

Destination Guide for United Kingdom

Overview

Destination Risk Levels

- Low Medical Risk for United Kingdom
- Low Travel Risk for United Kingdom

Standing Travel Advice

- Travel to the UK can continue with standard security precautions.
- Take basic security precautions against petty and street crime.
- There is a credible risk of terrorist attacks from a wide variety of actors. Be vigilant and follow instructions from the police and security authorities. Be alert to suspicious behaviour and report any suspect packages to the authorities.
- Security alerts or hoaxes can trigger the short-notice evacuation of transport hubs or public locations, which can cause disruption. Follow all directives issued by the authorities during any security operation and do not act on the basis of unverified information.
- Well-attended protests and demonstrations over various political and socio-economic issues occur occasionally but usually pass peacefully. Plan journeys bypassing them as a precaution and to minimise travel delays.
- Rural areas are occasionally affected by flooding due to heavy rainfall. Consult the websites of the meteorological service for up-to-date weather information and related warnings. Familiarise yourself with natural disaster response procedures and follow all directives issued by the authorities. See our Mitigating natural hazards section for additional advice.
- There is a residual threat of attacks in Northern Ireland by dissident Irish Republican terrorist groups. Be vigilant in the vicinity of UK state buildings including police stations, army barracks and government offices.

Active Alerts (3)

● Advisory | Category

Cumbria, Lancashire counties: Expect disruption to rail services in coming hours following derailment

03 November 2025 at 09:40

Location : United Kingdom

Category : Rail incident, Rail disruption

Expect disruption to rail services between [Carlisle](#) (Cumbria county) and [Preston](#) (Lancashire county) **over the coming hours**. This follows a derailment earlier on 3 November near [Shap](#) (Cumbria). No injuries have been reported, but a major incident has been declared to support emergency response efforts. All Avanti West Coast services north of Preston are currently affected, with disruption likely to continue throughout the day. Emergency services are at the scene responding to the incident.

Advice :

- Expect disruption to rail services on the affected route, as well as heightened demand for alternative modes of transport over the coming hours. Plan journeys accordingly.
- **We do not hold specific information on train schedules.** Contact the relevant service provider for more details.
- Follow all directives issued by emergency officials.
- Monitor our UK alerts for updates.

● Advisory | Category**Expect disruption to railway services between London, Peterborough following train stabbing incident**

03 November 2025 at 09:36

Location : United Kingdom**Category :** Rail disruption, Police/security operation, Crime

Expect disruption to railway services between the capital London and Peterborough (Cambridgeshire county) **in the coming hours** following a stabbing attack on a train on 1 November. According to local media, 11 people were injured in the attack on the LNER train from Doncaster (South Yorkshire county) to London King's Cross railway station. The train stopped at [Huntingdon rail station](#) (Cambridgeshire), where the police boarded it and arrested two suspected perpetrators, though one of them was released on 2 November. The motive behind the attack remains unclear. However, the authorities have ruled out terrorism. Follow official directives while investigations continue.

Advice :

- **We do not hold information on specific train schedules.** Consult the [National Rail](#) or [LNER](#) websites for specific details.
- Plan journeys using alternative routes and modes of transport to minimise travel disruption. Allow additional time for travel.
- If travelling in Huntingdon, expect an increased emergency services presence near the train station and follow all official directives.
- Monitor our UK alerts for updates.

● Notice | Category**Manchester: Reconfirm flights, expect disruption from 30 October due to strike by airline's cabin crew at international airport**

29 October 2025 at 06:55

Location : United Kingdom**Category :** Strike, Airline disruption

Reconfirm flights and expect disruption if travelling with Irish flag carrier Aer Lingus via Manchester Airport ([MAN](#), Greater Manchester county) **in the coming weeks**. The airline's unionised cabin crew have planned to strike from **30 October to 2 November** over salary-related grievances, which could affect up to 18 flights. These include transatlantic services, such as routes to Barbados' capital Bridgetown, New York City and Orlando (both US). Further stoppages are planned between **9 and 11 November**, on **14 November** and from **16 to 18 November**. Affected travellers could be accommodated on alternative flights. Reconfirm itinerary details in advance.

Advice :

- **We do not hold information on specific flights.** Contact the relevant airline to reconfirm schedules. In case of cancellations, your travel agent will be able to assist with alternative arrangements.
- Closely monitor developments related to the strike. Residual disruption may persist even after the strike ends as the airline attempts to resume normal operations.
- Follow all official directives.
- Monitor our UK alerts for updates.

Destination Guide for United Kingdom

Before You Travel

Visa Requirements

IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

British

Passport Required: N/A

Visa Required: N/A

Return Ticket Required: N/A

Australian

Passport Required: Yes

Visa Required: No

Return Ticket Required: No

Canadian

Passport Required: Yes

Visa Required: No

Return Ticket Required: No

USA

Passport Required: Yes

Visa Required: No

Return Ticket Required: No

Visas

The UK government has introduced the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme, which applies to foreign nationals, mentioned [here](#), who do not require a visa for short visits to the UK or who do not already hold a UK immigration status before their journey. Before applying for an ETA, check if you need a visa on the UK government official [website](#).

Nationals of EU, EEA countries and Switzerland for stays shorter than six months, including for tourism, visiting family and friends, short-term study and business trips. However, business travellers entering the UK for short business trips are not allowed to do paid or unpaid work for a UK company or as a self-employed person, do a work placement or internship, or sell directly to the public or provide goods and services. Individuals intending to stay for longer than six months will need to apply for a visa or advance entry-clearance. More information is available at the UK government [website](#).

Nationals of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE will need an ETA instead of Electronic Visa Waiver to enter the UK. Business travellers can apply for ETA online [here](#) or through the [ETA app](#). More information is available at the UK government [website](#).

