections on either side.

## SEA

The main ferry routes between Britain and Ireland include Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire. Between Britain and mainland Europe, ferry routes include Dover to Calais (France); Harwich to Hook of Holland (Netherlands); Hull to Zeebrugge (Belgium) and Rotterdam (Holland); Portsmouth to Santander or Bilbao (Spain); Newcastle to Bergen (Norway) or Gothenberg (Sweden); Rosyth, near Edinburgh, to Zeebrugge; and Lerwick to Bergen. There are many more.

Competition from Eurotunnel and budget airlines has forced ferry operators to offer constant discounted fares, with options varying massively (in budget airline style) according to demand. Go at a busy time and you pay a lot. Go in the middle of the night outside holiday time, and you should get a bargain. Booking early can also help reduce costs. As well as these variants, fares depend on the size of car and the number of passengers. If you're a foot passenger, or cycling, you've got more flexibility.

The best cross-channel deals are return fares – often much cheaper than two singles; and sometimes cheaper than *one* single! On longer ferry trips, the fare might include a cabin.

Main ferry operators (and their UK contact details):

**Brittany Ferries** (☎ 08703 665 333; www.brittany-ferries.com)

**DFDS Seaways** (☎ 08702 520 524; www.dfds.co.uk)

**Hoverspeed** (☎ 0870 240 8070; www.hoverspeed.co.uk)

**Irish Ferries** (☎ 08705 171717; www.irishferries.com)

**P&O Ferries** (☎ 08705 202020; www.poferries.com)

**SpeedFerries** (☎ 0870 220 0570; www.speedferries.com)

**Stena Line** (☎ 08705 707070; www.stenaline.com)

**Transmanche** (☎ 0800 917 1201; www.transmanche-ferries.com)

Another option is www.ferrybooker.com – an online agency covering all sea-ferry routes, plus Eurotunnel.

## GETTING AROUND

For getting around Britain by public transport, your main options are train and long-distance bus (called coach in Britain). Services between major towns and cities are generally good, although expensive compared with other European countries. Delays are frequent too, especially on the rail network, but these tend to afflict commuters rather than visitors: if your journey from London to Bath runs 30 minutes late, what's the problem? You're on holiday!

As long as you have time, using a mix of train, coach, local bus, the odd taxi, walking and occasionally hiring a bike, you can get almost anywhere without having to drive. You'll certainly see more of the countryside than you might slogging along grey motorways, and in the serene knowledge that you're doing less environmental damage. Having said that, in some rural areas the bus services can be patchy, so a car can often be handy for reaching out-of-the-way spots.

**Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2 608; www.traveline.org.uk) is a very useful information service covering bus, coach, taxi and train services nationwide (although some areas are better represented than others), with numerous links to help plan your journey. By phone, you get transferred automatically to an advisor in the region you're phoning *from*; for details on another part of the country you may have to be transferred to another assistant. Another good site is www.transportdirect.com.

## AIR

Britain's domestic air companies include British Airways, bmi, bmibaby, EasyJet and Ryanair. If you're really pushed for time, flights on longer routes across Britain (eg Exeter or Southampton to Newcastle or Edinburgh) are handy, although you miss the glorious scenery in between. On some shorter routes (eg London to Newcastle, or Manchester to Newquay) trains can compare favourably with planes, once airport downtime is factored in. On costs, you might get a bargain air fare, but trains can be cheaper if you buy tickets in advance.

## BICYCLE

Britain is a compact country, and getting around by bicycle is perfectly feasible – and a great way to really see the country – if you've got time to spare. For more ideas see p86.

## BUS & COACH

If you're on a tight budget, long-distance buses are nearly always the cheapest way to get around, although they're also the slowest – sometimes by a considerable margin.

In Britain, long-distance express buses are called coaches, and in many towns there are separate bus and coach stations. Make sure you go to the right place!

**National Express** (☎ 08705 808080; www.national-express.com) is the main operator, with a wide network and frequent services between main centres. North of the border, services tie in with those of **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 08705 505050; www.citylink.co.uk), Scotland's leading coach company. Coach fares are very reasonable (eg London to York around £20, London to Edinburgh from £25, with special-offer 'fun fares' as low as £1).

Also offering fares from £1 is **Megabus** (www.megabus.com), operating a budget airline-style service between about 20 main destinations around the country. Go at a quiet time, book early and your ticket will be very cheap. Book last-minute, for a busy time and... You get the picture.

For information about short-distance and local bus services see p971.

## Bus Passes & Discounts

National Express offers NX2 discount passes to full-time students and under-26s. They cost £10, and get you 30% off standard adult fares. Proof and a passport photo are required. People over 60, families and travellers with disabilities also get discounts.

For touring the country, National Express also offers Brit Xplorer passes, which allow unlimited travel for seven days (£79), 14 days (£139) and 28 days (£219). You don't need to book journeys in advance with this pass; if the coach has a spare seat, you can take it. This deal is only available to non-Brits though.

If you just want a pass for touring Scotland, Scottish Citylink has three main options: three days travel in five days for £35; five days in 10 for £59; eight in 16 for £79. These passes are available to everyone.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Travelling by private car or motorbike you can be independent and flexible, and reach remote places, although in cities you'll need superhuman skills to negotiate heaving traffic, plus deep pockets for parking charges. For

solo budget travellers a downside of car travel is the expense, but if there are two of you (or more), car travel can work out cheaper than public transport.

