Destination Guide for United Kingdom



Overview

Destination Guide Content

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 of 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)

Notice28 October 2024 at 15:02

London: Expect disruption on 30 October during demonstrations linked to government budget (Revised)

Location: United Kingdom

Category: Protest/Rally, Road disruption

Situation:

Expect localised disruption on **30 October** in the capital London during demonstrations linked to the government's budget announcement. Several civic society groups have called on protests to demand higher taxes for the wealthy, payment of overdue pensions and a substantial cut to the budget allocated for the monarchy. Demonstrations will be held from **11.00** (local time) around the Parliament building and 10 Downing Street.

Advice:

- Expect localised traffic disruption near the demonstrations and plan journeys accordingly.
- If travelling in the area, ensure routes are clear prior to setting out and allow additional time for journeys.
- Expect heightened security around the protests and follow all official directives.
- Monitor our UK alerts for updates.

Notice

28 October 2024 at 03:32

Urban centres: Expect disruption in coming days during demonstrations linked to Middle East conflict

Location: Europe & CIS

Category: Road disruption, Protest/Rally

Situation:

Expect disruption **in the coming days** during demonstrations linked to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East (*see separate alerts*). Although such gatherings should mostly pass off peacefully, there is potential for localised scuffles between participants and the police. Bystanders would face incidental risks in the event of any unrest.

Advice:

• Liaise with local contacts for details on any planned or spontaneous demonstrations in your area. Expect associated disruption and plan journeys accordingly.

- If travelling in the vicinity of a gathering, reconfirm the status of routes before setting out and allow additional time for journeys.
- Expect heightened security near demonstrations and follow all official directives. Leave an area at the first sign of unrest.
- Monitor our alerts for updates.

More Detail:

Details of known demonstrations are listed below (all times are local). This list is not exhaustive:

30 October

• The capital Berlin (Germany): From 16.00 outside Potsdamer Platz Station

2 November

- The capital London (UK): From 12.00 from the Foreign Office to the US embassy
- Leipzig (Germany): From **13.00** at corner of Konradstrasse and Elisabethstrasse, towards the US consulate
- Freiburg (Germany): From **15.00** at Freiburg Theatre
- Marseille (France): From 14.00 at L'Ombrière du Vieux Port

Notice

27 October 2024 at 20:33

Urban centres: Expect disruption from 28 October during protests by environmental activists

Location: United Kingdom

Category: Protest/Rally, Road disruption

Situation:

Expect disruption across urban centres **from 28 October** during protests by the activist group Extinction Rebellion. The activists have called for demonstrations focused on companies that allegedly insure new fossil fuel projects. In the capital London, participants will congregate between **28 and 30 October** from **11.00** (local time) at the Trinity Square Gardens. Demonstrations in other locations are expected throughout the week. While the events should pass off peacefully, scuffles between participants and the police cannot be ruled out. Reconfirm the status of routes before setting out and allow additional time for journeys near protest locations.

Advice:

• Expect disruption near protests and plan journeys accordingly. Liaise with local contacts to remain apprised of any related rallies in your area.

- If travelling near a rally venue, reconfirm the status of routes before setting out and allow additional time for travel.
- Expect a heightened security presence around the protests and follow all official directives.
- Monitor our UK alerts for updates.

Destination Guide for United Kingdom



Before You Travel

Destination Guide Content

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/2

Return Ticket Required No

Canadian

Passport Required Yes

Visa Required No/2

Return Ticket Required No

USA

Passport Required Yes Visa Required No/2

Return Ticket Required No

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. Travellers may be required to present onward/return ticket and proof of sufficient funds to support their intended stay. Nationals of European Economic Area (EEA) member states are not required to complete a landing card on arrival. 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 socalled '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

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.

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.

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

This is the most common plug type used:

Calendar

Holidays & Security Dates

2024

30 Nov St. Andrew's Day

Scotland only.

25 Dec Christmas Day

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

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.

2025

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

12 Jul Bank holiday

Public holiday in Northern Ireland. Schools and most businesses are closed. Marches and occasional clashes can be expected in major towns and cities.

Destination Guide for United Kingdom



Medical

Destination Guide Content

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 or walk-in outpatient visits. Both public and private hospitals provide a high level of care for non-emergency cases.

