

## **Dr. Culture's® Road Warrior Survival Guide: Departing England for:**

### **LONDON**

#### **TRAVEL SECURITY:**

Discussion here focuses on destination airport security considerations and tips and techniques for minimizing delays at customs. Airport arrival and departure is a travel security “choke point” which demands your attention to items easily overlooked, misplaced, etc. At this point of the program, we’ll center on security considerations from arrival to boarding and minimizing potential difficulties before they develop.

**☑ Reminder!** Exchange minimum currency in order to handle ground travel expenses and other minor items prior to arriving at your destination hotel. This prevents pulling out your wallet, purse while balancing bags, passports, etc., at destination currency exchange window as the bad guys watch, and wait.

**Dr. Culture Travel Tips:** If you are a regular at your local firearms range or perhaps you drive out into country for target practice, etc., don’t use your firearms the day before your travel. Also, do not transport your firearm to the range in anything you’ll be taking on your trip such as a bag, satchel, etc. Especially important to not wear the same hat, clothes and/or shoes in which you target practice due to residue accumulating on you. Many airports randomly wipe your bags and shoes then conduct analysis of the swab in order to detect explosive materials. Gunpowder residue from your target practice the day before may still be present and when the airport “sniffer” identifies you you’ll get more attention than you ever thought possible.

Arrival at Gatwick, baggage pickup, clearing customs, and ground transportation segment. Comparison of Gatwick vs. Heathrow airports as arrival airport: Gatwick -- more modern, more difficult to get around, a bit more confusing, further from London central. Heathrow -- cramped, “old world” airport design, and amenities but only 15 minutes from Paddington train station and downtown London.

## **GROUND TRANSPORTATION IN LONDON**

Discussion on travel security considerations  
for taxis, trains, busses and rental cars.

**Taxi:** Although you should already have an idea of the cost of taxi -- in British Pounds -- ask first -- and no, don't try and pay with US dollars.

The good news? The trip will take you through scenic British neighborhoods.

The bad news? It will take you nearly two hours to get into London from Gatwick *and cost almost \$175.*

**Train:** Unless the trains are on strike, this is easiest. The trains leave Gatwick every 15 minutes and they are fast, easy travel into the city. You'll take train to Victoria station and then a short, inexpensive taxi trip to the hotel.

**Bus:** Forget about it. Although cheaper, the idea of schlepping bags up and onto a bus then repeating this at the hotel is too much after your overnight (short!) trip into England. This is last resort only. However, if you have time later, a red double-decker tour bus trip through the city, usually narrated by a knowledgeable guide/driver, is very interesting. This is excellent opportunity to acclimate you to your surroundings, help reduce jet lag, etc. When I and Lady Culture visited once, the bus driver asked if there were "*any Yanks*" on board. I and a few other Americans raised our hands and the elderly driver then went into a five minute, very sincere, thank you for our help during WWII. It was a moving tribute to those Americans of the 1940s who literally saved the world.

**Rental Car:** Are you sure? First it is expensive. Secondly, parking is difficult, cost of fuel is approximately \$4.00 a gallon, and London traffic is a nightmare second only to Cairo (and the Egyptians learned how to drive from the Brits). Moreover, considering London originally began as a series of villages there was never a central plan for the city streets, etc., the result: a frustrating mass of meandering streets that might allow you to look at your destination but *never show you the opportunity to get there!* And, let's not forget the outrageous number of one-way streets. To finally convince you to not rent a car, remember this: you'll be driving on the other side of the road. This is a perplexing exercise for most Americans that will put your nerves on edge and wear you down mentally -- in addition to scaring the *bejeebers* out of any fellow passengers and those others on the road

around you. Executing a right turn across traffic can be a near-spiritual experience....

***Dr. Culture Travel Tip:*** Before leaving on your trip, call your credit card company and verify precisely what your rental car insurance coverage includes. Then, call your auto insurance company. Some insurance companies insure any car you are driving regardless if it is a rental or not. Don't get drawn into purchasing duplicate auto insurance. Finally, understand that in Italy as found in several eastern Europe countries, auto theft insurance is required to be purchased by the auto rentee -- *you*.

Getting around in London is one of the great pleasant surprises of international business travel. With 15 railroad stations all of which have subway (*Underground* or *The Tube*) connections either in the train station or within a few minutes walk *and* most are served by several bus routes and when adding the capabilities of the ever-efficient London taxis, ...well, the transportation part of your London visit is simply not a problem.

### **CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCY TIPS** **London, England**

“America and Britain are two nations divided by a common language.”