Motorways and main A-roads are dual carriageways and will deliver you quickly from one end of the country to another. Lesser A-roads, B-roads and minor roads are much more scenic and fun, especially in northern England, much of Wales and Scotland, as you wind through the countryside from village to village; ideal for car or motorcycle touring. You can't travel fast, but you won't care.

Petrol and diesel cost around 95p per litre, although fuel prices rise as you get away from cities and large towns.

## Hire

Compared with many countries (especially the USA), hire rates are expensive in Britain; you should expect to pay around £250 per week for a small car (unlimited mileage). Rates rise at busy times and drop at quiet times (especially at easyCar, where you also get better rates for advance reservations and special offers can drop to £3 per day). Some main players:

**1car1** (☎ 0113-387 5866; www.1car1.com)

**Avis** (☎ 0870 010 0287; www.avis.co.uk)

**Budget** (☎ 08701 565656; www.budget.com)

**easyCar** (☎ 0906 333 3333; www.easycar.com)

**Europcar** (☎ 0870 607 5000; www.europcar.co.uk)

**Hertz** (☎ 0870 844 8844; www.hertz.co.uk)

**National** (☎ 0870 400 4502; www.nationalcar.com)

**Sixt** (☎ 08701 567567; www.e-sixt.co.uk)

**Thrifty** (☎ 01494-751600; www.thrifty.co.uk)

Many international websites have separate pages for customers in different countries, and the prices for a car in Britain on, say, the UK pages can be cheaper or more expensive than the same car on the USA or Australia pages. The moral is – you have to surf a lot of sites to find the best deals.

Your other option is to use an internet search engine to find small local car-hire companies in Britain who can undercut the big boys. Generally those in cities are cheaper than in rural areas. See under Getting Around in the main city sections for more details, or see a rental broker site such as **UK Car Hire** (www.uk-carhire.net).

Another option is to hire a motor home or camper van. It's more expensive than hiring a car but it does help you save on accom-

modation costs, and gives almost unlimited freedom. Sites to check include www.coolcampervans.com, www.wildhorizon.co.uk and www.justgo.uk.com.

## Motoring Organisations

Large motoring organisations include the **Automobile Association** (☎ 0800 085 2721; www.theaa.com) and the **Royal Automobile Club** (☎ 0800 731 7090; www.rac.co.uk); annual membership starts at around £35, including 24-hour roadside breakdown assistance. A greener alternative is the **Environmental Transport Association** (☎ 0800 212 810; www.eta.co.uk); it provides all the usual services (breakdown assistance, roadside rescue, vehicle inspections etc) but *doesn't* campaign for more roads.

## Parking

Britain is small, and people love their cars, so there's often not enough parking space to go round. Many cities have short-stay and long-stay car parks; the latter are cheaper though maybe less convenient. 'Park and Ride' systems allow you to park on the edge of the city then ride to the centre on regular buses provided for an all-in-one price.

Yellow lines (single or double) along the edge of the road indicate restrictions. Find the nearby sign that spells out when you can and can't park. In London and other big cities, traffic wardens operate with efficiency; if you park on the yellow lines at the wrong time, your car will be clamped or towed away, and it'll cost you £100 or more to get driving again. In some cities there are also red lines, which mean no stopping at all. Ever.

## Purchase

If you're planning a long tour around Britain you may want to buy a vehicle. You can find a banger for £300, and a reasonable car for around £1000. If you want a camper van, expect to pay at least £2000 for something reliable. For more ideas on prices, pick up *Autotrader* magazine, or look at www.auto-trader.co.uk.

To be on the road, all cars require: third-party insurance – shop around, but expect to pay at least £300; a registration form (log book) – signed by both the buyer and seller; a tax disc – £90/160 for six/12 months (less for small engines); and a Ministry of Transport (MOT) safety certificate – for cars over three years old (valid for one year).

It saves loads of hassle to buy a vehicle with a valid MOT certificate and tax disc; both remain with the car through change of ownership. Third-party insurance goes with the driver rather than the car, so you'll still have to arrange this.

## Road Rules

A foreign driving licence is valid in Britain for up to 12 months. If you plan to bring a car from Europe, it's illegal to drive without (at least) third-party insurance. Some other important rules:

- drive on the left (!)
- wear fitted seat belts in cars
- wear crash helmets on motorcycles
- give way to your right at junctions and roundabouts
- always use the left-side lane on motorways and dual-carriageways, unless overtaking (although so many people ignore this rule, you'd think it didn't exist)
- don't use a mobile phone while driving unless it's fully hands-free (another rule frequently flouted).

Speed limits are 30mph in built-up areas, 60mph on main roads, and 70mph on motorways and dual carriageways. Drinking and driving is taken very seriously; you're allowed a blood-alcohol level of 80mg/100mL and campaigners want it reduced to 50mg/100mL.

All drivers should read the *Highway Code*. It's often stocked by tourist offices, and available online at www.roads.dft.gov.uk/roadsafety (and, incidentally, often around seventh place in national nonfiction bestseller lists).

## HITCHING

Hitching is not as common as it used to be in Britain, maybe because more people have cars, maybe because few drivers give lifts any more. It's perfectly possible however, if you don't mind long waits, although travellers should understand that they're taking a small but potentially serious risk, and we don't recommend it. If you decide to go by thumb, note that it's illegal to hitch on motorways; you must use approach roads or service stations.

