

UK Guidebook

Description

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In many ways, pilgrims will find the UK very familiar, especially compared to other international destinations: English is spoken nearly universally, and amenities like credit card acceptance, wi-fi, and cell phone service are very common.

However, as with any international travel, there are important differences from home to be aware of. This page provides an overview of important things to take into consideration as you plan for your trip.

- Currency and Credit Cards
- Electronics
- Staying in Touch
- Riding the Tube
- Tipping
- Weather

Currency and Credit Cards

The official currency of the United Kingdom is the British Pound (Â£). You should not expect to use US dollars in the United Kingdom, and most businesses do not accept Euros used elsewhere in Europe.

Credit/Debit Cards

Before you leave home, notify your bank or credit union that you will be traveling internationally to avoid disruption. While this step is no longer required by many banks, we encourage you to confirm that is the case so that you donâ??t show up in England without a working credit card.

As in the United States, virtually all businesses in the UK accept credit and debit cards, and many businesses do not accept cash. Visa and Mastercard-branded cards are accepted most places, and American Express is accepted in many places.



Plan to bring a contactless/tap-to-pay card (with the symbol shown here), as most payment terminals in the UK accept tap-to-pay, and many (including the terminal on the RailAir 2 bus and on the Tube) are tap-to-pay only.

Foreign Transaction Fees: Be sure to check with your bank or credit union about any foreign transaction fees that may apply to your card, which is an additional per-transaction charge.

Many card machines will prompt you to choose a USD or GBP amount. In most cases, if your card doesnâ??t charge foreign transaction fees, the best exchange rate is when you choose GBP.

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Prior to the trip, you may wish to consider obtaining a travel-type credit card. These cards typically offer no foreign transaction fee and may come with other benefits such as basic travel insurance, trip delay coverage, and similar perks. Credit cards generally also offer better fraud protection in the event that your card is lost or stolen.

Bring at least two separate cards, including at least one you donâ??t carry day to day, as a backup in case one is lost or stolen. It is also recommended to bring cards from different payment networks such as Visa and American Express since some merchants may not accept all payment methods.

Cash

While cash is generally not needed, as virtually all merchants accept credit/debit cards, many pilgrims choose to carry a small amount of cash during the trip.

There are several options for obtaining British Pounds including:

- **At ATMs in the UK:** Using your US debit card at a bank-owned ATM in the UK is generally the safest and most cost-effective option. You may incur a small fee, but bank-owned ATMs offer the best exchange rate. Numerous ATMs are available in Salisbury.
- **Salisbury Post Office:** The Salisbury Post Office offers currency exchange if you are seeking to exchange dollars, euros, or other currency for pounds.
- **Your Home Bank:** Many US banks are able to provide you with pounds with advance notice.

Note that airport currency exchanges and non-bank-owned ATMs are **not** recommended, as they charge higher fees and offer less favorable exchange rates.

Electronics

As a general rule, you will need few, if any, electronics for the pilgrimage beyond a cell phone.

Of course, you are welcome to bring additional devices such as cameras, laptops/tablets, e-readers, etc. However, we encourage you to think carefully about what you will actually need during the pilgrimage, as electronic devices add weight, complicate airport security, and risk being lost, stolen, or damaged.



Power connections in the UK have a different voltage and plug style than in the US, so make sure you bring a suitable travel adapter. You can buy adapters relatively cheaply from major retailers such as Amazon, Target, or Walmart, as well as from many retailers in the UK.

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Adapter or Transformer? Most modern devices are â??dual voltage,â?• meaning they only need an adapter for the UK plug style. Check the small print on your device, and if it says something like â??Input: 100-240v,â?• you only need an adapter. If your device is not dual-voltage, or if youâ??re not sure, you will need a power transformer that converts the 220v UK voltage to the 110v US standard.

Staying in Touch

WhatsApp

Our primary means of communication before and during the pilgrimage will be **WhatsApp**. WhatsApp is a free app you can download for iOS or Android phones, and it works well on either a cell connection or Wi-Fi.

When you register for the pilgrimage, you will receive more details about joining the WhatsApp group for your trip. Even before we arrive in England, the WhatsApp group will be a place to share information, ask questions, and receive updates and reminders.

