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travel.state.gov > Passports & International Travel > Country Information > **United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)**

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

Official Name: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

LAST UPDATED: MARCH 27, 2017

Embassy Messages

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Quick Facts

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

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Embassies and Consulates

[U.S. Embassy London](#)

24 Grosvenor Square

London, W1A 2LQ

United Kingdom

Telephone: +(44)(20) 7499-9000

Emergency After-Hours Telephone: +(44)(20) 7499-9000

Fax: +(44) (20) 7495-5012

SCSLondon@state.gov

CONSULATES

[U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh, Scotland](#)

3 Regent Terrace,

Edinburgh EH7 5BW

Scotland

Telephone: 013-1556-8315 / from the United States: 011 (44)(13) 1556-8315

Emergency After-Hours Telephone: 020-7499-9000 / from the United States: 011 (44)(20) 7499-9000

Fax: 0131-557-6023 /from the United States: 011 (44) 131-557-6023

Edinburgh-Info@state.gov

[U.S. Consulate General Belfast, Northern Ireland](#)

Danesfort House, 223 Stranmillis Road,

Belfast BT9 5GR

Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

Telephone: 028-9038-6100 / from the United States: 011 (44)(28) 9038-6100

Emergency After-Hours Telephone: 01253-501106 / from the United States: 011 (44) 1253-501106

Fax: 028-9068-1301 / from the United States: 011 (44)(28) 9068-1301

Email: ConsularBelfast@state.gov

Destination Description

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

Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements

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

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

Find information on [dual nationality](#), [prevention of international child abduction](#) and [customs regulations](#).

Safety and Security

Credible information indicates terrorist groups continue plotting possible near-term attacks in Europe. All European countries remain potentially vulnerable to attacks from transnational terrorist organizations. The UK Security Service, commonly known as MI5, publishes specific reasons for any changes in the threat level and recommended actions for the public via its [UK threat levels website](#) .

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

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

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

Crime: The United Kingdom and Gibraltar generally have low crime rates.

- Be cautious and aware of your surroundings.
- Be vigilant, as **pickpocketing**, **mugging** and “**snatch and grab**” theft of mobile phones, watches and jewelry can occur.
- Do not leave bags unattended in restaurants, pubs, hotel lobbies, and parked cars.
- Be alert to other criminal schemes, such as **impostors** posing as undercover police officers and “fining” tourists for bogus minor offenses. A legitimate Metropolitan Police Services officer will never demand an immediate cash payment.
- **Use only licensed Black Cabs or pre-ordered car services (minicabs).** Unlicensed taxis or private cars posing as taxis may offer low fares, but in some instances, travelers have been **robbed** or **sexually assaulted** while using these cars. The Safer Travel at Night partnership among the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, and the mayor of London maintains a website with [additional information on cabs and car services](#) .
- **Avoid using ATMs that look temporary in structure or location** or are located in isolated areas – they may not be legitimate. Use ATMs located inside a bank branch.
- **Scams:** Before sending any money to individuals you have never met in person, visit the [Embassy London blog website](#) for more information about **internet financial scams** and how to protect yourself. Financial crimes conducted over the internet have increased dramatically in the United Kingdom as scammers attempt to convince you to send them money. These fraudulent schemes can include:
 - Lotteries
 - Online dating/social networking services
 - Inheritance notices
 - Work permits/job offers
 - Bank overpayments

- Schemes that make it appear you are helping a loved one or a friend in trouble

See the [Department of State](#) and the [FBI](#) pages for information on scams.

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

- **Local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting crimes.**

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

We can:

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

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

For further information:

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

Local Laws & Special Circumstances

Criminal Penalties: You are subject to local laws. If you violate local laws, even unknowingly, you may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. **A U.S. passport will not protect you from being arrested, prosecuted, or jailed.**

Furthermore, some laws are also prosecutable in the U.S., regardless of local law. For examples, see our website on [crimes against minors abroad](#) and the [Department of Justice](#) website.

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

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

Special Circumstances:

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

Faith-Based Travelers: See our following webpages for details:

- [International Religious Freedom Report](#) – see country reports
- [Human Rights Report](#) – see country reports
- [Hajj Fact Sheet for Travelers](#)
- [Best Practices for Volunteering Abroad](#)

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

See our [LGBTI Travel Information](#) page and section 6 of our [Human Rights report](#) for further details.

Travelers Who Require Accessibility Assistance: Individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from the United States.

- UK law requires that all public service providers (except in the transportation sector) make “reasonable adjustments” to ensure their services are available

to persons with disabilities. **Nevertheless, code exemptions permit many older buildings to have steps up from the street.**

- Getting around in cities may be difficult at times because sidewalks can be narrow and uneven.
- **Most London Underground and UK National Rail System stations are not readily accessible for people with disabilities.** Very few stations have elevators, and most have stairways and long corridors for changing trains or exiting to the street. However, many UK buses are equipped with lowering platforms for limited-mobility or sight or hearing disabled travelers.
- Many taxis have swivel entry seats or retractable ramps to ease entry.

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

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

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

Health

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

An NHS surcharge is assessed on certain visa applicants at the time of application. **Tourists and short-term visitors will not be assessed the surcharge, but will be charged 150 percent of the cost of any medical treatment they receive from the NHS. Unpaid balances of £1,000 or more can result in being barred from return to the United Kingdom.**

- **The U.S. government does not pay medical bills, and U.S. Medicare is not valid overseas.**

Medical Insurance: Make sure your health insurance plan provides **coverage overseas**. Most care providers overseas only accept **cash payments**. See our webpage for more [information on insurance providers for overseas coverage](#).

- **We strongly recommend [supplemental insurance \(our webpage\)](#) to cover medical evacuation.**

Carry **prescription medication** in original packaging, along with your doctor's prescription. Certain prescriptions available in the United States are classed as **narcotics** in the United Kingdom and not available.

Vaccinations: Be up-to-date on all [vaccinations](#) recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Further health information:

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

Travel & Transportation

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

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

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

Traffic Laws:

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

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

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

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

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of the United Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of United

Kingdom's air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the [FAA's safety assessment page](#) .

Maritime Travel: Mariners planning travel to the United Kingdom should also check for U.S. maritime advisories and alerts at www.marad.dot.gov/msci . Information may also be posted to the U.S. Coast Guard homeport website (<https://homeport.uscg.mil>), and the NGA broadcast warnings website <https://msi.nga.mil/NGAPortal/MSI.portal> (select "broadcast warnings").

Please see [Fact Sheet](#) for this country.

Assistance for U.S. Citizens

U.S. Embassy London
24 Grosvenor Square
London, W1A 2LQ
United Kingdom

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

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