

# What Every Tourist Ought To Know About London



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A mini guide to help you plan your  
visit to London

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## Here's to a great time in London

You already know that London's one of the best cities in the world which is why you're coming here.

In this guide we give you tips and advice to help make your stay in London that much more fun.

This is Part 1 of the guide and it's about things you need to think about and plan before you come to London.

The second part of the guide has tips and advice for when you're actually here in London.

What you won't find in the guide are the boring things that every guide book has i.e. what the currency is, dialling code, electricity etc, etc.

We're taking you beyond the guide books so that you'll feel more like a Londoner and less like a tourist.

We hope you find it useful and if you have any questions you can contact us at our blog at [www.3guysonalondonbus.com](http://www.3guysonalondonbus.com) or website [www.epok.com](http://www.epok.com).

Cheers

Rainbowsurfer, Norm, Chris P

Co-founders of EPok.com

## Reliable monthly London weather forecast

Doing a long term weather forecast for London is very difficult because the weather in England and especially in London is very changeable.

(Nearer your arrival date, if you want to know the exact weather for when you're here, click [London weather forecast](#) and bookmark that page.)

It's only when you start searching around the various weather websites that you realise how unreliable most of them are.

*Just to prove how difficult it is to forecast London weather. One website's forecast was over 20mm more than the average from another site. This is why we take the averages from various sites.*

What we've done is looked at the various weather sites and by taking the averages of their weather data we've come up with a more reliable average monthly weather forecast for London.

But just to prove how difficult it is to forecast the weather in London here's an example. The average rainfall in July noted by one website was over 20mm more than the average noted by another site.

That's a huge difference and that's the reason why we took the averages from various sites, so that you could get a more accurate and reliable picture.

You'll be able to see the average monthly temperature highs, lows and the average rainfall in mm. You'll also see that although the quantity of rain isn't a lot, it does rain often in every month.

### Monthly London Weather Forecast

#### London weather in January

Average High: 7°C (45°F)

Average Low: 2°C (36°F)

Average Rainfall: 52mm

### **London weather in February**

Average High: 8°C (46°F)

Average Low: 2°C (36°F)

Average Rainfall: 38mm

### **London weather in March**

Average High: 11°C (52°F)

Average Low: 4°C (39°F)

Average Rainfall: 36mm

### **London weather in April**

Average High: 13°C (55°F)

Average Low: 6°C (43°F)

Average Rainfall: 43mm

### **London weather in May**

Average High: 18°C (64°F)

Average Low: 9°C (48°F)

Average Rainfall: 44mm

### **London weather in June**

Average High: 20°C (68°F)

Average Low: 12°C (54°F)

Average Rainfall: 48mm

### **London weather in July**

Average High: 23°C (73°F)

Average Low: 14°C (57°F)

Average Rainfall: 43mm

### **London weather in August**

Average High: 23°C (73°F)

Average Low: 14°C (57°F)

Average Rainfall: 50mm

### **London weather in September**

Average High: 19°C (66°F)

Average Low: 12°C (54°F)

Average Rainfall: 52mm

### **London weather in October**

Average High: 15°C (59°F)

Average Low: 9°C (48°F)

Average Rainfall: 63mm

### **London weather in November**

Average High: 10°C (50°F)

Average Low: 5°C (41°F)

Average Rainfall: 58mm

### **London weather in December**

Average High: 7°C (45°F)

Average Low: 4°C (39°F)

Average Rainfall: 53mm

## The London blogs every visitor to London should read before coming here

If you want to get a really good idea of what any major city is like. Tune into what people who live in that city are saying.

The following blogs will give you a great insight into London. They cover every aspect of this great city. Visit each of them and pick a couple to follow.

*Bloggers give you a good idea of what's going on in a city. Follow a few of them to get an insider's view of London.*

If you have any questions the bloggers running them will generally be happy to answer them or be able to point you in the right direction for the answer.

In no order of importance here are 15 London blogs to try.