Although medical facilities are more limited in rural areas, there is a welldeveloped 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.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance 999 Fire service 999 Police 999

The number 112 can be used to call emergency services throughout Europe and supplements the local emergency numbers. Contact International SOS for help with your medical situation. Contact us

Hospitals & Clinics

Princess Grace Hospital

Category: Hospital Address: 42 52 Nottingham Place, London, London Phone: 44 2074861234 Email: PGH.FOH@hcahealthcare.co.uk

The Portland Hospital for Women and Children

Category: Hospital Address: 205-209 Great Portland Street, London, London Phones: 44 2039933972, 44 2073906032 Email: HCA.preadmissions@hcahealthcare.co.uk

The Wellington Hospital part of HCA Healthcare UK

Category: Hospital Address: 8a Wellington Place, London, London Phones: 44 2031316751, 44 2075865959 Emails: WellingtonEnquiryHelpline.Staff@HCAHealthcare.co.uk, contact@hcahealthcare.co.uk

Vaccinations

COVID-19

Vaccination is recommended for all travellers.

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 **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.

Routine Vaccinations

Influenza

Influenza occurs in:

- Temperate southern hemisphere: April to September.
- Temperate northern hemisphere: November to March.
- Tropics: year-round.

Annual vaccination is recommended. Vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of severe disease. People who are at higher risk for severe disease include:

- People over the age of 65.
- People with underlying health conditions.
- Pregnant women.

Measles-Mumps-Rubella

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

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.

Malaria

None

Yellow Fever

Routine only

Health Threats

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 longterm 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 povidoneiodine 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.)

"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 average travellers 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 postexposure rabies treatment and vaccination is given.

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.

In the United Kingdom, Lyme disease is the most common infection that is spread to people through biting insects. The highest number of cases are in late spring and early summer, the main tick feeding season. The majority of cases occur in southern England and the Scottish Highlands.

COVID-19

COVID-19 is predominantly a respiratory illness, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Transmission is from person to person via contaminated respiratory droplets. People are infected when these droplets are inhaled or land directly on the mouth/nose/eyes, or indirectly when transferred by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the mouth/nose/eyes. Most people will develop a mild to moderate illness only which lasts up to two weeks, or have no symptoms. Symptoms vary greatly. Common symptoms include fever, cough and sore throat. Sometimes there is a loss of or change in the sense of smell or taste. The illness can progress to being severe and can be fatal. Older people and people with underlying health conditions are at higher risk of severe disease and death. Antiviral treatment is available and is particularly important for people at higher risk of severe illness. Some people may continue to have symptoms that last for weeks or months

Prevention is through vaccination, hand hygiene, and physical distancing. Wearing a mask, and ensuring adequate ventilation in enclosed spaces can reduce the risk of infection.

The first imported cases were confirmed in late January 2020. See the UK Government COVID-19 Dashboard and the UK Government COVID-19 Guidance

HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and STIs

after the initial infection has gone.

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.

Food & Water

Generally safe

Food Risk

Food is considered safe.

Water and Beverages

Tap water is considered safe.

Destination Guide for United Kingdom



Security

Destination Guide Content

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 socioeconomic issues occur occasionally but usually pass of 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 bagsnatchers 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. 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. An attempt to carry out a similar attack two weeks later failed. 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. On 22 March 2017, four people were killed and at least 40 injured when a man drove a vehicle into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge before fatally stabbing a police officer outside the nearby Palace of Westminster (Houses of Parliament). The assailant was shot and killed at the scene. This was followed on 3 June 2017 by a similar attack, in which three men drove a van into pedestrians on London Bridge before stabbing several people in nearby Borough Market. Eight people were killed and 48 others were injured before the attackers were shot and killed by police officers.

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 17 November 2022, a bomb detonated at the side of a police vehicle in the Mount Carmel Heights area of Strabane (County Tyrone). No casualties were reported. The New IRA claimed responsibility for 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*

Violent attacks by those motivated by far-right political beliefs have risen in recent years, with reports indicating that COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated the problem. Jo Cox, a Labour Party MP known for her pro-immigration views, in June 2016 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. In August 2024, violent anti-immigration protests erupted in major cities, including Birmingham (West Midlands county), Leeds (West Yorkshire county), Liverpool (Merseyside county), and Manchester (Greater Manchester county). This followed a mass stabbing in Southport (Merseyside) that killed three children. Reports indicated clashes between protesters and authorities, as well as 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 stonethrowing 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.