Note: If you run into issues while traveling to Salisbury, your best option to let pilgrimage leaders know you will be using WhatsApp.

Cell Phone Usage in the UK

It is important that you have the ability to use your cell phone while in the UK. There will be several points during the pilgrimage when you will have free time, either individually or with your small group, and being able to use your cell phone will allow you to stay in contact with group members and

pilgrimage leaders. Additionally, we will have several walking tours during the trip and will use a phone-based tool to allow you to listen to leaders as we walk.

In most cases, there are additional charges related to using a cell phone internationally, and you are encouraged to contact your cell phone carrier to review your options. Some approaches taken by pilgrims include:

Local SIM cards/eSIMs

In many cases, this is the most cost-effective option for cell phone usage internationally, with local SIM cards/eSIMs offering predictable costs during the trip. Some providers pilgrims have used in the past include:

- Saily
- Airalo
- Holafly
- Ubigi

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These providers are not endorsed by Discipleship Ministries. They are listed for informational purposes only. Additionally, Discipleship Ministries and the pilgrimage leaders cannot provide technical support for setting up a SIM card or eSIM. You are encouraged to obtain a SIM/eSIM early to ensure compatibility with your phone and existing plan prior to arriving in England.

Note: SIM/eSIM plans are often data-only and do not come with a UK phone number for phone calls or text messages. In most cases, this is acceptable as calls can still be made using WhatsApp, FaceTime, etc., but make sure you are aware of any such limitations when purchasing a plan.

Carrier-Provided Options

Many carriers have international usage options including pay-per-use, daily plans, and trip/monthly plans. These plans are often somewhat more expensive than SIM/eSIM options but are almost always the simplest to set up and use. Check with your cell phone carrier for details and options.

How Much Data to Get?

Especially if using an eSIM, you will often buy a package with a fixed amount of data. Your data plan should include a **minimum** of 3GB of data for the trip, and 5GB is recommended if you will be regularly posting photos or videos, using data to make voice or video calls, or extensively using maps.

To maximize your data plan, we recommend disabling cloud backups and photo sync over cellular data prior to the trip, and making use of wi-fi for uploading or sending photos and videos.

Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is very common in the UK, similar to the US, and available at all overnight accommodations, many pilgrimage sites, and community locations such as coffee shops.

Riding the Tube

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The primary form of public transport in London is the subway, also known as the Tube or the London Underground. You will often see public transport generally referred to as TfL, or Transport for London.

You can pay your fare using a contactless credit card, travelcard, or ticket. If your credit card supports contactless payments, this is often the easiest way to pay, as you just tap your card at the turnstile. If youâ??ll be paying with cash, ticket machines are available at Tube stations.

TfL offers an app that can help you plan your journey, and navigation apps such as Apple or Google Maps can also be helpful. Visit the TfL Website or TfL Go app for more details about topics like fares and service disruptions that may impact your journey.

If you will be riding the Tube, here are some tips that will help your trip go smoothly:

- Do not bring more luggage than you can safely carry on your own.
- If traveling with a backpack, take it off and stand over it on the carriage or move it under your seat to take up less room.
- Be aware of busy times for the Tube, particularly during the morning and evening rush hours.
- Allow departing passengers to exit the train before boarding.
- The Tube is not air-conditioned, so be sure to bring water and wear cool clothing during the summer months.
- Practice basic security measures and be aware of your surroundings, particularly at larger stations.
- As you enter and exit Tube stations, stand on the right and walk on the left of escalators.

- Stand behind the yellow line on station platforms.

Tipping and Service Charges

Tips are much less prevalent in the UK than in the US, and service charges are often included in bills in places such as hotels and restaurants. It is always a good practice to see if a service charge is included before tipping, and if it is, then no tip is generally expected.

If you do choose to tip, a customary tip is 10% to 15% of the bill, or a smaller cash tip in places like coffee shops.

Weather in the UK

Summer weather in the UK can be quite warm, with highs in the 90s (Fahrenheit), and daily rain chances are not uncommon. Additionally, air conditioning is not common in the UK, and most pilgrimage sites and overnight accommodations are **not** air-conditioned.

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For more information about how this should impact your packing, visit packing advice.

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