### 1. [Londonist](#)

This blog truly has its finger on the pulse of London. As noted on Londonist: “we bring you the best and most diverse view of the city in news, reviews and events; the history and future of London”. Keeping an eye on this blog instantly makes you twice as knowledgeable on London.

### 2. [LDN](#)

LDN with its accompanying Twitter account keeps you informed of great deals, events and interesting London news. As over 50,000 people follow LDN it's worth taking a note of them.

### 3. [Visit London Blog](#)

This blog by the official visitor organisation for London keeps itself well up to date with interesting things to see and do.

### 4. [Catch A Vibe](#)

The site bills itself as “Your guide to black culture and going out in London”. It is a great website with posts such as “[Top 5 South African Restaurants in London](#)”.

### 5. [London Underground](#)

Annie Mole’s famous blog provides humorous reading for daily tube users. It includes interesting observations, pictures and news from the underground. It is the best place to read about hilarious tube announcements and [errors](#).

### 6. [London SE1](#)

One of the most fast moving and interesting areas in London has a great accompanying blog. If you're going to stay in the area or nearby, it's worth keeping an eye on the news here.

### 7. [3 Guys On A London Bus](#)

This is our blog. We tell it to you straight and give you advice about events going on in London that you probably would have missed. It also has special 2 for 1 offers to the theatre and for eating out.

8. [London Cyclist](#)

One for the cyclists amongst you. The blog offers tips for the everyday cyclist and coverage of London cycling news and events. If you're thinking of hiring a bike while you're here, this one's a must.

9. [Tired of London Tired of Life](#)

Not sure how he does it but every day, like clockwork, there is a new suggestion of something interesting to do in London.

10. [London Daily Photo](#)

Every day there's a great new picture from London showcasing a new part of the city.

11. [Dave Hill's London Blog](#)

Dave keeps a close eye on the politicians and London.

12. [London Eater](#)

A great London Blog to make your stomach grumble and forget about that ready meal you had planned for tonight.

13. [Londonelicious](#)

Covering the interesting restaurants and eateries of London. A tasty London blog.

14. [Ian Visits](#)

Ian explores London and covers it on his blog. Great place to discover events happening in London such as the [private gardens weekend](#).

15. [Qype London Blog](#)

Even if you don't use Qype their blog is a great place to discover some of London's most "interesting inhabitants" and events.

## How to pick a London hotel – Part 1

You know if your hotel in London isn't nice or it's miles away from the action, chances are you're not going to enjoy the vacation.

Starting the day in an unpleasant room or location will put a downer on the whole day. And that's before the arguments with your partner about whose fault it was for choosing that hotel.

To help you avoid all of this I've written a 2 part article of 4 things you should consider when doing your London hotel research.

*If there's one thing everyone in the hotel trade agrees on, it's that there are a lot of terrible hotels in London.*

In this first post I look at budgeting for your hotel room and tell you where the easiest place is to stay.

### **Add half as much again for your hotel room budget**

Whatever budget you're thinking of for the hotel, my advice is to add half as much again.

If there's one thing everyone in the hotel trade agrees on, it's that there are a lot of terrible hotels in London. You'll never regret spending more on your room than you would have liked to, by being in a safe, clean and well managed hotel.

Stories of woe litter hotel review sites of people who thought they could get a good, clean hotel room in London at a bargain price. You can't, unless one of the large hotels or hotel chains are doing an offer and if they are, bite their hands off to get it.

So first thing to do after reading this article is to join the email lists of hotel

chains and larger hotels. Months before I go anywhere on holiday I join the email newsletters of large hotels and hotel chains in the area. I use a special email address just for holiday email newsletters.

So you've decided on the budget. This next tip is aimed at those of you who want a hassle free arrival.

### **Choose a hotel near the underground/train station that you will be arriving at**

When you arrive in London chances are you'll be coming in from Heathrow airport, Gatwick airport or the Eurostar. Whichever one it is, try to book a hotel near to the underground/train station that you arrive at from the airport.