Biometric passport holders of Venezuela can travel and stay visa-free in the UK for up to six months. In addition, nationals of countries mentioned [here](#) need visa to enter or transit UK.

Nationals of countries that do not require a visa should be in possession of either a return ticket or, if arriving on a one-way ticket, proof of sufficient funds to accommodate and support themselves for the duration of stay. All other nationals should apply for a visa in advance from their local British embassy or consulate.

A UK Visitor's Visa allows a person to travel and stay in the UK for up to six months. It also covers those travelling to the UK for business trips or medical treatment, or those travelling to other countries via the UK. A Business Visitor Visa can be granted for a single entry or for multiple entries with a validity of two years. Transit visas are required if the business traveller is a visa national who wishes to stay in the country longer than 48 hours, a Direct Airside Transit Visa ([DATV](#)), national, or a non-national. Foreign nationals intending to stay longer than six months, or to work, will require the relevant visas. In addition, those who have lived (in past six months) or still live in countries mentioned [here](#) are required to obtain a certificate confirming that they are free from Tuberculosis (TB) at the time of application. This certificate should be obtained after undergoing a pre-entry screening and before applying for the visa.

Foreign nationals who have been previously refused entry to the country will have to get an entry clearance from the British Diplomatic Commission before planning a visit to the country.

A passport is not required for travel between Great Britain and Ireland (an official form of identification, such as a driver's licence, is required), Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man. However, some airlines or sea carriers only

accept a passport as valid identification. Passengers transiting the UK to the Republic of Ireland should hold return tickets to avoid delay and interrogation.

Procedures

Passengers travelling through London Heathrow Airport around Christmas, Easter or the major public holiday weekends in early May, late May and August should expect long queues and allow at least three hours to negotiate check-in and security. Passengers travelling to the US can be subject to additional security measures, such as rigorous inspection of electronic devices. They may be asked to switch on their devices to prove its authenticity.

Customs and immigration checks are as strict as in most other Western countries. The usual green (nothing to declare) and red (goods to declare) channels are in operation. Passengers are more likely to be stopped and searched if arriving from countries where there is large-scale cultivation or trafficking of illicit drugs, or which are a source of significant numbers of illegal immigrants. Further information on prohibited goods is given [here](#).

Entry/Exit Requirements

Entry/Exit requirements

Foreign nationals must possess a valid passport during their stay. Business travellers may be required to present onward/return ticket and proof of sufficient funds to support their intended stay. Business travellers must complete a cash declaration form if carrying cash in excess of 10,000 euros.

Cultural Tips

CULTURAL ISSUES AND ETIQUETTE

General Tips

- There are no legal restrictions for LGBTQ individuals. Societal attitudes towards the LGBTQ community are generally tolerant.

Getting There

METHOD OF ARRIVAL

By air

The UK is a major international business hub, served by many airlines. London and other major cities, including Aberdeen ([ABZ](#)), Belfast ([BFS](#)), Birmingham ([BHX](#)), Bristol ([BRS](#)), Cardiff ([CWL](#)), Edinburgh ([EDI](#)), Glasgow ([GLA](#)), Liverpool ([LPL](#)), Manchester ([MAN](#)) and Newcastle ([NCL](#)), have at least one international airport.

London Heathrow ([LHR](#)) is the busiest airport and the centre for most international and domestic flight operations. It is fully equipped with shops, restaurants, bureaux de change, car hire facilities, banks and tourist information desks. Gatwick Airport ([LGW](#)) is the second-largest airport and also serves London. Freezing temperatures and poor weather conditions can disrupt flights during the winter season (December-February).

Security at airports is good and hand luggage is always inspected. Airports are among the few locations in the UK where police officers are routinely armed.

Airlines have variable security standards. You may wish to consult the European Commission's [website](#) for a list of airlines banned within the EU and the US Federal Aviation Administration's [website](#) for a database of aviation accidents and statistics.

By rail

The Channel Tunnel between England and France accommodates two services: [Eurotunnel](#), which transports vehicles and their drivers between Calais (France) and Folkstone Eurotunnel Terminal in Kent, and the high-speed [Eurostar](#) rail service to Paris, Lille (both France), Brussels (Belgium) and Amsterdam (Netherlands). The terminal for Eurostar services is in St Pancras International station (on the northern edge of central London). St Pancras has excellent public transport connections, especially with the London Underground ('tube') network. Foreign nationals may also arrive at Ashford International and

Ebbsfleet stations in Kent (south-east of London). Coach services are available from several European destinations, though have a longer journey time.

When arriving from Eurotunnel and Eurostar, business travellers are required to hold valid passport and relevant visa documents. If bringing a vehicle on Eurotunnel, foreign nationals should possess a valid driver's licence and original vehicle registration documents; for hired vehicles, a Vehicle on Hire Certificate (VE103) is necessary. For non-European Economic Area (EEA) business travellers using Eurostar services, a landing card is required to be completed on arrival at the St Pancras terminal and submitted to immigration officials.

By sea

There are extensive ferry links, including fast vehicle- and passenger-carrying catamaran services from the south coast to several French ports. Ferries also connect south-eastern and eastern England to Belgium and the Netherlands; south-west England to Spain; Wales and north-west England to Ireland; and north-east England to Denmark and Germany.

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Getting Around

BY AIR

There are internal flights between London and most major cities, including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle. The network of flights between cities other than London has increased rapidly with the expansion of low-cost airlines. [British Airways](#) is the flag carrier. A valid passport is required for internal flights.

