



British Studies At Oxford

2010

Information Document

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1 The address and contact numbers of *British Studies At Oxford*

The program's addresses in Oxford is

Office of the Dean
British Studies At Oxford
 St. John's College
 OXFORD
 UNITED KINGDOM
 OX1 3JP
 Telephone: (01865) 277368; fax: (01865) 277433

Email: bsao@rhodes.edu

If calling from outside Britain, include the country code (44) but do not dial the initial 0 in the city code (so, from the USA, the number is +44-1865-277368). If calling from the USA, the international line is usually obtained by dialing 011. To phone the *BSAO* office, therefore, you would dial 011-44-1865-277368.

2 Contacting St. John's College

The main switchboard number for St. John's College, and also for the Porters' Lodge, is (01865) 277300.

3 Emergency numbers throughout Britain

To contact the emergency services – Police, Fire Services, and Medical Emergencies – phone **999**.

4 Travel to Britain, Passports, and Identity Cards

Transatlantic Travel

BSAO does not make group airline bookings. Participants make their own arrangements for travel to and from Oxford. If you have not already made your reservations, you should do so soon. There are many and various deals on offer, and we advise you to shop around.

Travel costs in 2010 are going to be significantly more than in recent years. In addition to the increased costs of fuel, the airlines are driving up prices by withdrawing flights and so reducing the number of available seats. We expect fares to be in the region of \$1100-1500.

You and your family may have a travel agent you trust and have worked with before. If that is not the case, or if you want to explore the options, here are some ideas, though *BSAO* does not recommend any particular agents. You may want to draw to your own travel agent's attention the various discount agents; your agent may impose a small commission on tickets obtained through the discount organizations.

Discount Travel Agents

In the past few years, the cheapest flights are often available from travel agents who specialize in bulk purchases of airline seats at greatly reduced prices, and through these we often get seats

at close to half the price quoted by the airlines themselves. Below are the names and telephone numbers of some we have used and others that are well known. It is worth shopping around and seeing if one agent will undercut another in order to get the business. Several insist in advertisements that they will never be undercut.

But as with most other activities, the internet is constantly changing the best way to do things. We now use www.kayak.com and www.sidestep.com and find that many of the better rates appear there.

Some discount brokers we have used are:

Cut-Rate Travel 800.388.0575

TFI International 800.745.8000 | <http://www.tfitour.com/>

International Vacations 800.727.0352 | <http://www.internationalvacations.com/>

From the London Airports or London to St. John's College

In the daytime, there are frequent trains from London to Oxford. There are also direct, non-stop coach routes to Oxford from London and the two main London airports, Heathrow and Gatwick. The *BSAO* staff use these coach services, finding them the most convenient, and least expensive, way of reaching Oxford. Ask at the airports for directions to trains and buses.

St. John's College is in St. Giles Street, in the middle of Oxford, and is a fifteen-minute walk from the railway station and a five-minute walk from the coach station. The coaches stop in Gloucester Green, a walk of about two city blocks from St. John's. Be sure to stay on the coach until it reaches Gloucester Green.

As you will have baggage, however, a taxi direct to the College from the train or coach station may be a good use of money, especially if you are travel-weary and have jet-lag. A taxi will only cost you around £5.00 - cheap at the price. There are taxi stands at both the railway and bus stations in Oxford.

Returning to Heathrow or Gatwick on Tuesday 10 August

On the final Tuesday morning, the program will have buses leaving for the two main airports at no additional cost to participants. These will leave at a time that will ensure that those with the earliest reasonable transatlantic flights arrive at their airport in good time: the buses will leave Oxford at 6:00 AM for Gatwick, 6:00 or 6:30 for Heathrow. If you have a Gatwick flight that departs earlier than 10:00 AM, or a Heathrow flight earlier than 9:00 AM, we will advise you to make your own way to the airports using the convenient commercial services. On the other hand, if your flight is mid afternoon, for instance, you might also do better to travel independently, so obviating the need to get up so early for the *BSAO* buses.

Before the Program Begins

Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate you in St. John's College until the formal opening of *BSAO*. However, arriving in Britain or Europe a few days – or even a few weeks – early is one of the best ways to enhance and deepen the experience offered by the program. It enables you to bring to *BSAO* some individual experience of Britain or Europe. Staying for a few days in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in a small British town or village gives you the opportunity to catch your breath, recover from jet-lag, meet some British people in their own homes, and develop your own first impressions of the culture we are studying.

An excellent website for finding bed and breakfast accommodation or small hotels is <http://www.smoothhound.co.uk>. Also, you might find very useful the *Let's Go* volume in the "Suggested Reading" at the back of this document.

Passports and Visas

Travelers holding a United States passport do not need a visa to enter the United Kingdom. If you are traveling with a passport issued by another country, check with a British Consulate to see whether a visa is required. **A passport is required**, and if you do not currently have a valid passport then you should apply for one immediately. In order to get a passport, obtain the appropriate forms from a main Post Office or contact the local Passport Office listed in your telephone directory.

Letter of Confirmation of Participation in *British Studies At Oxford*

In May we shall send you a formal letter confirming that you are participating in *BSAO*. This can speed your way through immigration so we recommend that you carry it with you.

