

EUROPE · HISTORY · CITY BREAKS · HIKING · CULTURE · ARCHITECTURE · ROAD TRIPS



United Kingdom

The UK fits a remarkable amount into a small area: London's free national museums, Edinburgh's medieval Old Town, Georgian Bath and the lakes and fells of Cumbria, all within a few hours by train. Further out, the Scottish Highlands, Eryri and the Giant's Causeway deliver serious scenery. Book trains ahead for the cheapest fares.

 CAPITAL London	 CURRENCY Pound sterling (GBP)	 LANGUAGE English, Welsh Scottish Gaelic	 BEST TIME May–Jun, Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £65–£320 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type G 230V · UK plugs fit	 DRIVE ON THE left	 TIME ZONE UTC+0 standard time

The UK is four nations in one: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, each with its own landscapes, accents and, in Wales and parts of Scotland, languages. Distances are short, so a first trip can combine London with Bath, Oxford or the Cotswolds, then head north via York to Edinburgh and on into the Highlands and Skye. Wales rewards a separate loop through Eryri and the Pembrokeshire coast, and Northern Ireland pairs Belfast with the Causeway Coast. In Scotland, access rights mean you can walk and wild camp responsibly across most open land.

Costs are high, especially for hotels in London and in Edinburgh during August, but much of the best is free: the British Museum, National Gallery and Natural History Museum charge nothing, and national trails and coast paths are open to all. Trains are fast between cities but fares vary wildly, so booking ahead matters. The weather changes by the hour and rain is possible in any month, while June evenings in Scotland stay light until after 10pm. It suits history lovers, walkers, theatre-goers and pub enthusiasts, and surprises many with how quickly cities give way to empty hills.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Edinburgh's Old Town and Castle

The Royal Mile runs from the castle on its volcanic crag down to the Palace of Holyroodhouse through a maze of medieval closes and wynds. Climb Arthur's Seat for the view, and book August stays far ahead.
- 2

NATURE

Isle of Skye

The jagged Cuillin ridge, the Old Man of Storr pinnacle and the Quiraing landslip make Skye Scotland's most dramatic island. It's reached by bridge from Kyle of Lochalsh, and its single-track roads get busy in summer.

3

NATURE

Lake District

England's largest national park and a UNESCO site, with lakes such as Windermere and Ullswater, fells for walkers of every level, and literary links to Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter.

4

ADVENTURE

Yr Wyddfa and Eryri

Wales's highest mountain, Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon), at 1,085 m, can be climbed on six main paths or reached by mountain railway from Llanberis. The wider national park has slate-mining heritage, lakes and Welsh-speaking villages.

5

NATURE

Giant's Causeway

Around 40,000 interlocking basalt columns step into the sea on Northern Ireland's north coast. Walk the cliff path, then follow the Causeway Coast to Dunluce Castle and the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

London

≈ 9.8 million people

Free national museums, West End theatre, markets from Borough to Columbia Road and neighbourhoods as different as Greenwich and Shoreditch; give it at least four days and use contactless on the Tube.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Manchester

≈ 2.8 million people

The north-west's capital has Victorian mills turned into bars and flats, the Science and Industry Museum, two Premier League football clubs and a strong live music scene.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Birmingham

≈ 2.6 million people

The UK's most populous council area has revived its canals and Jewellery Quarter, hosts Symphony Hall and the Library of Birmingham, and claims the balti as its own.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

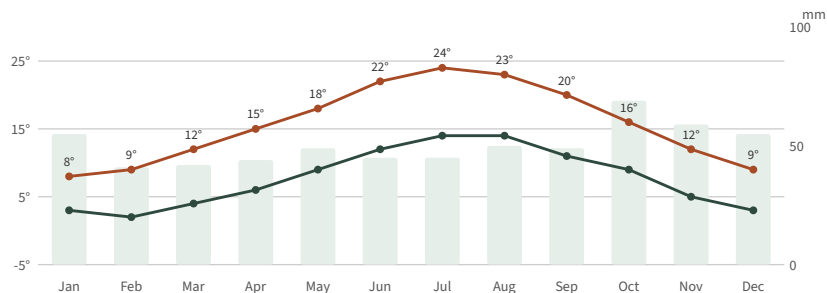
When to go to United Kingdom

Best time: **May–Jun, Sep.**



Average climate in London

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan, Dec	Edinburgh's Hogmanay Scotland's New Year celebrations climax with a ticketed street party beneath the castle and fireworks at midnight, with concerts and events in the days either side.
Aug	Edinburgh Festival Fringe The world's largest arts festival takes over Edinburgh for three weeks every August, with thousands of comedy, theatre and music shows alongside the International Festival and the Military Tattoo.
Aug	Notting Hill Carnival Europe's biggest street festival fills west London over the August bank holiday weekend with steel bands, sound systems, costumed parades and jerk chicken stalls.

How much does United Kingdom cost?

SHOESTRING £65 per person / day hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £150 per person / day 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £320 per person / day 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Fish and chips Battered cod or haddock with thick-cut chips, salt and malt vinegar, best eaten from the paper by the sea in towns such as Whitby or Anstruther.	Sunday roast Roast beef, lamb, pork or chicken with roast potatoes, vegetables, gravy and Yorkshire pudding, served in pubs every Sunday lunchtime.	Haggis, neeps and tatties Scotland's national dish of spiced sheep's offal, oats and onion, served with mashed swede and potatoes, especially on Burns Night in January.
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Getting around

Trains are the fastest way between cities: London to Edinburgh takes about four and a half hours. Book Advance fares early through National Rail Enquiries or operators' apps, and use a railcard if eligible. National Express and Scottish Citylink coaches are cheaper but slower. Hire a car for the Highlands, Wales and the Lake District. CalMac ferries serve the Hebrides, and contactless payment works on London's Tube and buses.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  G 230V — UK plugs fit	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Emergency 999
DIALLING CODE +44	TIME ZONE UTC+0 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Leave 10–12.5% in restaurants unless a service charge is already on the bill; tipping isn't expected for drinks bought at a pub bar.

ETIQUETTE

Queue patiently and wait your turn at the bar. Stand on the right on London escalators, keep quiet in quiet carriages, and say please, thank you and sorry freely.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Heathrow Airport (LHR), London; Gatwick Airport (LGW), London; Manchester Airport (MAN), Manchester

Visas & entry for United Kingdom

Shown for a British passport.

British citizens don't need a visa. Visitors from abroad should check GOV.UK: Check if you need a UK visa.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Polio

Bat Lyssavirus

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in United Kingdom

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Mon 28 Dec 2026	Boxing Day (observed)
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 3 May 2027	May Day
Mon 31 May 2027	Spring Bank Holiday

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

Book Advance train tickets as soon as they go on sale, usually around 8–12 weeks ahead, and buy a railcard if eligible; it cuts a third off most fares.

In London, tap a contactless card or phone on the Tube, buses and most trains; daily and weekly caps apply automatically, so there's no need for an Oyster card.

Pack midge repellent for the Highlands and Skye between June and September, and book Skye accommodation and August beds in Edinburgh months in advance.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.