However, as is the case with so many other things, it's all different in remote rural areas such as Mid Wales or northwest Scotland, where hitching is a part of getting around – especially if you're a walker. On some Scottish

islands, local drivers may stop and offer a lift without you even asking.

## LOCAL TRANSPORT

British cities usually have good local public-transport systems, although buses are often run by a confusing number of companies. The larger cities have tram and underground rail services too. Tourist offices can provide information, and more details are given in the city sections throughout this book.

## Bus

All cities have good local bus networks year-round, and in rural areas popular with tourists (especially national parks) there are frequent bus services from Easter to September. Elsewhere in the countryside, bus timetables are designed to serve schools and industry, so there can be few midday and weekend services (and they may stop running in school holidays), or buses may link local villages to a market town on only one day each week. It's always worth double-checking at a tourist office, before you hike to a pretty village on Monday and then discover that the next bus out is on Thursday.

## BUS PASSES

If you're taking a few local bus rides in a day of energetic sightseeing, ask about day passes (with names like Day Rover, Wayfarer or Explorer), which will be cheaper than buying several single tickets. If you plan to linger longer in one area, three-day passes are a great bargain. Often they can be bought on your first bus, and may include local rail services. Passes are mentioned in the regional chapters, and it's always worth asking ticket clerks or bus drivers about your options.

## POSTBUS

A postbus is a van on mail service that also carries passengers. Postbuses operate in rural areas (and some of the most scenic and remote parts of the country) and are especially useful for walkers and backpackers. For information and timetables contact **Royal Mail Postbus** (☎ 08457 740 740; www.royalmail.com/postbus).

## Ferries

Local ferries, from the mainland to the Isle of Wight or the Scottish islands for example, are covered in the relevant sections in the regional chapters.

## Taxi

There are two main sorts of taxi in Britain: the famous black cabs (some carry advertising livery in other colours these days) that have meters and can be hailed in the street; and minicabs that can only be called by phone. In London and other big cities, taxis cost £2 to £3 per mile. In rural areas, it's about half this, which means when it's Sunday and you find that the next bus out of the charming town you've just hiked to is on Monday, a taxi can keep you moving. If you call **National Cabline** (☎ 0800 123444) from a landline phone, the service will pinpoint your location and transfer you to an approved local company.

## TRAIN

For long-distance travel around Britain, trains are generally faster and more comfortable than coaches, but can be more expensive, although with discount tickets they're competitive – and often take you through beautiful countryside.

In the 1990s rail travel had a bad reputation for delays and cancellations. By 2006 the situation had improved markedly, with around 85% of trains running on (or pretty close to) schedule. (The journeys that are delayed or cancelled mostly have an impact commuters, rather than long-distance leisure travellers.)

About 20 different companies operate train services in Britain (for example, First Great Western runs from London to Bath and Bristol; GNER runs London to Leeds and Edinburgh; Virgin Trains runs a very useful and wide-ranging service all across Britain from its hub in Birmingham, extending to Penzance, Cardiff, Holyhead, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, London and Bournemouth), while Network Rail operates track and stations. For passengers this system can be confusing, but information and ticket-buying services are increasingly centralised.

Your first stop should be **National Rail Enquiries** (☎ 08457 48 49 50; [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)), the nationwide timetable and fare-information service. The site also advertises special offers, and has real-time links to station departure boards, so you can see if your train is on time (or not). Once you've found the journey you need, links take you to the relevant train operator or to two centralised ticketing services ([www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com) and [www.Qjump.co.uk](http://www.Qjump.co.uk)) to buy the ticket. These websites can be

confusing at first (you always have to state an approximate preferred time and day of travel, even if you don't mind *when* you go), but after using the sites a few times they soon become easy to use, and with a little delving around they can offer some real bargains.

## Classes

There are two classes of rail travel: 1st and standard. First class costs around 50% more than standard and, except on very crowded trains, is not really worth it. However, at weekends some train operators offer upgrades: for an extra £10 to £15 on top of your standard class fare you can enjoy more comfort and legroom.

## Costs & Reservations

For short journeys (under about 50 miles), it's usually best to buy tickets on the spot at train stations. You may get a choice of express or stopping service – the latter is obviously slower, but can be cheaper, and may take you through charming countryside or grotty suburbs.

For longer journeys, on-the-spot fares are always available, but tickets are much cheaper if bought in advance. (Essentially, the earlier you book, the cheaper it gets.) Fully discounted tickets for longer trips are usually not available at stations at all and must be bought in advance by phone or online. Advance purchase usually gets you a reserved seat, but do remember that the cheapest fares are nonrefundable, so if you miss your train you'll have to buy a new ticket.

If you have to change trains, or use two or more train operators, you still buy one ticket – valid for the whole of your journey. The main railcards are also accepted by all operators.

If you buy by phone or website, you can have the ticket posted to you (UK addresses only), or collect it at the originating station on the day of travel, either at the ticket desk (get there with time to spare, as queues can be long) or via automatic machines.

For short or long trips, fares are usually cheaper outside 'peak' travel times ('peak' is when everyone else is trying to get to/from work). It's worth avoiding Fridays and Sundays too, as fares are higher on these busy days.

The main fare types are 'open', 'saver' and 'advance', although there are sometimes variations within these main categories (eg, 'super-saver' or 'extra-advance') – and just

to keep you on your toes, the different train companies sometimes use different brand-names for these products (eg 'sunshine-saver' or 'capital-advance').

The main features or each type are as follows (with the varying prices of London to York tickets given by way of example).