BY ROAD

Driving is considered safe. Traffic drives on the left. Cars can be hired at numerous outlets, including at all international airports. Drivers from within the EU need a valid driving licence from their home country, while drivers from most other countries need an international driving licence. All foreign drivers must be over 17 (or over 25 for some types of vehicle). Standards of driving are generally good and road signs are clear. Roads can often be narrow in urban areas. Speed limits are 30 miles per hour (48kph) in urban areas and 60-70mph (96-112kph) on highways; enforcement cameras are common, though signs warning of their location are prominent. It is prohibited to use car horns in built-up areas between 23.00 and 07.00 (all times local). Driving conditions in some parts of the country deteriorate during winter months (December-February) due to snow and icy conditions. Drivers should use the emergency call boxes found along the motorway for any breakdown. These emergency boxes are directly linked to the motorway centre and therefore one of the best options.

BY TAXI

Taxis are plentiful in all major cities. Most taxis can be hailed on the street but can also be hired from a taxi rank or through a hotel, especially outside the city centre. Most taxis are metered, but if the destination is outside Greater London, the fare can often be negotiated. This is particularly the case for so-called 'minicabs'. Business travellers should ensure that they use the services of licensed cab companies and do not flag down 'anonymous' drivers operating illegally. Taxis are not normally shared with strangers and drivers do not stop if they are already carrying passengers.

Normally, a maximum of five passengers can ride in a 'Hackney cab' (the colloquial name for the black cabs found in London and other UK cities) and four in a saloon or sedan car, though some taxi firms operate larger vehicles. Fares are charged depending on the time of the day and distance driven, and tend to be higher in the evenings, at weekends and during public holidays.

Rideshare services such as Uber are ubiquitous, especially in urban areas, and are a convenient and safe means of travel.

BY TRAIN

The [rail](#) system is extensive and express intercity trains run between major towns, though these can be subject to delays. Services are sometimes disrupted during bank holidays and over the weekends when the authorities undertake repair and maintenance works, so it is worth confirming schedules before travelling. Fares are high by European standards, particularly if travel is not booked in advance.

Be vigilant and report any suspicious persons or packages to the authorities.

Business travellers can encounter drunkards or muggers at night, especially on late night trains. Although stations are well policed, remain alert for possible pickpockets and bag-snatchers.

Avoid sitting in empty carriages late at night, particularly on trains with no interconnecting doors between carriages. Middle- and long-distance trains generally have guards.

BY OTHER MEANS

There is an extensive bus network in major cities. Inter-city coaches operate between several cities, though take longer than trains. Ferry services are also available to the Channel Islands, Ireland, the Isle of Man and other destinations.

Business Women

BUSINESSWOMEN

There are no specific risks for female foreign nationals or business travellers. However, all women are advised to follow basic security precautions, such as:

- Politely say no to invitations that would take you beyond your personal comfort levels, even if faced with amicable pressure to behave otherwise.
- Do not leave your drink unattended, particularly in nightclubs and bars, to avoid being drugged, especially when in the company of a recent or casual acquaintance.
- Be prepared to ask trusted contacts to accompany you to your car, a taxi or your hotel after dark.

Working Week

WORKING WEEK

- Working week: Monday-Friday
- Office and Bank hours: 09.00-17.00/18.00
- Some banks may open on Saturdays until 12.30

Language & Money

LANGUAGE

English is the official language and is spoken throughout the UK, though there are areas (such as north-western Wales and remote parts of Scotland) where it is the second language.

MONEY

The pound sterling is the national currency. Regional banks issue notes in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These notes are legal tender elsewhere in the UK, though it is best to exchange them for the more common Bank of England notes because they may not be accepted by retailers outside their region who are unfamiliar with their design.

The Channel Islands have their own currency (notes and coinage), which has the same value as and is also called the pound. While pound sterling is accepted in the Channel Islands, the Channel Islands' pound is not legal tender in the rest of the UK; however, banks will exchange it for pound sterling.

ATMs are common and accept the major international credit and bank cards such as Visa, MasterCard and American Express. Commercial establishments use 'chip-and-PIN' technology for credit card transactions. Bureaux de change in central London,

at airports and in other tourist areas are often open until very late, at weekends and on public holidays. Exercise caution when withdrawing money from ATMs and check if any suspicious devices are attached to the machine or placed over the card slot due to the risk of skimming.

Tipping

TIPPING

A 10% tip is customary at restaurants for good service. Some establishments incorporate a service charge into the bill. It is worth checking whether this is suggested or mandatory, as the former does not need to be paid if the customer feels the service was not good. Also check that the staff member will receive the service charge; some restaurants do not pass on the full amount to the server, in which case you might wish to not pay the service charge and leave a cash tip to your server instead. Tipping taxi drivers is not common, though if paid, is usually 10% of the fare.

Geography & Weather

CLIMATE

Climate overview

- The climate in the UK is temperate.
- There are four distinct seasons: spring (March-May), summer (June-August), autumn (September-November) and winter (December-February).
- Rain is possible throughout the year, though western areas are wetter than the eastern.
- The north of England and Scotland can be significantly colder in winter.
- Monitor the website of [Met Office](#) for weather updates and warnings.

Heavy rain and strong winds

- Heavy rain, strong winds and flooding occur during winter. Storms also affect the country in autumn and winter.
- The most flood-prone parts of the country include low-lying areas of the West Country, the south-western coast, the border regions between England and Wales and the Midlands.
- Coastal areas of England, Scotland and Wales are considered to be the most vulnerable to high-speed winds.
- Flooding can cause significant disruption to travel and essential services, as well as infrastructure damage.

Heavy snow

- Heavy snow occurs during the winter season – primarily in northern regions – causing disruption to travel.
- Icy road conditions can make driving dangerous across the country.

Heatwaves

- Heatwaves are increasingly affecting the country during the summer months.
- Heatwaves have previously disrupted transport and prompted the authorities to advise passengers to only undertake necessary travel.

GEOGRAPHY

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK) comprises England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, located on the British Isles. The British Isles are surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea and the English Channel. The Irish Sea separates England, Wales and Scotland from Ireland. The Channel Islands are located just off the northern coast of France. The Channel Tunnel connects England with France. The Severn is the longest river, while the Thames, which flows through London, the Trent and the Mersey are other important waterways. The UK is administratively divided into counties.