The *BSAO* Identification Card

We shall issue you with a *BSAO* identification card in Oxford. It will enable you to identify yourself to the security staff at St. John's College and it is accepted in some other places as a student identification card. You may wish to obtain an International Student Identification Card (ISIC), but *BSAO* does not supply these.

5 *BSAO* 2010: Dates, Arrival and Departure

This year's session of *BSAO* begins in St. John's College, Oxford, on Sunday 4 July. The Closing Dinner is on Monday 9 August. Students are expected to leave St. John's College by 10:00 AM in the morning of Tuesday 10 August.

You should plan to arrive at the College between 12:00 noon and 5:00 PM, on Sunday, July 4.

Should an emergency greatly delay your arrival, please advise the Dean's Office by telephone as soon as possible.

On arrival at St. John's, please come to the *BSAO* Office (which will be clearly visible on entering the College). We will be waiting to greet you, help you with your luggage, and get you established in your room. The *BSAO* staff will be in the office during the afternoon of July 4 from 12:00 noon until 5:00 PM.

6 Sending Luggage in Advance

This is a perennial problem to which we don't have a simple or good solution (if we did, it wouldn't be a problem). St. John's is not equipped to store luggage sent before the program begins. If you have luggage for storage before then, you may use the "Left Luggage" office in a convenient railway station or airport, or (by negotiation) in a hotel, or with your bed-and-breakfast hosts.

At the main British airports, including London Heathrow, London Gatwick, and Manchester International, and at the main London rail termini, there are secure left luggage facilities operated by Excess Baggage (<http://www.excess-baggage.com/>). You have to pay a daily charge, but the costs are not exorbitant, considering the convenience of the service. Alternatively, the Excess Baggage company has a left-luggage facility in West London which is significantly less expensive than the airport or railway offices: 168 Earls Court Road London SW5 9QQ, approximately 150 metres from the Earls Court underground station (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm; Saturday 9am-1pm).

Please be aware that, if you arrange to have luggage sent to you through the mail system or by international carriers such as FedEx and UPS, it is likely to be delayed at Customs in the UK and you will probably have to pay duty to obtain its release. This duty can usually be reclaimed after you “re-export” the contents on returning home, but the process is bureaucratic and cumbersome.

7 Medical and Health Information

Health information concerning Britain can be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control at the address listed in Appendix 1.

Neither *BSAO* nor St. John’s College has its own medical staff. However, *BSAO* has formed relationships over the years with doctors’ and dentists’ practices close to St. John’s College. The Dean’s Office will recommend students needing medical or dental assistance to them.

In the case of any illness serious enough to require intensive hospitalization or prolonged convalescence, you may be advised to return home to be released into the care of your family and your own physicians.

If you have a medical condition that requires continuing medication, you must be sure to bring a sufficient supply of any medication, properly labeled, to last the duration of the program. Do not assume that you will be able to obtain a fresh supply in Britain - some drugs are not available there, or go under different names, or cannot be prescribed by a physician who does not know you. It is unwise to think that you can have fresh supplies sent to you; Customs officials often confiscate drugs sent in this way.

While in Oxford you must take responsibility for maintaining your own health: behave prudently, get plenty of rest, eat appropriately, and do not abuse alcohol.

8 Insurance

VERY IMPORTANT: Before leaving home, please ensure that you have insurance for the loss of baggage, personal property, and cancellation or change of travel plans.

BSAO is pleased to include some insurance in the cost of the program. We also include insurance for withdrawal on medical grounds. Brochures describing these insurance policies are on our website (<http://www.britishstudies.net/Insurance%20Cover.htm>). You may well wish to ensure that you have additional insurance to cover you for withdrawal from the program for non-medical reasons.

We strongly advise you to consult your own and your family’s existing insurance policies to see how much cover you may already have, and if necessary take out additional insurance to cover all eventualities.

9 Personal Finance

It is impossible for us to say definitely how much additional spending money you will need while in Britain. Some students have a wonderful time without spending much money at all;

others spend a great deal. Your position within this spectrum will be determined by personal circumstances.

We therefore recommend that you arrive with roughly £200 in sterling (the UK currency), either in cash or in travelers' checks.

In Britain it is virtually impossible to cash personal checks drawn on a U.S. bank **whatever your local bank may tell you.**

For security reasons we advise you not to travel with large amounts in cash.

The form in which you gain access to extra money will determine to some degree the cost of doing so. We advise you to spend a few minutes talking to your bank about the transaction and commission charges they would levy. Many banks, ever interested in additional revenue, have strikingly increased the costs of using credit, debit, and ATM cards in the past couple of years. Recent news suggests that it may be worth opening an account with a credit union – they charge far less for ATM use.

The ATM machines at local banks in Britain and much of Europe are connected to exactly the same international networks as the ATMs in America and through them you will be able to obtain cash in the local currency (the British pound sterling in the UK, the Euro in most of continental Europe). We recommend that your ATM card should give you access to a current account rather than a savings account. In case of access problems, we suggest that someone at home in the USA should also be able to access your account.