Open fares (London–York single/return £83/167) are available on the spot or in advance for travel any time, valid for a month.

Saver fares (London–York single/return £71/72) are available on the spot or in advance. The day of outward travel is fixed, but you can change the time (changing the day of travel costs £5), but you can return any day or time, valid for one month. Some restrictions apply (eg no peak travel).

Advance fares (London–York singles from £10 to £30) are available in advance only, up to 6pm day before travel. Valid only on the specified date and time. The earlier you buy, the cheaper the ticket – especially if you travel outside peak times. Tickets are non-refundable.

If you're making a return journey (ie coming back on the same route), open return fares are usually just under double the single fare, while saver returns are often just a few pounds more than saver singles. Advance return fares are sometimes hard to find, as an increasing number of train operators have followed the lead set by low-cost airlines and offer advance single fares only. This gives you more flexibility and can turn up some amazing bargains, with two advance singles easily undercutting the saver return price.

Children under five travel free on trains; those aged between five and 15 pay half price, except on tickets already heavily discounted. Seniors also get discounts, but again not on already heavily discounted fares.

## BIKES ON TRAINS

Bicycles can be taken on most long-distance train journeys for £1 to £3, but space limitations and ridiculously complicated advance-booking regulations often make this difficult. It really seems as if the train operators don't want customers, although with persistence you can usually get where you want, especially if you don't travel at peak times. Start with **National Rail Enquiries** (☎ 08457 48 49 50; [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)) and have a big cup of coffee or stress-reliever handy.

On local trains outside peak times and on shorter trips in rural areas there's generally much less trouble; bikes can be taken free of charge on a first-come-first-served basis. Even so, there may be space limits.

A final warning: when railways are being repaired, cancelled trains are replaced by buses – and they won't take bikes.

## Train Passes

Local train passes usually cover rail networks around a city (many include bus travel too), and are mentioned in the individual city sections throughout this book.

If you're staying in Britain for a while, passes known as 'railcards' are available. They cost around £20 (valid for one year, available from major stations) and get you a 33% discount on most train fares. On the Family and Network Railcards, children get a 60% discount, and the fee is easily repaid in a couple of journeys. Proof of age and a passport photo may be required. For full details see [www.railcard.co.uk](http://www.railcard.co.uk).

The Family Railcard covers up to four adults and four children travelling together; the Senior Railcard is for anyone over 60; while you must be 16 to 25, or a full-time UK student, for the Young Person's Railcard.

If you're travelling around southeast England (eg London to Dover, Weymouth, Cambridge or Oxford), a Network Railcard covers up to four adults travelling together outside peak times. For details see [www.railcard.co.uk/network/network.htm](http://www.railcard.co.uk/network/network.htm).

You can get an application form for a Disabled Person's Railcard from stations or from the railcard website. Call ☎ 0191-281 8103 for more details.

For country-wide travel, BritRail passes are good value, but they're only for visitors from overseas and *not available in Britain*. They must be bought in your country of origin from a specialist travel agency. There are many BritRail variants, each available in three different versions: for England only; for the whole of Britain (England, Wales and Scotland); and for the UK and Ireland.

One of the main options is BritRail Consecutive, with unlimited travel on all trains

in Britain for four/eight/15/22/30 days costing US\$220/310/469/590/700. Anyone getting their money's worth out of the last pass should earn some sort of endurance award. There's also BritRail Flexipass; now you don't have to get on a train every day to get full value. Your options are four/eight/15 days of unlimited travel in Britain within a 60-day period for US\$275/400/600. Prices quoted are for adults.

Children's passes are usually half price (or free with some adult passes), and seniors get discounts too. For about 30% extra you can

upgrade to 1st class. Other deals include a rail pass combined with the use of a hire car, or travel in Britain combined with one Eurostar journey. For more details see [www.britrail.com](http://www.britrail.com).

If you don't (or can't) buy a BritRail pass, an All Line Rover (seven/14 days £375/565), gives unlimited travel anywhere on the national rail network and can be purchased in Britain, by anyone. Of the other international passes, Eurail cards are not accepted in Britain, and InterRail cards are only valid if bought in another mainland European country.



# Health

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Britain is a healthy place to travel. The National Health Service (NHS) provides an excellent service, free on the point of delivery, which – although Brits may complain – is better than most other countries offer. Across the country, hygiene standards are high (despite what your nose tells you on a crowded tube train) and there are no unusual diseases to worry about. Your biggest risks will be from overdoing activities – physical, chemical or other.

## BEFORE YOU GO

No immunisations are mandatory for visiting Britain.

European Economic Area (EEA) nationals can obtain free emergency treatment on presentation of a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) – which replaces the old E111 form – validated in their home country. Reciprocal arrangements between the UK and some other countries around the world (including Australia) allow free emergency medical treatment at hospitals or general practitioners (GPs), and subsidised dental care. For details see the Department of Health's website:

### NATIONAL HEALTH WEBSITES

If you're visiting Britain from overseas, these travel health websites will be useful:

**Australia** ([www.dfat.gov.au/travel](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel))

**Canada** ([www.travelhealth.gc.ca](http://www.travelhealth.gc.ca))

**USA** ([www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/))

[www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk), then follow links to 'Policy & Guidance', 'International' and 'Overseas Visitors'.

Regardless of nationality, anyone receives free emergency treatment at Accident & Emergency departments of NHS hospitals. Travel insurance, however, offers greater flexibility over where and how you're treated, and covers emergency repatriation.