International Dialing & Power

DIALLING CODES

Country Code : 44

IDD Prefix (International Direct Dialling) : 00

NDD Prefix (National Direct Dialling) : 0

COMMUNICATIONS

The telecommunications system is excellent. Mobile telephone networks cover almost all areas. The postal system is efficient, though it is always best to send items by first class or special delivery; second-class mail normally takes three days. Several private operators now carry business mail. There are also numerous courier services.

Information Security

Business travellers, particularly senior executives and those on short- and medium-term assignments, face high risks from cybercrime. The main method employed by cybercriminals is phishing emails to steal personal credentials such as usernames and passwords. Business travellers may also be vulnerable to banking fraud and ransomware if using an unsecured web connection.

Organisations in the UK have been targeted by cyberattacks believed to originate from outside the country, leading to operational disruption. The most notable incident occurred in 2017, when ransomware caused disruption to the UK's National Health Service and public and private agencies. More traditional forms of cybercrime involve malicious phone calls, wherein the criminal asks for personal information in exchange for a financial reward. ATM skimming, in which bank card information is siphoned from devices attached to ATM machines, is not uncommon.

The UK's National Crime Agency, the National Cyber Security Centre and the Government Communications Headquarters efficiently collaborate to combat cybercrime.

Advice

- Clean devices, containing only data necessary for the trip with no access to shared networks, should be used if targeted attacks are likely.
- Ensure all devices you bring in-country are well secured, with strong passwords; ensure all storage devices have full disk encryption.
- Ensure all software, including anti-virus protection, is up-to-date prior to travel; avoid updating software while away.
- Avoid connecting to insecure Wi-Fi networks where possible. Public Wi-Fi connections are almost always unencrypted, allowing attackers to easily instigate man-in-the-middle attacks, where they redirect your browsing request to a malicious website and then, run malware on your device.
- If necessary, only connect to public networks using a Virtual Private Network (VPN). Always familiarise yourself with the legal status of any VPN or application in your destination country prior to travel. Be aware of other relevant legislation including compliance requests which allow authorities to inspect devices.
- Keep devices on your person as much as possible. If unattended, ensure devices are powered down and well secured. If using hotel safes, secure them with a secondary personally-lockable device.
- Limit location tracking/turn off your phone's location function to deter surveillance, with the exception of our Assistance App or other essential applications. Turn off Wi-Fi and Bluetooth when not in use.
- Run a thorough check of all devices upon your return and use the 'forget network' setting if you did connect to any public Wi-Fi networks.
- Comply with local legislation. This includes any official requests to inspect devices. If this occurs, inform your IT department as soon as possible and exercise caution when using the device after. Power off devices prior to approaching customs.
- Obtain profile-specific advice taking into account your industry and position in the company.

ELECTRICITY



Calendar

Holidays & Security Dates

2025

30 Nov St. Andrew's Day

Scotland only.

26 Dec Boxing Day

In many countries, if this holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, a public holiday is observed on the following Monday or

Tuesday respectively.

2026

01 Jan New Year's Day

In many countries, if this holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, a public holiday is declared for the following Monday.

02 Jan New Year's Day (Second Day)

Second day of holiday.

17 Mar St Patrick's Day

Destination Guide for United Kingdom

Medical Overview

Medical Care

Excellent

Standard of Health Care

The quality of medical care in the United Kingdom is of an international standard, and all specialties are available. Public (NHS) hospitals offer tertiary-level care and should be used for all emergency cases. Private hospitals have no accident and emergency departments and will **not** accept emergency cases. Some private hospitals in London have an "Urgent Care Centre" that will accept walk in patients. Both public and private hospitals provide a high level of care for non-emergency cases. However, note that, waiting times in public hospital emergency rooms (Accident and Emergency departments) can be prolonged, at times more than 12 hours.

Although medical facilities are more limited in rural areas, there is a well-developed internal medical transfer service. The British National Health Care System (NHS) uses a "general practice" model. Individuals must seek their initial care from a general practitioner (GP) before seeing a specialist.

Private maternity services are in short supply in areas outside central London and it is highly likely that delivery will be undertaken in the public hospitals. Within Central London, there are a number of private hospitals able to receive expectant mothers for delivery.

Medical Contact

Emergency Numbers, hospital and clinic contact information

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance : 999

Fire service : 999

Police : 999

Hospitals & Clinics

Vaccinations

Routine only

Hepatitis A

Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis A vaccination for all travellers regardless of destination, especially those who are at higher risk (see [US CDC](#)), such as gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, people who use illicit drugs or those with liver disease.

Hepatitis A is a viral disease that causes liver inflammation. The virus is present in the faeces of an infected person. It spreads through contaminated food and water and is common in areas with poor sanitation. Person-to-person spread also occurs, when the virus is inadvertently transferred into the mouth, including during sexual activity. People at higher risk of infection include men who have sex with men, illicit drug users and people with liver disease.

Not everyone gets symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they begin two to four weeks or more after infection and can last for weeks or months. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain/discomfort, jaundice (yellow colour of the skin and eyes), dark urine, clay-coloured stool, joint pain and itching. Many infected people suffer only a mild illness. Most cases recover fully after four or more weeks. However, for some, the disease can be severe, and occasionally is fatal. There is no specific treatment and cases are managed through supportive therapy.

Prevention is through vaccination, attention to hygiene, and access to safe food and water.

[Watch the Hepatitis Video Podcast](#) (Vimeo)

[View Viral Hepatitis Infographic Poster](#) (PDF)

The Disease

Hepatitis is a general term that means inflammation of the liver. Medications, poisons, alcohol and infections can all cause hepatitis.