Many people who go abroad these days also carry one or more major credit cards, and the major credit card networks (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Discover, etc.) are all common in Europe. However, European credit card networks are introducing tighter security systems, issuing credit cards with inbuilt security chips and requiring PIN numbers. We do not think that this will cause problems for holders of US credit cards, but you should remember to sign your card and remember your PIN if you have been issued with one.

We advise that you bring some money, in case of emergency, in the form of **insured traveler's checks.**

Whether you are in Britain or on the Continent, the hurried transmission of funds abroad is neither easy nor economical, and **there is no good substitute for planning ahead.** Neither St. John's College nor *BSAO* is able to cash personal or traveler's checks for members of the program or accept credit cards.

10 The Program's Excursions and Independent Travel

BSAO will offer a wide range of excursions throughout the session. These are still being arranged and details will be given separately, later in the Spring.

Our program is structured to enable you to explore independently as well as study more formally: much of the value of being abroad lies in what you find out for yourself, which then feeds back into your classroom experience. There are a multitude of guidebooks available both here and in Oxford, and you will enjoy planning some excursions in advance. Again, the *Let's Go* series is a good place to start, but look at the other *Suggested Reading* at the end of this document.

11 Meals

Unless otherwise announced, meals in Oxford will be served at the following hours. Everyone is requested to be punctual.

Breakfast-8:00-Sunday-9:00

Lunch-12:30

Dinner-7:00

Please note that there is no service of dinner on Saturday evenings.

Students who intend to be absent from one or more meals are requested to give advance notice to the Dean's Office, using the Signing On and Signing Off sheets by the entrance to the Dining Hall. No refund will be made for meals not taken.

Dinner. Although casual dress is acceptable for breakfast and lunch, we dress more formally on "High Table" evenings – a list of these (about 10) will be posted by the entrance to the Dining Hall on a weekly basis. These evenings are occasions on which we celebrate ourselves as members of the program, and when we welcome and entertain guests, including our lecturers. Men are expected to wear jackets and ties to table on those evenings, and women to dress accordingly. This doesn't mean extravagantly "dressy", just presentable. You should be present in the Dining Hall a few minutes before 7:00 PM on these occasions.

On High Table evenings a group of students will be invited to dine with tutors and guests.

Morning coffee will be served at 9:30 AM in the Junior Common Room Lounge (the College Bar) between the first seminar and the lecture.

Vegetarian meals are available and if you wish to order these, please inform the Office of the Dean at the beginning of the programme. Once the vegetarian option has been requested, further changes cannot be made.

12 Accommodation in Oxford

Students live in St. John's College, having either a single bed-sitting room, or a single room with separate sitting room. Linen and towels are provided. Room assignments will be made as nearly as possible in accordance with the requests received before arrival in Oxford. We regret that accommodation in the College will not be available after 10:00 AM, Tuesday, August 10. Please remember that the rooms you occupy are those of undergraduates of the College; do not disturb any personal possessions left there.

Your room will be given a basic cleaning each day by a "Scout". Please ensure that your room looks presentable and that the Scout is not expected to deal with a major mess. Do not hang anything out of the windows.

Smoking in all enclosed public spaces is now banned in Britain. This includes restaurants, bars, and pubs – a dramatic change to social life. St John's has decided to apply this law throughout the College and smoking is therefore banned in all rooms, including bedrooms. There are a few designated open-air smoking areas, indicated by notices.

13 Facilities in St. John's College

In some ways, facilities in St. John's College will exceed those most students are accustomed to at their home colleges (the single rooms, for instance, and daily cleaning mentioned under **Accommodation in Oxford** above). In other ways, the circumstances of an overseas study program mean that facilities are more limited. In your home college there are many more administrators and administrative and service offices than we will have in Oxford. As a result, we ask that you be tolerant, flexible, and resourceful.

Computing

St. John's has computing facilities open to our participants, but these are limited. (Oxford students have access to University computing facilities as well, which take pressure off the colleges. The University computing facilities are not open to *BSAO* participants.) You will need to organize your time to adapt to the limited access to computers, being prepared to do work in advance of deadlines and perhaps to submit some work handwritten (your tutors will be expecting that). You should also be mindful of the needs of others, and avoid monopolizing computers for long periods (especially for social purposes when others are writing papers, etc.).

Laptops

A growing number of participants bring laptops. The *BSAO* administration is nervous about this: easily portable computers do not discriminate about who is carrying them, and so are vulnerable to theft or loss. If you are bringing a laptop

- insure it before you leave home;
- make a complete back-up of valuable data and programs before leaving home; and
- invest in a security cable to tether it while in Oxford.

Most laptops – all that we have seen, in fact – have a transformer built into the power cord. It is usually a rectangular box with statements about voltage on the underside, usually saying something like “110-240v”, meaning that the transformer means that the supply to the computer is converted within those bounds. US voltage is 110; European 240. All you will then need is plug converter, easily obtained at the airport or in Oxford.

We expect that St John's will, as in previous years, enable students to have [internet access in their rooms](#). Before doing so, the College authorities will require completion of some documentation and perhaps inspection of your laptop as a condition of internet access.

In order to protect their network, St John's requires you to have (and have used) the latest security patches and virus protection programs. Without these they will not connect your laptop to the network. They will also not connect your computer to the network if you have programs designed to enable illegal peer-to-peer filesharing. They will permit the use of Skype.