You see the secret to travelling easily and quickly through London is to avoid, as much as you can, changing train lines. Believe me changing onto another train line with luggage is no easy task in London.

For starters there aren't that many lifts, there's a good chance you'll have stairs to contend with and then there's the sheer number of people rushing along.

For instance, if you're coming in from Heathrow airport and you're going to get the Heathrow Express, then look for a hotel in Paddington because this is where the Heathrow Express arrives and departs from.

If you want to stay more central than that then take the Underground from Heathrow (see below) or be prepared for what could be a costly cab journey from Paddington.

If you're going to take the Underground from Heathrow airport and arrive via the Piccadilly line then you should look for a hotel along the Piccadilly

line route.

The Piccadilly line is a great route as it goes nicely into the centre of London with stops at many of the well known tourist areas.

The next thing which is even more important is to find out what the distance is from the station to the hotel. A cab journey in London in traffic is very expensive.

Make sure you ask the hotel how far the hotel is from the station and what the traffic's like if you have to get a cab.

Now you know how much you want to pay and how to arrive hassle free at your hotel. But what hotel do you choose? In part 2, I'll explain how to get the best out of the biggest hotel review site.

## How to pick a London hotel – Part 2

In Part 1 you read how it would be a good idea to increase your room budget for London hotels and to choose a hotel near a station.

In this part you'll see how to get the best out of Tripadvisor and how thinking out of the box can get you a nice room.

So let's start and the first thing to remember is:

**Hotel reviews are not always honest** – Tripadvisor is the largest and most used hotel review site. However questions have been asked about the quality of the reviews, see <http://bit.ly/wWzuS> and <http://bit.ly/6km1V>.

Here's the way I now do it.

I've been using Tripadvisor long before hotels and PR firms woke up to the idea of Tripadvisor.

Back in 2006 and earlier the reviews and ratings were a lot more honest than they are now. For me, anything a reviewer from say 2007 onwards says, has to be treated with a huge pinch of salt.

The reviewers I believe the most are the ones from people who have been members of Tripadvisor from 2006 and earlier.

My advice is when you're looking at the reviews first look at when the person became a member, then look at the review.

Let's face it, if you owned a hotel with not very good ratings and a PR firm said they could get you better ratings, what would you do?

**Think out of the box** – It's obvious that most of the hotels in London cater for tourists, which is why the quality of service and standards vary so

wildly even within the same hotel rating.

You see these hotels know there's a constant flow of visitors to London so they don't have to try that hard to keep you happy.

However for hotels that mainly cater to business people it's a different story. Business people expect a certain level of service

and if they don't get it they won't be back and neither will anyone from their company.

*"If I didn't live in London and I was looking for somewhere nice to stay for a few days, I'd first look at what the business hotel sector had to offer."*

This means that these types of hotels have very high standards and are usually near good transportation links. They won't be the cheapest during the week but their rates drop considerably over the weekend which when you take that into consideration can make them good value.

Personally, if I didn't live in London and I was looking for somewhere nice to stay for a few days, I'd first look at what the business hotel sector had to offer.

So there you have it, four simple steps to help you in your research to find a nice hotel in London.

To recap

1. Add half as much again to your room budget.
2. Choose a hotel near the underground/train station that you will be arriving at from Heathrow, Gatwick or the Eurostar.

3. Look at how long the reviewer has been a member of Tripadvisor.  
Reviewers who have been members from before 2007 are the most honest.
4. Consider business hotels as an alternative to tourist hotels.

Hope you found all of this useful but if you don't want to stay at a hotel read the next chapter. How to find a London vacation rental.

## How to find a London vacation rental

If you're reading this chapter, chances are you've looked on Google for London vacation rentals and be blown away by the sheer number of companies offering apartments.

As you've found there are so many companies to choose from it's hard to know which one to go with. Some of the websites look quite good as do the apartment pictures, but as we know looks on the Internet aren't everything.