Hepatitis A is inflammation of the liver caused by a virus. The virus is highly contagious. People are mostly infected through eating or drinking contaminated food or water, or through direct contact with an infected person. Usually people make a full recovery, however occasionally the disease can be severe or fatal. There is an effective vaccine available.

Transmission

The illness is transmitted via the "faecal-oral route". The virus is present in the stool of an infected person. Others are infected when they consume food / drink contaminated with the virus. This is more common in areas with poor sanitation systems and limited access to clean water.

It is also possible to get the disease via direct contact with an infected person's faecal matter, for example through incompletely washed hands, sexual contact or through shared illicit drugs.

Symptoms

Not everyone gets symptoms. Most childhood infections will be asymptomatic or mild. Most adults will develop symptoms, and severity increases with age.

If symptoms do occur, they begin two to four or more weeks after infection and can last for weeks or months. They include any or all of the following:

- fever
- fatigue
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea
- nausea/vomiting
- abdominal pain/discomfort
- jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- dark urine, clay-coloured stool
- joint pain
- itching

Most people make a full recovery. About 10 to 15% of symptomatic persons with hepatitis A may experience relapse or prolonged illness up to six months. Sometimes the disease is severe and can be fatal (less than 1% of all cases), particularly in older people, and those with other underlying liver disease (such as infection with hepatitis B or C). It is thought to be due to the immune mechanisms rather than infection levels.

Diagnosis

Blood tests are required to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment

There is no specific medication to treat hepatitis A. Medications to relieve symptoms should only be used under medical advice as they may contribute to damage of the liver.

Prevention

Prevention is through **hygiene**, careful selection of **food and water**, and **vaccination**.

Good hygiene, and choosing safe food and water are important, especially in areas where hepatitis A is common:

- Maintain a high level of personal hygiene, including during sexual activity.
- Do not drink tap water. Choose boiled or bottled water from reputable sources, water that has been treated with chlorine or iodine, or carbonated beverages.
- Avoid ice, as it may have been made with unsafe water.
- Ask locally which restaurants and hotels serve safe food.
- Select food that has been thoroughly cooked while fresh and served very hot.
- Do not eat raw shellfish.

Vaccination is effective, widely available and generally recommended for any traveller who has not already had the vaccine (or the disease). Two doses, given six months apart, are required for lifelong immunity. All travellers should consider it, particularly:

- If travelling to areas with high rates of hepatitis A.
- When living conditions are crowded or have poor sanitation.

- Men who have sex with men.
- Illicit drug users.
- People with liver disease.

Postexposure prophylaxis: After exposure, people who are not immune may be recommended Hepatitis A vaccination or immune globulin (antibodies) as soon as possible (within two weeks) to prevent infection.

Risk to travellers

Hepatitis A is common in areas with limited access to sanitation. People who live with an infected person, men who have sex with men, illicit drug users and people with liver disease are at higher risk in any area.

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Hepatitis A Information](#)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) [Factsheet about hepatitis A](#)

Hepatitis B

Recommended for health care workers and anyone who may have a new sexual partner, share needles or get a tattoo or body piercing.

Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis B vaccination for all travellers and international assignees, regardless of destination.

The Disease

The hepatitis B virus, like HIV, is transmitted through contact with blood, blood products or body fluids. Modes of transmission include:

- Unprotected sexual intercourse
- Infected blood transfusions
- Needle sharing by IV drug users
- Use of unsterilized needles, syringes or equipment
- From mother to child during childbirth

Symptoms develop between 45 and 160 days after infection when the virus invades the liver causing fever, abdominal pain, nausea and loss of appetite. Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) is a common feature and the urine may become dark. There is no specific treatment and recovery usually takes about four weeks. Many individuals may have no symptoms but can still be infectious to others.

Approximately 1 in 10 of those infected do not recover fully and suffer ongoing liver damage called chronic hepatitis B - this can eventually cause liver cirrhosis and/or cancer. The very young and the elderly are more likely to develop a chronic infection.

Vaccination

In many countries, hepatitis B is included in the routine childhood immunizations and need not be repeated. For unvaccinated travelers:

Routine schedule

- Individual hepatitis B vaccination requires a series of three injections given on days zero, 30 and after 6-12 months.
- A combined vaccine for hepatitis A and B is available in many countries. It also requires a series of three injections given on days zero, 30 and after six months.

Accelerated schedule

Can be used for travelers who will depart before the first two doses of the routine schedule can be given:

- Use an *individual* hepatitis B vaccine
- Doses on days 0, 7 and 21
- Fourth dose required after 6 months

Accelerated combined hepatitis A and B vaccine

- Doses on days 0, 7 and 21
- Fourth dose of hepatitis B alone or the combined vaccine required after 12 months

[Watch the Hepatitis Video Podcast](#) (Vimeo)

[View Viral Hepatitis Infographic Poster](#) (PDF)

The Disease

Hepatitis B is a viral disease affecting the liver. It is transmitted through contact with blood, blood products or body fluids of an infected person. It can cause a mild illness but occasionally can develop into a chronic illness.

Transmission

The hepatitis B virus, like HIV, is transmitted through contact with blood, blood products or body fluids (e.g. semen, saliva) on broken skin. Modes of transmission include:

- Unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected partner
- Infected blood transfusions
- Needle sharing by IV drug users
- Use of unsterilized needles, syringes or equipment
- From mother to child during childbirth
- Contact with wounds of an infected person

The virus remains viable outside the body on any surface for about seven days and can lead to infection. Blood spills including dried blood can be infectious.

Symptoms

Symptoms develop between 30 and 180 days after exposure to infection. Hepatitis B can either be acute (short term illness) or chronic (long term illness). Most people will not develop symptoms during the acute phase. Others experience fever, pain in muscles and joints, abdominal, nausea and loss of appetite. Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) is a common feature and the urine may become dark. Recovery may take several weeks.