Chemists and pharmacies can advise on minor ailments such as sore throats and earache. In large cities, there's at least one chemist open 24 hours.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

Good sites include:

**www.ageconcern.org.uk** Advice on travel for the elderly.

**www.cdc.gov** US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**www.fco.gov.uk/travel** For Brits going abroad, but useful for incomers.

**www.maristopes.org.uk** Women's health and contraception.

**www.mdtravelhealth.com** Worldwide recommendations, updated daily.

**www.who.int** Site of the World Health Organization.

## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) refers to blood clots forming in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. The chief symptom is swelling or pain in the foot, ankle or calf. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties.

To prevent DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, contract and release leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol.

### JET LAG

To avoid jet lag (common when crossing more than five time zones), try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight

and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep and so on) as soon as possible.

## IN BRITAIN

### SUNBURN

In summertime in Britain, even when there's cloud cover it's possible to get sunburnt surprisingly quickly – especially if you're on water. Use sunscreen, wear a hat and cover up with a shirt and trousers.

### WATER

Tap water in Britain is always safe unless there's a sign to the contrary (eg on trains).

Don't drink straight from streams in the countryside – you never know what's upstream.

### WOMEN'S HEALTH

Emotional stress, exhaustion and travel through time zones can contribute to an upset in the menstrual pattern. If using oral contraceptives, remember that some antibiotics, diarrhoea and vomiting can stop them from working.

If you're already pregnant, travel is usually possible, but you should always consult your doctor. The most risky times for travel are the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and after 30 weeks.

# Language

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Lonely Planet's *British Language & Culture* offers an informative and entertaining look at the history and peculiarities of British English, including section on Scottish Gaelic and Welsh, and a feast of useful words and phrases.

### SCOTTISH GAELIC

Scottish Gaelic (*Gàidhlig*, pronounced 'gallic' in Scotland) is spoken by about 80,000 people in Scotland, mainly in the Highlands and islands, and by many native speakers and learners overseas. The language is a member of the Celtic branch of the Indo-European family of languages, which has given us Gaelic, Irish, Manx, Welsh, Cornish and Breton.

Although Scottish Gaelic is the Celtic language most closely associated with Scotland it was quite a latecomer to those shores. Other Celtic languages in the form of Pictish and Brittonic had existed prior to the arrival and settlement by Gaelic-speaking Celts (Gael) from Ireland from the 4th to the 6th centuries AD. These Irish settlers, known to the Romans as Scotti, were eventually to give their name to the entire country. Initially they settled in the area on the west coast of Scotland in which their name is perpetuated, Earra Ghaidheal (Argyll). As their territorial influence extended so did their language and from the 9th to the 11th centuries Gaelic was spoken throughout the country. For many centuries the language was the same as the language of Ireland; there is little evidence of much divergence before the 13th century. Even up to the 18th century the bards adhered to the strict literary standards of Old Irish.

Viking invasions from AD 800 brought linguistic influences, which are evident in many of the coastal place names of the Highlands.

Gaelic culture flourished in the Highlands until the 18th century and the Jacobite rebellions. After the Battle of Culloden in 1746 many Gaelic speakers were forced off their ancestral lands; this 'ethnic cleansing' by landlords and governments culminated in the Highland Clearances of the 19th century. Although still studied at academic level, the spoken language declined, being regarded as a mere 'peasant' language of no modern significance.

It was only in the 1970s that Gaelic began to make a comeback with a new generation of young enthusiasts who were determined that it should not be allowed to die. People from all over Scotland, and indeed worldwide, are beginning to appreciate their Gaelic heritage.

After two centuries of decline, the language is now being encouraged through financial help from government agencies and the EU. Gaelic education is flourishing from playgroups right through to tertiary level. This renaissance flows out into the fields of music, literature, cultural events and broadcasting. The Gaelic language has a vital role to play in the life of modern Scotland.

### Making Conversation

#### Good morning.

*Madainn mhath.* mating vah

#### Good afternoon/Good evening.

*Féasgar math.* feskur mah

#### Goodbye. (lit: Blessings go with you)

*Beannachd leat.* byan-nukhk laht

#### Goodbye. (The same with you)

*Mar sin leat.* mar shin laht

#### Good night.

*Oidhche mhath.* ai-khuh vah

#### Please.

*Mas e do thoil e.* ma-she duh hol eh

#### Many thanks.

*Móran taing.* moe-ran tah-eeng

#### You're welcome.

*'Se do bheatha.* shey duh veh-huh

#### What's your name?

*Dé an t-ainm a tha ort?* jen ta-nam a horsht?

#### I'm ...

*Is mise ...* smee-shuh ...

#### Good health/Cheers!

*Slàinte mhath!* slaan-chuh vah!

## WELSH

The Welsh language belongs to the Celtic branch of the Indo-European language family. Closely related to Breton and Cornish, and more distantly to Irish, Scottish and Manx, it is the strongest Celtic language both in terms of numbers of speakers (over 500,000) and place in society. It was once spoken throughout the island of Britain south of a line between modern Glasgow and Edinburgh, but was gradually pushed westwards by the invading Angles and Saxons following the retreat of the Roman legions in the 5th century. Several thousand Welsh speakers also live in the Welsh colony in Patagonia. Its earliest literature was written towards the end of the 6th century in what is now southern Scotland, when court poets Taliesin and Aneurin pioneered a literary tradition which continued for some 14 centuries.