*If the Company that's advertising apartments has a telephone number which begins with 07, 0871 or 09. Do not call them.*

What I'm going to do in this chapter is give you a little bit of advice to help you decide which company to do business with so that you can find that perfect London vacation rental.

### Call them

The first thing you want to do even before looking at the apartments available is to contact a few companies by phone. But before you do this if their phone number begins with 07 or 0871 or 09 do not call it.

These are what we call premium phone numbers and if you call them your phone call will turn out to be very expensive.

The company is trying to make money from you without you knowing it. In London we know about these premium numbers, as a visitor, they know you don't.

If the company doesn't have a phone number at all and you can only contact them by email. Cross them off your list. The same thing applies to

their postal address; if they haven't got one forget about them.

### **Check the apartment location**

Only once you've contacted the company and you feel they are genuine, start to look at their apartments.

When you see one that you like ask them for the full postcode of the apartment. Once you have that you can check its exact location and see how far it is from public transport. [Google maps](#) is a good option for this.

### **Some questions to ask**

A reputable company will have a good FAQ section because with vacation rentals there are so many things that you have to know. If they don't have such a section here are a few of the things you need to know answers to:

The most important question is - What is the total price and are there any additional fees?

Is there a cancellation fee?

What facilities are in the apartment?

Is there maid service or a reception/security desk or a local contact?

Are there instructions for using all the appliances?

If there is an emergency in the apartment is there a help line to contact?

How much do telephone calls cost from the apartment if you have to use the phone?

Is heating included in the cost? Note: if it's not, don't go with this company.

How far is the nearest supermarket, ask specifically for one of the main supermarkets. The supermarkets in London are Tesco, Sainsburys, Waitrose, Asda and Marks and Spencer.

Make sure you read all the terms especially concerning if the apartment becomes unavailable and you have to have a replacement apartment. Find out before you book where the replacement would be.

If the terms just say you will get another apartment, you could find that the other apartment is miles from where you wanted to be based.

### **How to pay**

You should try to only pay by credit card; other forms of payment will not necessarily give you any protection if things go wrong.

Never pay everything up front regardless of how good the apartment seems.

## What's the best London travel guide to buy?

If you're looking for a guide to London there are lots of travel guides available. To help you decide which one to get I looked at 7 of the most popular ones to see if any of them would really help you in London.

Before reviewing these travel guides I was firmly in the Internet camp. I'd always say you could get all the information you needed about London via the Internet and then print it off.

After going through most of the guide books I was still thinking that, but then I came across the winning guide and it completely changed my view.

The reviews of the 7 London travel guides are below but if you just want to know what the winner was without reading anymore, it was the Time Out London guidebook.

Time Out have various London guides, the one you want is just called "Time Out London".

### **Here are the London travel guide reviews**

#### **Time Out London**

The Time Out guide to London easily beat the other guides. In fact it was so good I'm seriously thinking of buying the guide, it had so many things that I didn't know about.

This guide proves that even if you live in London, there's still lots of it you haven't discovered.

Unlike some of the other guides, this guide isn't heavy/weighty and would be easy to carry around all day. Also it's not bulky so you could easily hold

it or put it in to a handbag.

Some of the things that I liked were how well it was laid out, it was very easy to find the information you wanted and the print was a good size.

It easily had the best activities and entertainment section out of all the guides and if you're coming over with kids, its kids activities section was superb. It also has very good local tips that even us locals would find useful.

You won't go wrong with this guide.

### **Rough Guide to London**

Before looking at the Time Out guide, the Rough Guide to London was my number one choice. It had a very clever start right at the beginning of the book with a section "20 things not to miss", which didn't just have the usual touristy things.

Again this guide is a good size and weight so you won't be bothered by carrying it all day. It's very well laid out and you can quickly and easily find information. It has a very good 'things to do' section and only the Time Out has a better kids activities section.

Like the Time Out it has local tips which again uncovered a few things that I didn't know about. It's head and shoulders above the other books so if for whatever reason you can't get hold of the Time Out guide this is the next best one.