Risk of chronic illness is related to age. Babies who get infected from their mothers or those that get infected before five years of age are very likely to develop chronic infection. Less than 5% of adults and about 90% of children may develop chronic infection. In chronic illness, virus continues to remain in the body although people do not have symptoms. Many individuals may appear healthy but can spread the infection to others. Life threatening conditions such as liver cirrhosis and/or cancer may develop.

Diagnosis

The disease can be confirmed by blood tests.

Treatment

There is no specific cure for the disease. Treatment is mainly supportive, consisting of rest, adequate nutrition and medications to reduce discomfort.

Prevention

Avoid direct contact with body fluids.

Vaccine: This can prevent the illness and its serious outcomes such as cirrhosis and cancer. In many countries, hepatitis B vaccination is included in the routine childhood immunizations.

Risk to Travellers

Most travellers are at low risk unless they have contact with the infected blood or body fluids.

[CDC Hepatitis B information](#)

Measles

- Recommended for all travellers and international assignees.
- All travellers should be up to date with their measles vaccination (schedule differs by country). Vaccination for adults is available as MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), two doses given at least four weeks apart are required.

Some individuals [cannot be vaccinated](#) due to certain health conditions.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease that can have serious complications.

Transmission

Measles spreads very easily when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes, releasing droplets into the air. If a healthy person breathes in these droplets, they can get sick. The virus can stay in the air and infect people for up to 2 hours after the infected person has left. It can also land on objects and surfaces, where it can live for several hours. If you touch these surfaces and then touch your face, you can get infected.

A person with measles is infectious from four days before the appearance of the rash until four days after it has appeared. After being exposed to the virus, approximately 90% of people who are not immune will become infected.

Symptoms

Measles symptoms usually start 7-14 days after being exposed to the virus. Early signs include a high fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. Small white spots, known as Koplik's spots, may appear inside the mouth. A few days later, a red, blotchy rash starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body.

Measles can lead to serious complications, especially in young children, adults over 20, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems. Common complications include ear infections and diarrhea. More severe complications can be pneumonia, which is a lung infection, and encephalitis, which is swelling of the brain. These severe complications can sometimes be fatal.

Pregnant women who contract measles have an increased chance of miscarriage and pre-term delivery. Their babies may also experience low birth weights and birth defects.

Diagnosis

This illness is usually diagnosed clinically. If necessary, a lab test can confirm measles.

Treatment

There is no particular treatment for measles. Symptoms can be managed with over-the-counter preparations, good nutrition

and adequate fluid intake. Antibiotics are required if there are bacterial complications (such as pneumonia, ear infection). Sick people should be isolated from non-immune people, and should not go out in public until at least four days after their rash appears.

Prevention

Measles can be effectively prevented by vaccination, which many countries routinely administer during childhood. The MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine is highly effective and safe, providing lifelong immunity for most people after two doses. Vaccination not only protects individuals but also helps prevent the spread of the virus within communities.

People who are not immune and are at higher risk for complications (such as pregnant women, unvaccinated infants and people with weakened immune systems) may be given a dose of antibodies if exposed to the virus.

In addition to vaccination, good hygiene practices, such as regular handwashing and avoiding close contact with infected individuals, can help reduce the risk of transmission.

Risk to Travellers

Measles occurs throughout the world. Outbreaks are common in areas where there is low vaccination coverage. Measles is highly contagious and can spread quickly in places where people gather, such as airports and tourist destinations. Anyone who has not been immunised, or has not previously had measles, is at risk of infection.

- International SOS article on [measles, mumps and rubella vaccination](#)
- [CDC Measles Information](#)
- See routine childhood vaccination schedules: [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Europe](#), [USA](#), [UK](#)

Routine Vaccinations

COVID-19

All travelers should ensure they are up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations. Recommendations vary between countries.

Influenza

Annual vaccination is recommended. Vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of severe disease, including::

- Young children
- Pregnant individuals
- People 65 years and older
- People with underlying health conditions

Measles-Mumps-Rubella

Vaccinations against measles, mumps, and rubella are routine in childhood, and are usually available as a combined vaccine "MMR".

Everyone should be immune to these diseases before travel.

There are outbreaks of measles in many locations.

If you are unsure of your immunity, consult your doctor well in advance of travel.

See routine childhood vaccination schedules: [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Europe](#), [USA](#), [UK](#)

Polio

Vaccination against polio is routine in childhood in many countries. See routine childhood vaccination schedules: [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Europe](#), [USA](#), [UK](#)

All adults should ensure they are immune to the disease before they travel abroad. If unsure of your immunity, consult your health professional. You may need a *primary vaccination* or a *booster*. Booster recommendations vary by country.

Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis

Vaccinations against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis are routine in childhood.

See routine childhood vaccination schedules: [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Europe](#), [USA](#), [UK](#)

All adults should ensure they are immune to these diseases before they travel abroad. If unsure of your immunity, consult your health professional. You may need a *primary vaccination* or *booster*. Booster recommendations vary by country.

Varicella

Varicella (chickenpox) vaccinations are included in the routine childhood immunization schedule of some countries. See routine childhood vaccination schedules: [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Europe](#), [USA](#), [UK](#)

All adults should ensure they are immune to varicella before they travel abroad. If unsure of your immunity, consult your health professional.

Health Threats

Known health threats for this country

Rabies

Rabies is a viral disease contracted when bitten or scratched by an infected (rabid) animal, often a dog. Once it enters the body, the virus travels along nerves and causes paralysis. As it reaches important organs like the spinal cord and the brain, it causes coma and death.

In countries where rabies is present in animals or bats, ALL animal / bat bites, scratches and licks to broken skin must be treated seriously. Rabies vaccination is very effective in preventing rabies, even after a bite/scratch by a rabid animal.