By the early modern period, Welsh had lost its status as an official language. The Acts of Union with England (1536 and 1542) deprived the language of all administrative functions. However, translations of the Book of Common Prayer (1567) and the Bible (1588) into Welsh gave the language a limited public function again. Up until the Industrial Revolution, most Welsh people spoke only Welsh, and some 50% still spoke Welsh in 1900. Thereafter the language retreated more rapidly, so that by 1961, only 26% were Welsh-speaking and there was general alarm that the language would totally disappear.

The Saunders Lewis BBC radio lecture, *Tynged yr Iaith tuhng-ed uhrr yaith*, 'The Fate of the Language' in 1962 led to the creation of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg kuhm-day-thas uhrr yaith guhm-raig*, a protest movement in support of the language. It was spearheaded by university students

and inspired by pop singers like Dafydd Iwan, and succeeded through campaigns of civil disobedience in winning equal recognition for Welsh in one domain of society after another. Recent figures would suggest that the decline has been halted. The language has reasserted its position in the educational system, with the Welsh-language TV channel S4C since 1983, and in recent years with the resurgence of Welsh as a badge of national identity, particularly among the young.

Wales is famous for having the longest place name in the world – Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogogoch (hlan-vairr-poohl-gwin-gihl-gogerr-uh-khwirrn-dro-boohl-hlan-tuh-sil-ee-oh-go-go-gokh) – which, translated, means 'St Mary's Church in the hollow of the White Hazel near a rapid whirlpool and the Church of St Tysilio near the Red Cave'. This can be tricky to say after a pint or three of Brains!

### Making Conversation

#### Good morning.

*Bore da.* bo-rre dah

#### Good afternoon.

*Prynhawn da.* pruhn-hown dah

#### Good night.

*Nos da.* nohs da

#### Hello.

*Sut mae.* sit mai

#### Goodbye.

*Hwyl fawr.* hueyl vowrr

#### Thanks.

*Diolch.* dee-olkh

#### What's your name?

*Beth yw eich enw chi?* beth yw which en-oo khee?

#### Cheers!

*Iechyd da!* yekh-id dah!

#### How much?

*Faint?* vaint?



Also available from Lonely Planet:  
*British Language & Culture*

# Glossary

The abbreviations (sl) and (cq) indicate slang and colloquialisms.

**agister** – someone paid to care for stock

**aka** – also known as

**almshouse** – accommodation for the aged or needy

**bailey** – outermost wall of a castle

**Bank Holiday** – public holiday

**bairn** – baby (northern England & Scotland)

**banger** – old, cheap car (cq)

**bangers** – sausages (cq)

**bannock** – half-scone-half-pancake (Scotland)

**bap** – bun

**bar** – gate (York, and some other northern cities)

**barbican** – extended gateway in a castle designed to make entry difficult for unwanted guests

**beck** – stream (northern England)

**bent** – not altogether legal (sl)

**bevvied** – drunk (cq)

**bevvv** – drink (originally from northern England) (cq)

**bill** – restaurant check

**billion** – the British billion is a million million (unlike the American billion – a thousand million)

**bitter** – a type of beer

**black pudding** – type of sausage made from dried blood and other ingredients

**blackhouse** – traditional Hebridean dwelling

**blatherskite** – boastful or talkative person (northern England) (cq)

**bloke** – man (cq)

**böd** – a rustic collection of simple hostels (Scotland)

**bodge job** – poor-quality repair (cq)

**bonnet (of car)** – hood

**boot (of car)** – trunk

**bothy** – originally meaning any hut or shelter, now used mainly to mean shelter or hut for walkers in mountain areas

**brae** – hill (Scotland)

**bridleway** – path that can be used by walkers, horse riders and cyclists

**broch** – defensive tower (Scotland)

**Brummie** – native of Birmingham (cq)

**bum** – backside (not tramp, layabout etc) (sl)

**BYO** – bring your own

**Cadw** – the Welsh historic monuments agency

**caff** – abbreviated form of café (cq)

**cairn** – pile of stones marking path, junction or peak

**CalMac** – Caledonian MacBrayne, the main Scottish island ferry operator

**canny** – good; great; wise (northern England)

**capital** – head of column (in a building)

**ceilidh** – pronounced kay-lee; a session of traditional song and dance (originally Scottish, now more widely used across Britain)

**cenotaph** – monument; memorial to person(s) whose remains lie elsewhere

**cheers** – goodbye; thanks; also a drinking toast

**chemist** – pharmacist

**chine** – valley-like fissure leading to the sea (southern England)

**chips** – sliced deep-fried potatoes, eaten hot (what Americans call ‘fries’)

**circus** – junction of several streets, usually circular

**dunch** – chalk (used in connection with chalk walls in building)

**coach** – long-distance bus

**coaching inn** – inn along a stagecoach route, in the days before trains and motor transport, where horses were changed

**coasteering** – adventurous activity that involves making your way around a rocky coastline by climbing, scrambling, jumping or swimming