This guide is well written and very informative.

### **Frommers London 2010**

At one stage the Frommers guide was looking like a contender for top

honours but that's just because the guides I read before it were so bad. Just because it's at number 3 don't think that makes it a book I'd recommend. I wouldn't.

It goes into quite a bit of depth about London and this is probably what makes it the heaviest book out of all the ones I looked at. You'd know about it if you had to carry this around all day.

It's 'London After Dark' section had no surprises. All the usual names appeared and it had information you could easily get from the Internet. Also its kids activities section was poor.

*When choosing a guide think about its weight and how it's laid out. The Time Out and Rough Guide guides scored well on these counts.*

On the plus side, it was easy to read and well laid out and it's way better than the next books.

### **A word in your ear**

The only reason for mentioning the next guides is in case you see them on special offer and are tempted to get them. If you do see them don't be tempted, you'll only be wasting your money.

### **Fodors 2009**

The first things that hit me was how small the writing was. My eyesight's fine and I had no problems with the 3 previous books so you just have to wonder who the hell did the typeface on this.

So you've got the small writing to contend with, but then you have the recurring problem that all of these other guides have, poor layout.

It does have some good info but because of the layout it's hard to find. Here's an example, they mention the Barbican family cinema, but when you go to the kids activities section, there's no mention of it as something to do with the kids.

If you just looked at the kids section you'd never know about this cinema activity. And that's the problem when a guide book is badly laid out, you're the one that misses out on good events and things to do.

### **Moon London**

This guide is the lightest of all the guides and I may be being a bit hard on it because it did have a very good festivals section and a good index at the back.

The problem I have with it is, if you know what you're looking for you can find it from the index at the back. However when you're using a travel guide you don't want to have to work at it, you want it to be easy.

You don't want to have to keep going to the index to find things because the layout's not good. I just think with other better guides about, why would you bother with this one.

### **Insight Guides London**

If you want to see lots of photos of London then you might like this guide. But if you actually want a guide to help you in London, this fails completely. It's more of a picture guide to London than a travel information guide.

### **Cadogan Guides**

There's a reason I left this one to last, I didn't want to waste your time, like

I wasted mine looking at this. The layout was so bad after only a few minutes I gave up and couldn't be bothered to try and plough through it anymore.

### **Final Words**

As good as the Time Out and Rough Guide guides are. They can't tell you about events and activities that are actually going on during your stay.

Plus they don't give you 2 fo1 offers on eating out and going out in London.

By reading some of the London blogs mentioned earlier you'll get an idea of what's on during your stay. And if you get our [EPok London Pack](#) you'll get offers on eating out and going out in London.

## Where to get the best Pound exchange rate

I feel so sorry for the tourists I see queuing up to be ripped off at foreign exchange bureaus in London or even worse at the airport.

To ensure you're not one of them get your cash from one of the on-line currency exchange bureaus before you leave for London.

The exchange rates they give will be way better than anything you'll find in London and will be better than rates offered by your bank.

The two that I use when travelling abroad are Crown Currency or [Travelex](#). Both offer good rates with Crown usually the best.

However you have to be a British resident to use Crown, whereas Travelex cater for almost anyone and you pick up the currency at the airport. Do a Google for foreign currency exchange and you'll find many others.

### **ATM's**

The other alternative is to check with your bank to see if you can use your debit card in the ATM's over here. If they say you can, find out what rate they charge, what fee there is and if there's a limit to how much you can withdraw.

Depending on the bank these fees shouldn't be too much and the rate they charge will easily be better than exchange bureaus in London or at the airport.

When it comes to using the ATM's here just go to any bank, below I've put a list of the most prominent banks that you'll come across.

If however you can't see a bank just ask someone where the nearest bank or as we call ATM's, Cashpoint is.

One word of caution with ATM's only use the ones from one of the banks and not one in a pub or shop.

Many of the ones in pubs and shops will charge you an extra fee on top of whatever fee your bank charges you.