Wireless

Those fifteenth-century builders had no vision: their structures don't adapt to wireless internet at all well. There is little or no wireless connectivity in St John's (the walls are just too thick).

The College Bar is located in Thomas White 4. Please ensure that you have left the area around the bar by 11:00 PM, and that you keep noise to a minimum: the bar area faces the President's Lodgings and Garden.

Laundromats are located in the basements of staircases N/3 and TW/3. Soap is available there as well. Laundry cards can be purchased in the Porters' Lodge between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Most gardens, courts, and other open places within the College are available for students' use, but there are some rules. The President's Garden is private. It is a long-standing tradition of the College that students neither walk nor sit upon the lawns in the Front and Canterbury Quadrangles, nor on the Great Lawn in the College Garden. Students are not permitted to sit on the steps of the Senior Common Room building in North Quad. These rules may seem odd and it's true this is an example of a British class system. However, in this instance the system is entirely merit based: all you have to do to gain the required privileges is be clever and distinguished enough to be elected to a fellowship of St. John's. Quite simple. Neither wealth nor inherited position will suffice.

The gardens are famous; please take care of them and abide by the College's rules. Under no circumstances try to enter gardens after they have been locked: St. John's will prosecute for trespass if you do and you may also find that the College's physical but invisible deterrents will make your clothes and skin difficult to clean.

14 Reading Assignments and Libraries

St. John's College does not admit *BSAO* participants to its libraries.

The reading assignments for the seminars come chiefly from the texts to be purchased and brought with you. Other readings may be assigned from books that are readily obtained in such large Oxford bookshops.

Students who so wish will be individually introduced to the Bodleian Library and required to take the Reader's Oath and pay a substantial entry fee. Afterwards, they will be permitted to use the main library, the Radcliffe Camera, and many of the auxiliary collections of the University in theology, music, Commonwealth studies, etc. Books may not be borrowed from these libraries. Like all great research libraries, the Bodleian is by no means easy to find your way around; you may feel that the time you would have to invest in finding your way around is not worth it for a relatively brief program. In general, we do not recommend participants to use the Bodleian.

BSAO has its own Reading Room, where there is a collection of reference and general interest books, as well as a bench collection for some of this year's courses. Please do not remove material from the room. The key to the Reading Room can be obtained from the Porters' Lodge.

15 Communications

Telephones

Quite a number of students now use internet telephony through programs such as Skype.

There are a few public telephones throughout St. John's College. You may also find internal lines in rooms, but St. John's College does not offer to create telephone accounts for short-stay visitors. Contacting students from outside the College is, therefore, difficult and you will find it much more satisfactory and reliable if you phone out. Long distance calls should be made collect, or by using international credit cards secured in the U.S. or the telephone unit cards available throughout Britain. Remember, there is a six-hour time difference between Britain and

U.S. Central Time: if it is 6:00 PM in Oxford it is 12:00 Noon Central Time in the USA. For emergency purposes, the telephone number of the *BSAO* office is 01865 277368 (from the USA +44 1865 277368).

Cell phones

Students often consider purchasing cell or mobile phones. *BSAO* is close to neutral about this: we don't see an overwhelming reason why participants need a cell phone and we see some negatives: if you stay too closely tethered to your life back in the USA you may never really engage with the culture you're visiting. If you do decide to use a cell phone, it may be possible to arrange to use one you already own in the USA – check coverage and plans with your service provider. Alternatively, you can purchase a relatively inexpensive phone in the UK – a Pay-As-You-Go phone is usually a better bet. Cell phones often don't receive a good signal within the college walls (see wireless, above).

The address for mail in Oxford is that in Section 1 of this document.

Mail received for you before 4 July will be held for your arrival. After the conclusion of the program, mail will be held for a few days and then forwarded according to instructions.

16 Visitors

We are happy for you to invite guests to dine in College, providing ample notice is given to the kitchen via the *BSAO* Office. We are always very pleased to welcome the families of participants and hope that you will tell us if yours is in town. The host student must pay for a guest's meals in advance at the price established by the College Bursary. Overnight guests are not normally permitted to stay in the College; but, in exceptional instances, you may make a reservation for your guest in advance in the *BSAO* Office for a maximum stay of two nights. **All overnight visitors must stay in guest rooms, for which the host will be charged. There are no exceptions to this rule. Do not arrange to have guests sleep on your floor, etc.** You will, of course, be responsible for your guests and for any consequences arising from their visits.

17 Security

Although St. John's College has invested heavily in increasing its security in the past couple of years, neither it nor *BSAO* can accept responsibility for personal possessions.

St. John's College has a Porters' Lodge (open 24 hours) at its main entrance on St. Giles and maintains 24-hour surveillance of its precincts through patrols and closed-circuit television.

We strongly advise you not to bring unnecessary valuables or large amounts of cash with you: bring only what you really need. If you do have valuables, you should consult the Office about safekeeping. Clothing, cameras, and personal effects, including luggage, should be insured before you leave home. You must keep the door to your room locked and the windows closed at all times when it is unoccupied: sneak thieves prey on the colleges, especially during the summer when there are so many visitors in Oxford. Please also report to the Lodge any strangers you see acting suspiciously.