Rabies vaccination

Pre-exposure vaccination is often recommended for expatriates and long-term visitors to destinations where rabies is present. It's especially recommended if quality medical care may not be available after being bitten or scratched by an animal. Pre-exposure treatment can be especially useful for children, since they may not tell their parents that they have been bitten/scratched.

Pre-exposure vaccination makes it easier to treat a bite or scratch. That's important because some types of rabies treatment can be in short supply in many countries, even in cities.

If bitten, scratched or licked (on broken skin) by an animal:

- Immediately cleanse the wound with soap and water and a povidone-iodine solution if available.
- Seek medical advice from a qualified source or your assistance company.
- Notify local health authorities immediately. You may need *post-exposure vaccination*, even if you have had pre-exposure vaccination. (THIS CAN BE LIFE SAVING.)

Lyme disease

Lyme disease occurs in North America, Europe and Asia. It is transmitted to humans by the bite of a particular species of tick. Lyme disease can cause an expanding rash at the site of the bite, fever, arthritis and nerve problems such as facial palsy.

To prevent tick bites:

- Avoid tick habitats
- Use insect repellents
- Check daily for ticks

Lyme disease vaccination is no longer available.

If you develop a rash at the site of a tick bite or other symptoms of Lyme disease, seek medical attention. A course of antibiotics can cure Lyme disease.

HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and STIs

HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C are spread by contact with bodily fluids (especially blood and semen).

- unprotected sex,
- needle sharing during IV drug use, or
- unsafe blood or medical/dental instruments.

Genital herpes (HSV), genital warts (HPV), gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and most other sexually transmitted diseases are spread by genital contact.

Prevention:

- In many countries, hepatitis B is now a routine childhood immunisation and need not be repeated. All non-immune travellers should consider vaccination.
- Always use new condoms (preferably brought from your home country).
- IV drug users should not share needles.
- Avoid having tattoos or piercings done.
- In healthcare settings, make sure that needles and syringes are sterile and not shared between patients.
- Call International SOS or your corporate medical department if you are hospitalised.
- Be aware of your risk when assisting anyone with an injury. Protect yourself from contact with bodily fluids.
- Seek medical attention within 24 hours if you accidentally come into contact with someone else's bodily fluids.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a viral disease that causes liver inflammation. The virus is present in the faeces of an infected person. It spreads through contaminated food and water and is common in areas with poor sanitation. Person-to-person spread also occurs, when the virus is inadvertently transferred into the mouth, including during sexual activity. People at higher risk of infection include men who have sex with men, illicit drug users and people with liver disease.

Not everyone gets symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they begin two to four weeks or more after infection and can last for weeks or months. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain/discomfort, jaundice (yellow colour of the skin and eyes), dark urine, clay-coloured stool, joint pain and itching. Many infected people suffer only a mild illness. Most cases recover fully after four or more weeks. However, for some, the disease can be severe, and occasionally is fatal. There is no specific treatment and cases are managed through supportive therapy. Prevention is through vaccination, attention to hygiene, and access to safe food and water.

Hepatitis B

The Disease

The hepatitis B virus, like HIV, is transmitted through contact with blood, blood products or body fluids. Modes of transmission include:

- Unprotected sexual intercourse
- Infected blood transfusions
- Needle sharing by IV drug users
- Use of unsterilized needles, syringes or equipment
- From mother to child during childbirth

Symptoms develop between 45 and 160 days after infection when the virus invades the liver causing fever, abdominal pain, nausea and loss of appetite. Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) is a common feature and the urine may become dark. There is no specific treatment and recovery usually takes about four weeks. Many individuals may have no symptoms but can still be infectious to others.

Approximately 1 in 10 of those infected do not recover fully and suffer ongoing liver damage called chronic hepatitis B - this can eventually cause liver cirrhosis and/or cancer. The very young and the elderly are more likely to develop a chronic infection.

Vaccination

In many countries, hepatitis B is included in the routine childhood immunizations and need not be repeated. For unvaccinated travelers:

Routine schedule

- Individual hepatitis B vaccination requires a series of three injections given on days zero, 30 and after 6-12 months.
- A combined vaccine for hepatitis A and B is available in many countries. It also requires a series of three injections given on days zero, 30 and after six months.

Accelerated schedule

Can be used for travelers who will depart before the first two doses of the routine schedule can be given:

- Use an *individual* hepatitis B vaccine
- Doses on days 0, 7 and 21
- Fourth dose required after 6 months

Accelerated combined hepatitis A and B vaccine

- Doses on days 0, 7 and 21
- Fourth dose of hepatitis B alone or the combined vaccine required after 12 months

Measles

Food & Water

Generally safe

Food Risk

Food is considered safe.

Water and Beverages

Tap water is considered safe.

Rabies

Avoid bats.

Rabies

"European Bat Lyssavirus", a virus closely related to rabies, has been found in a very small number of UK bats. The risk of exposure for the average traveller is very low. Nevertheless, any bat may be carrying the disease. Any bat scratch or bite should be viewed as a possible exposure to the virus and post-exposure rabies treatment should be given.

Destination Guide for United Kingdom

Security Overview

Personal Security

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- Travel to the UK can continue with standard security precautions.
- Take basic security precautions against petty and street crime.
- There is a credible risk of terrorist attacks from a wide variety of actors. Be vigilant and follow instructions from the police and security authorities. Be alert to suspicious behaviour and report any suspect packages to the authorities.
- Security alerts or hoaxes can trigger the short-notice evacuation of transport hubs or public locations, which can cause disruption. Follow all directives issued by the authorities during any security operation and do not act on the basis of unverified information.
- Well-attended protests and demonstrations over various political and socio-economic issues occur occasionally but usually pass peacefully. Plan journeys bypassing them as a precaution and to minimise travel delays.
- Rural areas are occasionally affected by flooding due to heavy rainfall. Consult the websites of the meteorological service for up-to-date weather information and related warnings. Familiarise yourself with natural disaster response procedures and follow all directives issued by the authorities. See our Mitigating natural hazards section for additional advice.
- There is a residual threat of attacks in Northern Ireland by dissident Irish Republican terrorist groups. Be vigilant in the vicinity of UK state buildings including police stations, army barracks and government offices.