The reason for that is that those ATM's are run by private companies who make their money by charging you to use them. At the time of writing the banks listed below do not charge you anything extra.

Here are some of the banks, in no particular order, which you can use in London:

Barclays, NatWest, HSBC, Lloyds, Abbey, Halifax, Royal Bank of Scotland

When you're in central London you'll never be that far from one of these banks and like I said if you can't see one, just ask someone for the nearest Cashpoint.

## What to wear as a tourist in London

On our blog one of the most frequently asked questions is – What should I wear when I come to London in the spring or summer or what should I wear so that I don't look like a tourist?

It's so nice when people ask what to wear by the season. We have seasons in London, it's just you're never sure exactly what the weather will be like in them.

*Wear jeans, trainers and any top and you'll fit right in at most places in London.*

For instance in the summer months, sun can be rarer than in spring, yet in spring it might rain more than in winter, while in the winter it can be quite mild to what other people expect winters to be like.

And why haven't I mentioned autumn? Because no one knows what's going to happen, yet it's often the nicest time of the year.

But if you've never been to London, what to wear is a valid question. Most of us when we go away want to fit in and not look like an obvious tourist.

For instance, even though London has so many different cultures and nationalities living here. Why is it that you can instantly spot say a Japanese or American tourist from a Japanese or American who lives in London? And it's not the camera that's giving the game away. There're lots of amateur photographers in London walking around with cameras.

What it is and has always been are the clothes or more precisely, wearing the wrong type of clothes in certain situations. That's what makes you look like a real tourist.

Let me put it this way, when you're in London and it rains. Don't, please don't, put on one of those fetching waterproof sheets that are often in the brightest yellow imaginable.

Is there something hard about packing a compact umbrella? Or do these people walk around in their home countries in those things.

And of course the flip side to that coin is wearing waterproof clothing when it's not raining. You're wearing it because you heard the weather in London is unpredictable.

Yes it's unpredictable, but most Londoners just take a chance they'll miss the rain, the others use umbrellas. You can do the same rather than standing there looking silly.

Like I said London's a mixture of cultures and you'll see people wearing all kinds of things on the street. It's only when you go to a club or restaurant that you need to be a bit more careful.

Even the theatre is a relaxed night out, some people dress up, and some don't. But don't wear shorts, that's like walking in with a big sign that says, I'm a tourist please forgive me.

In a restaurant, if you're unsure of the dress code (another reason for having the EPok London Pack, it has the dress code) smart casual will always work.

Only the most formal of restaurants will frown if you turn up in jeans and probably not let you in.

So what am I saying, basically wear what you would normally wear in your own country for the weather conditions and the venue.

London's not Paris or Milan, no one is going to look down at you because of what you're wearing.

But if you're still not sure:-

For men – Pack Jeans, jumper, t-shirt, shirt, trousers, a jacket and tie (only needed if you go somewhere formal/5 star). Normal walking shoes/trainers but try to avoid wearing jogging shoes, it's not a good look. Casual waterproof jacket or coat and of course an umbrella.

For women it's very much the equivalent items as the men i.e. Jeans, trousers/skirt/dress, blouse, top, a jacket/cardigan etc.

## That's a wrap

In Part 2 of the guide we'll tell you about things to consider when you're in London. It has tips and advice to make your stay in London easier, cheaper and more fun.

If you want to know more about things to do in London, you can read our blog at [www.3guysonalondonbus.com](http://www.3guysonalondonbus.com).

And if you'd like to save money on eating out and going out in London take a look at our EPok London Pack at [www.epok.com](http://www.epok.com).

Thanks for taking the time to read this and if you'd like to receive Part 2 of the guide or if you have any questions. Please feel free to contact us at either our blog or website.

Also if you would like a free copy of this eBook for your website or blog we can do a co-branded copy for you, contact us and we'll sort something out.

One of your followers might need this. Tweet it and help them out. Click here. Thanks!

Here's to enjoying London and all it has to offer.

Cheers

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Co-founders of EPok.com