As a rule of thumb, do not bring with you anything that you would miss if it were to be lost or stolen unless it is absolutely essential.

18 Vehicles

Oxford is a modern city inhabiting an ancient town, and the traffic is a nightmare. Finding a parking space in Oxford can take most of a day. Do not bring a vehicle with you.

We strongly recommend that you do not attempt to rent a vehicle for independent trips or other purposes. Britain is densely populated; the roads are congested; and the traffic regulations are different from those of the USA. Britain has a much more comprehensive system of public transport than the USA. We recommend that you use it.

19 Clothing

The British summer weather is unpredictable: it was cool in 1993, unusually hot in 1994 and 1995, pretty warm in 1996 and 1997, cool again in 1998, variable in 1999, 2000, and 2001, cool in 2002, very pleasant in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2008, very hot then fairly cool in 2006, wet, wet, wet in 2007, and cool and wet in 2009. The best we can say is that the temperature generally is cooler and the air less humid than in the Southeast of the USA; there is usually more rain than in the USA in the summer; and anything can happen. It is advisable, therefore, to bring clothing that is versatile, warm, and practical (crease and stain resisting, and amenable to some degree of personal cleaning). Rainwear, shoes which resist water and are stout enough for walking, and a sweater are recommended. For warmth, students often rely on “layered” clothing.

Reminder: Although casual clothing is acceptable at breakfast, lunch, and for daytime wear, men are expected to wear jackets and ties to Hall on several evenings, and women to dress correspondingly.

We advise you not to have clothing or other articles mailed to you. Such packages frequently incur sizeable import duty and considerable hassle with the UK Customs.

20 Electrical Equipment

The voltage in Britain is 220. Electric clocks, radios, mini-TVs, razors, hair-dryers, etc., from the USA will generally not work abroad and students are advised not to bring them unless they have been designed by the manufacturer for use in different countries. Simply changing the plug will not work and is dangerous. Battery appliances will function, of course.

There are exceptions, most obviously laptop computers. See the Section 13: Laptops.

21 Some Guide Books

Lonely Planet Great Britain – new edition due out in May

Great Britain (Eyewitness Travel Guides) (2006) **ISBN-13:** 978-0756615420

Landmark Visitors Guide Oxford (Landmark Visitors Guides) (2004) **ISBN-13:** 978-1843060222

Blue Guide Oxford & Cambridge 6 edition (2004) **ISBN-13:** 978-0393325867

Let's Go 2009 Britain (2008) **ISBN-13:** 978-0312387099

21 US Embassy details

The U.S. Embassy in London is located at 24/31 Grosvenor Square, telephone (44) (171) 499-9000. U.S. Consulates are located in Belfast, Northern Ireland, at Queen's House, 14 Queen Street, telephone (44) (1232) 328239 and in Edinburgh, Scotland, at 3 Regent Terrace, telephone (44) (131) 556-8315. The U.S. Consulate in Edinburgh provides only emergency American citizens services.

Appendix 1 - The Latest United States State Department Consular Information Sheet for the United Kingdom



United Kingdom and Gibraltar (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) Country Specific Information

January 04, 2010

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a highly developed constitutional monarchy composed of Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) and Northern Ireland. Read the Department of State [Background Notes on the United Kingdom](#) for additional information. Gibraltar is a UK Overseas Territory bordering Spain, located at the southernmost tip of Europe at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea; it is one of 13 former British colonies that has elected to continue its political ties with London. Tourist facilities are widely available throughout the United Kingdom and Gibraltar.

REGISTRATION / EMBASSY LOCATION: U.S. citizens living or traveling in the United Kingdom are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate at the [Department of State's travel registration page](#) in order to obtain updated information on local travel and security. U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Registration is important; it allows the State Department to assist U.S. citizens in an emergency. [The American Citizen Services section maintains a blog](#) of easy-to-access information relevant to U.S. citizens living in or traveling to the United Kingdom. Local Embassy and Consulate information is available below and at the [Department of State's list of embassies and consulates](#).

[U.S. Embassy London](#)

24 Grosvenor Square, London W1A 1AE
Telephone: 020-7499-9000
Telephone from the United States: 011-44-20-7499-9000 (24 hours)
Consular fax: 020-7495-5012
Consular fax from the United States: 011-44-20-7495-5012.

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

3 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BW
Telephone: 013-1556-8315
Telephone from the U.S.: 011-44-13-1556-8315
Emergency after hours telephone: 012-2485-7097
Emergency after hours telephone from the United States: 011-44-12-2485-7097
Fax: 013-1557-6023
Fax from the United States: 011-44-13-1557-6023.

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

Danesfort House, 228 Stranmillis Road, Belfast BT9 5GR

Telephone: 028-9038-6100
Telephone from the United States: 011-44-28-9038-6100
Fax: 028-9068-1301
Fax from the United States: 011-44-28-9068-1301

There is no U.S. consular representation in Gibraltar. Passport questions should be directed to the [U.S. Embassy in Madrid](#), located at Serrano 75, Madrid, Spain; telephone: 34-91-587-2200 and fax: 34-91-587-2303. All other inquiries should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in London.