George Bernard Shaw

“America and Britain are two nations divided by a common culture.”

*Dr. Culture*

The people who say “we are all basically the same” simply don't get out enough. In fact, most who hold that view have rarely traveled out of the US! Indeed, as most international travelers know and understand, quite the opposite is true: we are all basically *different*. The good news is that these differences can usually be understood by learning about the cultural structure of the different cultures with which you're working. American international business types often assume that whenever English is spoken American culture is prevalent as well. Nowhere is this more apparent than in England. Cross-cultural horror stories are everywhere for those individuals or organizations who either won't or don't understand contrasting American-British cross cultural business components. Here are a few tips and techniques that will help you in your day-to-day interactions with your English counterparts:

In discussions/negotiations/meetings don't use the expression "to table" something because while in the US it means to postpone the discussion or decision in English business circles it means to begin the discussion.

In this small country, literacy is 99 percent and school attendance at virtually 100 per cent. With over forty universities and many professional schools (well respected around the world) you may assume that your English business colleagues and much of the remainder of the country are smart -- and use the language well. **Don't allow yourself or anyone in your party** to use bad English, i.e., "I seen him" or "I got gone", "It don't look like it," etc. In written correspondence, watch for critical writing errors which immediately show you to be a complete intellectual Neanderthal such as: "an finally..." (instead of "*and* finally") or "their being shipped next week" (instead of *they're* being shipped next week). Remember, spellcheckers won't help you here!

Always be punctual -- American time works well here (approximately 10-15 minutes early. However, traffic can work against you so plan accordingly.

Dress conservatively and well.

Don't send your young, fast tracking, up and rising boy (or girl) wonder to negotiate significant joint ventures, etc. Remember older execs (male or female) are more respected. Age is synonymous with rank. Plan accordingly. Important deals demand highest-ranking representation and preferably, someone with a long personal relationship with your counterpart(s).

Generally, the English don't show emotion/excitement, etc., during negotiations, etc., as this is viewed as bad form. It stands to reason then that neither should you.

Understand decision making in England is slower -- add time to your project time line. It's not as bad as you'll find later in your trip when you get to Italy or Brazil, but you should be prepared for a longer response and answer. Pushing the English toward a decision simply doesn't work well either.

Don't assume that everyone in England is British/English! The Scots, Welsh and Irish will quickly call you on this incredibly rude assumption. More importantly, it quickly shows you to be totally ignorant of the United Kingdom region.

And, the English don't consider themselves European either -- case in point is the Euro Dollar issue -- in which they don't participate. So don't include them in any discussion of European Union business, politics, etc.

My gawd, don't start a conversation with the typically American, "So, what do you do?" This along with "What part of England are you from?" is generally considered a bit rude and personal. Rather, open with, comments on how great it is to be in England (again, if true) this time you have to make time to get a few pictures of Big Ben (for instance), maybe visit St. Paul's and take in a show (live theater). Learn about what is showing and ask about it. It only takes getting a newspaper! For instance, "Have you seen Sunset Boulevard with Petula Clark?" This shows you to be interested in areas other than your specific business. This also opens up discussion on topics other than the business at hand -- which is viewed with pleasant surprise, as most American businesspersons only seem to talk about their product/business/mission, etc. You're quite civilized after all!

Don't be surprised a business lunch is held in a pub with a light meal unless this is a senior executive level type event. Then, it will be in a nice restaurant or executive dining room.

Don't ever toast those who are older and much more senior than you. Toast the organization and its wonderful people, etc.

When inviting your English counterparts out, ensure you include people of the same background and professional level in the invitation. Class structure is important to keep in mind here.

Avoid American "bone-crusher" handshake; light is right!

When dining, don't put your hands in your lap; hands belong about the table but no elbows on on the table. Yikes!

English men generally still open doors for women and rise when women enter the room -- regardless of man's status. If you are a professional American woman, refrain from opening your own doors, etc.

Use any titles you come in contact with (especially in professional group) Rather than "sir" use the title of the person you are addressing; "Yes, Minister" instead of "Yes, sir." Use of first names is relatively new in British business circles. If your host insists, then OK.

Don't expect most English to exhibit long direct eye contact during conversations.

Finally, rather than giving gifts we recommend inviting your hosts out for a meal or even better, theater -- especially impressive if you can arrange a private box. This is costly but impressive.