Crime

Limited to hot spots

CRIME

The main threat to business travellers and foreign nationals is from pickpockets or bag-snatchers in crowded places such as busy shopping areas, public transport hubs and tourist attractions. Mitigating the risks requires basic security precautions and a degree of vigilance. Serious crime is rarely random and most frequently linked to personal or domestic issues. Gang-related crimes do occur in certain boroughs of major cities, though violence is usually targeted at rival gangs and highly unlikely to affect business travellers and foreign nationals.

Instances of knife crime have increased in recent years, particularly in the capital London. However, such incidents are generally targeted. Business travellers and foreign nationals are unlikely to be affected.

Electronic crimes and ATM and credit card fraud, such as card skimming and cloning, have increased. Be alert to any suspicious activity, including overly friendly behaviour by strangers or signs that the device may have been tampered with, while making transactions. Security at major hotel chains is generally good. As a precaution, leave valuables and passports in the hotel safe.

Terrorism

Limited indirect risk to foreign nationals

TERRORISM

Islamist terrorism

London continues to be a significant potential target for Islamist extremist groups and lone individuals inspired by radical Islamist ideology. Attacks could focus on major public transport facilities, government buildings and prominent tourist and commercial centres. However, the current terrorist threat level is 'substantial' (middle on a five-tier scale). The most significant Islamist extremist attack in the capital occurred on 7 July 2005, when four bombings on the public transport network killed 52 people and injured more than 700 others.

Since 2005, almost all sophisticated terrorist plots have been foiled and the majority of attacks have been perpetrated by assailants armed with knives or using vehicles as weapons. In 2017, incidents involving vehicle and knife attacks in public spaces resulted in at least twelve people killed and dozens of injuries, highlighting concerns about public safety and terrorism. In Manchester, a suicide bomber killed 22 people and injured 1,017 people leaving a pop concert on 22 May 2017. On 15 November 2021, a bomb explosion occurred near the Women's Hospital in Liverpool (Merseyside county). A bomb detonated

in a taxi, killing the individual carrying the device and injuring the taxi driver. The authorities treated it as a terrorism-related incident.

Irish republican terrorism

The most prominent dissident republican paramilitary organisations are the Real Irish Republican Army (Real IRA) and the New Irish Republican Army (New IRA). On 22 February, an off-duty police officer was shot in Omagh (County Tyrone); the New IRA later claimed responsibility for the attack on 26 February.

Telephoned warnings are generally given for bombings in urban areas, indicating that the primary purpose of such attacks is to cause damage and disruption rather than casualties. On 22 February 2023, masked gunmen shot at a Northern Ireland police official, who survived the attack. The New IRA also claimed responsibility of the attack.

The risk from these groups is largely confined to traditional republican strongholds such as western areas of Northern Ireland's capital Belfast and Londonderry (Derry, Co Londonderry), as well as Antrim (Co Antrim), Craigavon (Co Armagh) and border regions of the counties of Armagh and Tyrone. Nevertheless, dissident republican groups lack sufficient resources and public support to conduct a major and sustained armed campaign similar to that waged by the Provisional IRA between 1969 and 1997. The risk is further mitigated by the effectiveness of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Extreme right-wing terrorism

In the UK, right-wing extremist terrorism, also known as right-wing extremist violence and extremism (REMVE), is an increasing concern. Violent far-right attacks have occurred in the past. In June 2016, Jo Cox, a Labour Party MP known for her pro-immigration views, was shot and killed in Birstall (West Yorkshire county) by a man with far-right beliefs. In June 2017, a man drove a van into Muslim worshippers leaving a mosque in the Finsbury Park area of London, killing one and injuring nine others.

Social Unrest

SOCIAL UNREST

Most demonstrations are non-violent, though clashes occur occasionally and can cause travel disruption, particularly during major rallies in city centres. Significant unrest is an unusual occurrence. However, where it does occur, as in London and some other British cities, business travellers are not a direct target.

Since 2022, several demonstrations and strikes have taken place across the UK over the cost-of-living crisis. Such rallies are largely peaceful, though they are generally well attended. Climate-related protests are also a regular occurrence, often organised by the Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil activist movements. The primary impact of these events has been localised disruption to travel.

Since August 2024, anti-immigration protests erupted in major cities, including Birmingham (West Midlands county), Leeds (West Yorkshire county), Liverpool (Merseyside county), and Manchester (Greater Manchester county). Scuffles between participants and the police occurred, as did incidents of arson and looting.

Sectarian conflict – Northern Ireland

Sectarian tensions between the Unionist and Nationalist populations of Northern Ireland persist and lead to sporadic low-level disorder, such as fistfights and bottle- and stone-throwing between rival groups. Such unrest typically takes place at sectarian interfaces (where Unionist and Nationalist communities exist alongside each other), principally in the western and northern areas of Belfast and in western Londonderry (Derry, County Londonderry). Violence is usually directed at police patrols and stations or occurs on the fringes of politically contentious events such as the annual marches by the Unionist Orange Order organisation. Disturbances between rival groups may occur during the annual 'marching season' commemorating various historical events, which runs from April until September.

Disturbances are likely to focus on working-class neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland's main urban centres, including around Ardoyne and Ormeau roads in Belfast, parts of Londonderry and the suburbs of Portadown and Craigavon (both Co Armagh). Although most of these areas are not located close to central business districts, rallies can take place in more central locations, such as Belfast's Donegall Square.