ENTRY / EXIT REQUIREMENTS: The UK Border Agency (UKBA) has recently implemented a five-tier, point-based visa system that affects U.S. citizens coming to the United Kingdom as well as U.S. citizens and dependents already in the country. Information on the [point-based system can be found on the UKBA website](#).

Companies and individuals intending to employ U.S. citizens, or other nationals from countries beyond the European Economic Area and Switzerland, are required to apply to the UKBA for a sponsorship license. Information on the [sponsorship license can be found on the UKBA website](#).

Educational establishments must also apply for a sponsorship license. This includes American educational institutions offering only short-term study abroad programs on their own premises in the United Kingdom to students who are enrolled in the United States but come to the United Kingdom for one or two semesters prior to returning home to finish their degree courses. All educational establishments must apply for a license from the UKBA. Information on the [license for educational establishments can be found on the UKBA web site](#).

Students and prospective students who intend to stay longer than six months, and those coming for less than six months but who wish to work while studying, are required to obtain a student or prospective student visa before traveling to the United Kingdom. Failure to do so will result in the student or prospective student being refused entry to the United Kingdom. Information on [student visas can be found on the UKBA website](#). Students may apply online.

Please note that charity workers, religious workers, and other temporary workers-- even those performing unpaid duties-- are required to obtain a visa prior to traveling to the United Kingdom. Information on [temporary workers can be found on the UKBA website](#).

If travelers or sponsors have any questions about requirements for a visa, please [refer to the UKBA website](#).

Travelers must be outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man when they make an application for a UK visa.

It is the traveler's personal responsibility to ensure that he/she has the appropriate permission to enter the United Kingdom. The U.S. Embassy in London cannot intervene with any application, nor can it secure entry on behalf of U.S. citizens who arrive without a visa when one is required. The UKBA website will assist you to [find out whether you need a visa to enter the United Kingdom](#).

Anyone who does not appear to be in good health may be required to undergo a medical exam (including a HIV test) prior to being granted or denied entry into the United Kingdom.

Information about [dual nationality](#) or the [prevention of international child abduction](#) can be found on our website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information page](#).

SAFETY AND SECURITY: The United Kingdom is politically stable, with a modern infrastructure but shares with the rest of the world an increased threat of terrorist incidents of international origin, as well as the potential for isolated violence related to the political situation in Northern Ireland (a part of the United Kingdom).

Like the United States, the United Kingdom shares its national threat levels with the general public to keep everyone informed and explain the context for the various increased security measures that may be encountered. The UK Home Office posts [UK threat levels on its website](#).

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

U.S. citizens are advised to check with the [UK Department for Transport](#) for the latest security updates and carry-on luggage restrictions.

The British Home Secretary has urged UK citizens to be alert and vigilant. For example, citizens are encouraged to keep an eye out for suspect packages or people acting suspiciously on the subway (called the Tube or Underground), at train stations, and at airports, and to report anything suspicious to the appropriate authorities. U.S. citizens are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. For more information about UK public safety initiatives, consult the [UK Civil Contingencies Secretariat website](#).

The political situation in Northern Ireland has improved noticeably since the days of the “Troubles;” nevertheless, in November 2009, the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) reported the dissident republican threat in Northern Ireland was at its highest level in six years. The IMC reported the two main dissident republican groups, the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA, were increasing the threat posed to security forces. Attacks by these groups have focused primarily on police and military targets, and involved the use of firearms and explosives; these types of attacks could continue. Additionally, the potential remains for sporadic incidents of street violence and/or sectarian confrontation. U.S. citizens traveling to Northern Ireland should remain alert to their surroundings and should be aware that if they choose to visit potential flashpoints or attend parades, sporadic violence remains a possibility. Tensions may be heightened during the summer marching season (April to August), particularly during the month of July (around the July 12th public holiday).

The Department of State reminds all U.S. citizens that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. U.S. citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. U.S. citizens should stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of their surroundings at all times.

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. This number should also be used for warnings about possible bombs or other immediate threats. The UK Anti-Terrorist Hotline, at 0800-789-321, is for tips and confidential information about possible terrorist activity.

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State's [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#), which contains current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#). Recent communications from U.S. Embassy London to the local U.S. citizen community, called [Warden Messages](#), can also be found here.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's extensive tips and advice on [traveling safely abroad](#).

CRIME: The United Kingdom and Gibraltar benefit from generally low crime rates. Overall crime rates have decreased over the past decade; however, according to Metropolitan Police statistics, serious crime (i.e. assault, robbery, burglary, gun-enabled, and rape) in many London boroughs has increased during

the past 12 months. As with any major metropolitan city, U.S. citizens are urged to be cautious and aware of their surroundings.

Typical criminal incidents include pickpocketing, mugging, and “snatch and grab” theft of mobile phones, watches, and jewelry. Theft of unattended bags, especially at airports and from cars parked at restaurants, hotels, and resorts is common.

Pickpockets target tourists, especially at historic sites and restaurants, and on buses, trains, and the London subway (known as the Tube or Underground). Thieves often target unattended cars parked at tourist sites and roadside restaurants, looking for laptop computers and handheld electronic equipment, especially global positioning satellite (GPS) equipment.