**cob** – mixture of mud and straw for building

**cot** – small bed for a baby (‘crib’ to Americans)

**couchette** – sleeping berth in a train or ferry

**courgette** – green vegetable (‘zucchini’ to Americans and Australians)

**court** – courtyard

**crack** – good conversation; good times (anglicised version of Gaelic ‘craic’) (cq)

**cream tea** – a cup of tea and a scone with jam and cream

**crisps** – thinly sliced, salted potatoes, eaten cold

**croft** – plot of land, with adjoining house, worked by the occupiers

**dear** – expensive

**DIY** – do-it-yourself, ie home improvements

**dodgy** – questionable, unreliable (cq)

**dolmen** – chartered tomb

**donkey engine** – small (sometimes portable) engine to drive machinery

**doocot** – dovecote (Scotland)

**dosh** – money; wealth (cq)

**dough** – money (cq)

**downs** – rolling upland, characterised by lack of trees

**dram** – whisky measure

**duvet** – quilt replacing sheets and blankets (‘doona’ to Australians)

**EH** – English Heritage

**en suite room** – hotel room with private attached bathroom (ie shower, basin and toilet)

**Essex** – derogatory adjective meaning showy/tarty (as in 'Essex girl') (sl)

**EU** – European Union

**evensong** – daily evening service (Church of England)

**fag** – cigarette; also boring task (cq)

**fagged** – exhausted (cq)

**fanny** – female genitals, not backside (sl)

**fell race** – tough running-race through hills or moors

**fen** – drained or marshy low-lying flat land

**firth** – estuary

**five** – five-pound note (cq)

**flat** – apartment

**flip-flops** – plastic sandals with a single strap over toes ('thongs' to Australians)

**footpath** – path through countryside and between houses, not beside a road (that's called a 'pavement')

**gaffer** – boss or foreman (cq)

**gate** – street (York, and some other northern cities)

**ginnel** – alleyway (Yorkshire)

**graft** – work (not corruption) (cq)

**grand** – one thousand (cq)

**greasy spoon** – cheap café (cq)

**grockle** – tourist (cq)

**gutted** – very disappointed (cq)

**guv, guvner** – from governor, a respectful term of address for owner or boss; can sometimes be used ironically (cq)

**hammered** – drunk (sl)

**hart** – deer

**heavy** – strong ale (Scotland)

**HI** – Hostelling International (organisation)

**hire** – rent

**hosepipe** – garden hose

**hotel** – accommodation with food and bar, not always open to passing trade

**howf** – pub or shelter (Scotland)

**HS** – Historic Scotland; organisation that manages historic sites in Scotland

**Huguenots** – French Protestants

**inn** – pub with accommodation

**jam** – fruit conserve spread on bread

**jelly** – sweet desert of flavoured gelatine

**junper** – woollen item of clothing worn on torso ('sweater' to Americans)

**kippers** – salted and smoked fish, traditionally herring

**kirk** – church (northern England & Scotland)

**knowes** – burial mounds (Scotland)

**kyle** – strait or channel (Scotland)

**lager lout** – see *yob*

**lass** – young woman (northern England & Scotland)

**ley** – clearing

**lift** – machine for carrying people up and down in large buildings ('elevator' to Americans)

**loch** – lake (Scotland)

**lock** – part of a canal or river that can be closed off and the water levels changed to raise or lower boats

**lolly** – money (cq); can also mean candy on a stick (possibly frozen)

**lorry** – truck

**love** – term of address, not necessarily to someone likable (cq)

**machair** – grass- and wildflower-covered sand dunes

**mad** – insane, not angry

**manky** – low quality; rotten; mouldy (cq)

**Martello tower** – small, circular tower used for coastal defence

**mate** – friend of any gender; also term of address, usually male-to-male (cq)

**midge** – mosquito-like insect

**motorway** – major road linking cities (equivalent to 'interstate' or 'freeway')

**motte** – mound on which a castle was built

**naff** – inferior; in poor taste (cq)

**nappies** – worn by babies before they're toilet trained ('diapers' to Americans)

**Ned** – see *yob* (used in Scotland particularly Glasgow, erroneously thought to stand for Non-Educated Delinquent) (cq)

**needs** – turnips (northern England & Scotland)

**NT** – National Trust; organisation that protects historic buildings and land with scenic importance in England and Wales

**NTS** – National Trust for Scotland

**NYMR** – North Yorkshire Moors Railway

**oast house** – building containing a kiln for drying hops

**off-license ('offie')** – carry-out alcoholic drinks shop

**OS** – Ordnance Survey

**owlers** – smugglers

**p** – pronounced pee; pence (ie 2p is 'two p' not 'two pence' or 'tuppence')

**pargeting** – decorative stucco plasterwork

**pete** – fortified house

**Pimms** – popular English spirit mixed with lemonade, mint and fresh fruit

**pint** – beer (as in 'let me buy you a pint')

**piscina** – basin for priests to wash their hands

**pissed** – drunk (not angry) (sl)

**pissed off** – angry (sl)

**pitch** – playing field

**ponce** – ostentatious or effeminate male; also to borrow (usually permanently) (cq)

**pop** – fizzy drink (northern England)

**postbus** – minibus delivering the mail, also carrying passengers

**provost** – mayor

**punter** – customer (cq)

**queue** – line of people waiting, for example, to buy tickets

**quid** – pound (cq)

**ramble** – short easy walk

**rebud** – heraldic device suggesting the name of its owner

**reet** – right (northern England)

**reiver** – warrior (historic term – northern England)

**return ticket** – round-trip ticket

**roll-up** – roll-your-own cigarette (cq)

**RSPB** – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

**RSPCA** – Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

**rubber** – eraser; also (less commonly) condom (sl)

**rubbish bin** – what Americans call a 'garbage can'

**rugger** – rugby

**sarnie** – sandwich (cq)

**sarsen** – boulder, a geological remnant usually found in chalky areas (sometimes used in Neolithic constructions, eg Stonehenge and Avebury)