Walking in isolated areas, including public parks, especially after dark, should be avoided, as these are advantageous venues for muggers and thieves. Travelers should be especially careful using the underground pedestrian tunnels at night or when there is little foot traffic. As a general rule, either walk the extra distance to use a surface crossing or wait until there are other adult pedestrians entering the tunnel.

In London, travelers should use only licensed Black Cabs or car services recommended by their hotel or tour operator. Unlicensed taxis or private cars posing as taxis may offer low fares, but are often uninsured and may have unlicensed drivers. In some instances, travelers have been robbed and/or raped while using these cars. You can access 7,000 licensed Black Cabs using just one telephone number: 087-1871-8710. This taxi booking service combines all six of London’s radio taxi circuits, allowing you to telephone 24 hours a day if you need a cab. Alternatively, to find a licensed minicab, text HOME to 60835 on your mobile phone to get the telephone number to two licensed minicab companies in the area. If you know in advance when you will be leaving for home, you can pre-book your return journey. The Safe 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](#).

Travelers should not leave drinks unattended in bars and nightclubs. There have been some instances of drinks being spiked with illegal substances, leading to incidents of robbery and rape.

U.S. citizens should take steps to ensure the safety of their U.S. passports. Visitors in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Gibraltar are not expected to produce identity documents for police authorities and thus may secure their passports in hotel safes or residences.

ATM Fraud: Abundant ATMs that link to U.S. banking networks preclude the need to carry a passport to cash travelers’ checks. Travelers should be aware that U.S. banks might charge a higher processing fee for withdrawals made overseas. Common-sense personal security measures taken in the United States when using ATMs should also be followed in the United Kingdom. ATM fraud in the United Kingdom is becoming more sophisticated, incorporating technologies to surreptitiously record customer ATM card and PIN information. Travelers should avoid using ATMs that look in any way temporary in structure or location, or are located in isolated areas. Travelers should be aware that in busy public areas, thieves use distraction techniques, such as waiting until the PIN has been entered and then pointing to money on the ground or attempting to hand out a free newspaper. When the ATM user is distracted, a colleague will quickly withdraw cash and leave. If distracted in any way, travelers should press the cancel transaction button immediately and collect their card before speaking to the person who has distracted them. If the person’s motives appear suspicious, travelers should not challenge them but remember the details and report the matter to police as soon as possible. In addition, travelers should not use an ATM if there is anything stuck to the machine or if it looks unusual in any way. If the machine does not return the card, report the incident to the issuing bank immediately.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Internet Financial Scams: Financial crimes conducted over the Internet have increased dramatically in the United Kingdom. Internet scams are attempts by con artists 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, or schemes that make it appear you are helping a loved one or a friend in trouble.

In many cases, scammers troll the Internet for victims, and spend weeks or months building a relationship. Once they have gained their victim's trust, the scammers create a false situation and ask for money. Scammers can be very clever and deceptive, creating sad and believable stories that will make you want to send them money.

A number of U.S. citizens are lured to the United Kingdom each year in the belief that they have won a lottery or have inherited from the estate of a long-lost relative. U.S. citizens may also be contacted by persons they have "met" over the Internet who now need funds urgently to pay for hospital treatment, hotel bills, taxes, or airline security fees. Invariably, the person contacted is the victim of fraud. Any unsolicited invitations to travel to the United Kingdom to collect winnings or an inheritance should be viewed with skepticism. Also, there are no licenses or fees required when transiting a UK airport, nor is emergency medical treatment withheld pending payment of fees.

Visit the Embassy London website for [more information about Internet Financial Scams](#) and how to protect yourself. The site contains useful tips to prevent becoming a victim. To view a common example of Internet financial scams, see [Embassy London's YouTube video](#). The U.S. Department of State also provides [information about other types of international financial scams](#).

INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME: If you are the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate (see the [Department of State's list of embassies and consulates](#)). This includes the loss or theft of a U.S. passport. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, help you find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime are solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the 911 emergency line in the United Kingdom is 999; in Gibraltar, it is 112.

Visit [the Victim Support website](#), maintained by an independent UK charity to help people cope with the effects of crime.

Please see our [information on victims of crime](#), including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime [prosecutable in the United States](#). Persons violating British laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the United Kingdom are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Many pocket knives and other blades, and mace or pepper spray canisters, although legal in the United States, are illegal in the United Kingdom and will result in arrest and confiscation if detected. Please refer to "[A UK Customs Guide](#)," detailing which items visitors are prohibited from bringing into the United Kingdom.

Air travelers to and from the United Kingdom should be aware that penalties against alcohol-related and other in-flight crimes ("air rage") are stiff and are being enforced with prison sentences. Please also see [our information on customs regulations](#) that pertain when returning to the United States.

From March 31, 2009, drivers of non-UK-registered vehicles may have to provide an on-the-spot deposit of up to 900 pounds if stopped for a motoring offense. If the driver cannot pay due to lack of cash or

credit, the vehicle will be clamped until payment is made, and a release fee will be charged in addition to the deposit.

Non-UK-resident drivers charged with motoring offenses are often unable to provide a verifiable address where a summons (subpoena) to appear in court can be delivered and/or enforced, or fail to return for court if released on bail. U.S. citizens may be detained and arrested if they 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. If alleged offenders attend court and are found not guilty, the deposit is returned.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: The legal drinking age (18 years old to purchase alcohol) in the United Kingdom is generally lower than that in the United States, and social drinking in pubs (bars) is often seen as a routine aspect of British life. Parents, organizers of school trips, and young travelers should be aware of the impact that this environment may have when combined with the sense of adventure that comes with being abroad. Please see our [Students Abroad](#) website as well as our fact sheet on [Studying Abroad](#) to help students plan a safe and enjoyable experience.

The United Kingdom has strict gun-control laws, and importing firearms is extremely complicated. Travelers should consider leaving all firearms in the United States. Restrictions exist on the type and number of weapons that may be possessed by an individual. All handguns, such as pistols and revolvers, are prohibited, with very few exceptions. Licensing of firearms in the United Kingdom is controlled by the police. Applicants for a license must be prepared to show “good reason” why they require each weapon. Applicants must also provide a copy of their U.S. gun license, a letter of good conduct from their local U.S. police station, and a letter detailing any previous training, hunting, or shooting experience. Background checks will also be carried out. Additional information on applying for a firearm certificate and/or shotgun certificate can be found on the [London Metropolitan Police Firearms Licensing web page](#).

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION: While medical services are widely available, free care under the National Health System (NHS) is allowed only for UK residents and certain EU nationals. Tourists and short-term visitors will be charged for medical treatment in the United Kingdom. Charges may be significantly higher than those assessed in the United States.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the [CDC website](#). For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the infectious diseases section of the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) website](#). The WHO website also contains additional health information for travelers, including [detailed country-specific health information](#).

Hiking in higher elevations can be treacherous. Several people die each year while hiking, particularly in Scotland, often due to sudden changes in weather. Visitors, including experienced hikers, are encouraged to discuss intended routes with local residents familiar with the area and to adhere closely to recommendations.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens to consult their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to determine if the policy applies overseas and if it covers emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. For more information, please see our [medical insurance overseas page](#).

Remember that most medical care facilities and medical care providers in the United Kingdom do not accept insurance subscription as a primary source of payment. Rather, the beneficiary is expected to pay for the service and then seek reimbursement from the insurance company. This may require an upfront payment in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 range.

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States.

UK penalties for driving under the influence of even minimal amounts of alcohol or drugs are stiff and often result in prison sentences. In contrast to U.S. and continental European traffic, which moves on the right side of the road, UK traffic moves on the *left*.

The maximum speed limit on highways/motorways in the United Kingdom is 70 mph. Motorways generally have a hard shoulder (breakdown lane) on the far left, defined by a solid white line. It is illegal to stop or park on a hard shoulder unless it is an emergency. In such cases, you should activate your hazard lights, get out of your vehicle, and go onto an embankment for safety.

Emergency call boxes (orange telephone booths with SOS printed on them) may be found at half-mile intervals along the motorway. White and blue poles placed every 100 yards along the motorway point in the direction of the nearest call box. Emergency call boxes dial directly to a motorway center. It is best to use these phones rather than a personal cell phone, because motorway center personnel will immediately know the location of a call received from an emergency call box.

Roadside towing services may cost approximately £150 (as of 12/09, approximately \$225). However, membership fees of automotive associations such as the RAC (Royal Automobile Club) or AA (Automobile Association) often include free roadside towing service.

Visitors uncomfortable with or intimidated by the prospect of driving on the left side of the road may wish to avail themselves of the United Kingdom's extensive bus, rail, and air transport networks. Roads in the United Kingdom are generally excellent but are narrow and often congested in urban areas. If you plan to drive while in the United Kingdom, you may wish to obtain a copy of [the Highway Code](#). Travelers intending to rent cars in the United Kingdom should make sure that they are adequately insured. U.S. auto insurance is not always valid outside the United States, and travelers may wish to purchase supplemental insurance, which is generally available from most major rental agents. A congestion charge of £8 (as of 12/09, approximately \$15) is imposed on all cars entering much of central London Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Information on the [congestion charge can be found on the Transport for London website](#).

Public transport in the United Kingdom is excellent and 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](#). 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. Extra care should be taken when crossing streets; remember to remain alert and look both ways before stepping into the street.

Driving in Gibraltar is on the right side of the road, as in the United States and continental Europe. Persons traveling overland between Gibraltar and Spain may experience long delays in clearing Spanish border controls.

Please refer to our [Road Safety page](#) for more information. For specific information concerning UK driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, refer to the [UK Department for Transport web site](#) or [the Driving Standards Agency website](#). The [U.S. Embassy in London](#) can also provide information.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the UK government'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](#).

CHILDREN'S ISSUES: Please see our Office of Children's Issues web pages on [intercountry adoption](#) and [international parental child abduction](#).

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This replaces the Country Specific Information for the United Kingdom dated March 27, 2009, to update sections on Registration/Embassy Information, Threats to Safety and Security, Crime, and Traffic Safety/Road Conditions.