**sett** – tartan pattern

**shag** – have sex (sl); also a tough or tiring task (cq)

**shagged** – tired (cq)

**sheila-na-gig** – Celtic fertility symbol of a woman with exaggerated genitalia, often seen carved in stone on churches and castles; found mainly in the Marches, along the Wales-England border

**shout** – to buy a group of people drinks, usually reciprocated

**shut** – partially covered passage

**single ticket** – one-way ticket

**sixth-form college** – further-education college

**Sloane Ranger** – wealthy and superficial, but well-connected, young person

**snicket** – alleyway (York)

**snog** – long, drawn-out kiss (not just a peck on the cheek) (cq)

**spondulicks** – money (cq)

**sporran** – purse worn with a kilt (Scotland)

**SSSI** – Site of Special Scientific Interest

**stone** – unit of weight equivalent to 14lb or 6.35kg

**stovie** – tasty pie of meat, mashed onion and fried potato

**subway** – underpass (for pedestrians)

**sweets** – what Americans call 'candy' and Australians call 'lollies'

**ta** – thanks

**tatties** – potatoes (cq)

**thwaite** – clearing in a forest (northern England)

**TIC** – Tourist Information Centre

**ton** – one hundred (sl)

**tor** – pointed hill (originally a Celtic word)

**torch** – flashlight

**Tory** – Conservative (political party)

**towpath** – path running beside a river or canal, where horses once towed barges

**trainers** – running/tennis shoes

**traveller** – nomadic person (traditional and New Age hippy types)

**tron** – public weighbridge

**tube** – London's underground railway (cq)

**twit** – foolish (sometimes annoying) person (cq)

**twitcher** – obsessive bird-watcher

**twitten** – passage; small lane

**Underground** – London's underground railway system; see also *tube*

**VAT** – value-added tax, levied on most goods and services, currently 17.5%

**verderer** – officer upholding law and order in the royal forests

**wanker** – stupid/worthless person (offensive sl)

**wide boy** – ostentatious go-getter, usually on the make

**wolds** – open, rolling countryside

**wynd** – lane or narrow street (northern England & Scotland)

**YHA** – Youth Hostels Association

**yob** – hooligan

## GLOSSARY OF RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

**abbey** – a monastery; a building inhabited by monks or nuns

**aisle** – passageway or open space along either side of a church's *nave*

**ambulatory** – processional *aisle* at the east end of a cathedral, behind the altar

**apse** – semicircular or rectangular area for clergy, traditionally at the east end of the church

**baptistry** – separate area of a church used for baptisms

**barrel vault** – semicircular arched roof

**boss** – covering for the meeting point of the ribs in a *vaulted roof*

**brass** – memorial, common in medieval churches, consisting of a brass plate set into the floor or a tomb

**buttress** – vertical support for a wall; see also *flying buttress*

**campanile** – freestanding belfry or bell tower

**chancel** – eastern end of the church, usually reserved for choir and clergy

**chantry** – *chapel* established by a donor for use in their name after death

**chapel** – small, more private shrine or area of worship off the main body of the church

**chapel of ease** – *chapel* built for those who lived too far away from the parish church

**chapter** – clergy who run the cathedral

**chapter house** – building in a cathedral *close* where the dean meets with the *chapter*

**chevet** – *chapels* radiating out in a semicircular sweep

**choir** – area in the church where the choir is seated

**clearstory** – see *clerestory*

**clerestory** – a wall of windows above a church's *triforium*

**cloister** – covered walkway linking the church with adjacent monastic buildings

**close** – buildings grouped around a cathedral

**collegiate** – church with a chapter of canons and prebendaries, but not a cathedral

**corbel** – stone or wooden projection from a wall supporting a beam or arch

**crossing** – intersection of the *nave* and *transepts* in a church

**flying buttress** – supporting *buttress* in the form of one side of an open arch

**font** – basin used for baptisms, usually towards the west end of a church, often in a separate *baptistry*

**frater** – common or dining room in a medieval monastery

**lady chapel** – *chapel*, usually at the east end of a cathedral, dedicated to the Virgin Mary

**lancet** – pointed window in Early English style

**lierne vault** – *vault* containing many tertiary ribs

**minster** – church connected to a monastery

**misericord** – hinged choir seat with a bracket (often elaborately carved) that can be leant against

**nave** – main body of the church at the western end, where the congregation gather

**precincts** – see *close*

**presbytery** – eastern area of the *chancel* beyond the choir, where the clergy operate

**priory** – religious house governed by a prior

**pulpit** – raised box where the priest gives sermons

**quire** – medieval term for *choir*

**refectory** – monastic dining room

**reredos** – literally 'behind the back'; backdrop to an altar

**rood** – archaic word for cross (in churches)

**rood screen** – screen carrying a *rood* or crucifix, which separates the *nave* from the *chancel*

**squint** – angled opening in a wall or pillar to allow a view of a church's altar

**transepts** – north-south projections from a church's *nave*, which is often added at a later date than the original construction. It gives the whole church a cruciform (cross-shaped plan).

**triforium** – internal wall passage above a church's arcade and below the *clerestory*; behind the triforium is the 'blind' space above the side *aisle*

**undercroft** – vaulted underground room or cellar

**vault** – roof with arched ribs, usually in a decorative pattern; see also *barrel vault* and *lierne vault*

**vestry** – robing room, where the parson/priest keeps his robes and puts them on

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