### **BUSINESS HOTELS COMPARISON -LONDON**

Three London business hotels are featured in our business hotel comparison. Cost range: Low cost; *Quality Hotel -- Paddington*, Medium; *Strand Palace Hotel* and High End; *Hyde Park Hotel*.

**Quality Hotel – Paddington:** From £45-149 (\$65-\$216) per night. Full Private Facilities With Bath & Shower, TV Satellite With In House Movies, Complimentary Tea/Coffee Making Facility, Direct Dial Telephone With Voice Mail, Central Heating, Non Smoking Rooms, "Trouser Press", Hairdryer, Electronic Security Key Locks, Smoke Detectors, Computer Modem Point, Electronic Safe.

**Strand Palace Hotel:** From £80-129 per night. All bedrooms have color TV, free satellite channels, pay movie channels, voicemail, tea and coffee making facilities, hairdryer, trouser press and 24-hour room service. On the Strand Club Floor provides bedrooms with upgraded amenities and features, as well as an exclusive lounge serving complimentary non-alcoholic beverages throughout the day. Don't expect air conditioning unless you are staying in the more expensive suites. However, this would only be a problem for a few months of the year as London has an overwhelmingly moderate climate. Breakfast and/or dinner package is reasonable and effective way to minimize "finding breakfast difficulties."

**Hyde Park Hotel:** Rooms £305-525, suites £650-3000 per night, Individually controlled air conditioning, Satellite channels; CNN, etc., video players and video library, CD player with selection of CDs, Multi-channel radio, Guest Floor Managers, 24-hour room service, Great minibar and refrigerator, morning delivery of daily newspapers, mineral water and fruit, all rooms have two telephone lines, voice mail, STSN high speed internet access, personal safe, all suites include fax machines, excellent same day laundry and valet one hour pressing. There is in house secretarial service available and mobile phones for rent. Additionally, a complete secretarial package is available -- ideal for presentation teams with last minute tweaking, correspondence, repro needs, etc. Rates are rational -- especially considering you'd be completely worn out by doing it all yourself. The Hyde Park business center is open 24/7 complete with

Dell computers, color printers, courier service, etc. Concierge Service is excellent featuring the full range of helpful assistance such as: Travel arrangements, Airport transfer, Theatre/Restaurant reservations, secretarial assistance, translation and courier service. Meeting and conference facilities are top notch and fully capable of answering any audiovisual requirement.

**Dr. Culture Travel Tip:** Although not as common as earlier years, there are still several older hotels that still consider sharing a bathroom normal. Usually, due to their very low prices, organizational travel people will be drawn like a moth to a flame to these old and antiquated -- not to be confused with charming -- facilities. Two issues at work here (1) your travel people are making *your* travel arrangements based upon *their own* cultural structure which sees a bathroom in a hotel room as a “given” and nothing they’d ever ask about and (2) they aren’t the ones traveling so (men) sharing a sink and your morning shave with an out of town soccer team is a joyful experience they will never know. Make sure they ask the right questions about your accommodations and travel. More importantly, remember when you give up control over your travel arrangements you also give up your right to complain about them. Moreover, staying in one of these hotels says something about you and your company to your British counterparts -- and it’s not particularly complimentary. Thought is: if a company treats its own employees/business travelers in such a shoddy manner, what can I expect as their client/customer?

Alternative accommodations: “Bed and Breakfast” type inns, pubs, etc.

### **DINING OUT DISCUSSION - LONDON**

Restaurant Comparisons: There was a time when delicious English food was an oxymoron -- *no longer!* Magnificent meals are available covering the spectrum of tastes and prices. Moreover, quick, affordable heavy snacks opportunities are available everywhere for the busy business traveler. Particularly noteworthy are the wine bars and pubs. Cost range of this comparison: Low Cost; *Wine Bars and Pubs*, Medium Cost: *Porters* and our High End example; *The White Tower*.

**Wine Bars:** These are a tremendous asset to the traveling businessperson. Usually a bit unsophisticated but you’ll find good, substantial food here. This is the typical unpretentious, friendly and ideal meeting place for a couple glasses of wine, pints of beer, great cold cuts and cheeses before heading out for dinner. However, it is easy to fill up here -- pace yourself!

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Recommendation: *Bleeding Heart*; great wines, champagnes and ask about the ghost...and, *Sloane's Wine Bar* next to the Royal Court Theater; reasonable and the home cooked food is excellent. Try their impressive sausage and cheese tray with a full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon.

**Pubs:** "Pub food" has a mixed reputation for quality but overall, can be a great help to the road warrior as well. Pub food quality, costs, etc., are as varied as English pubs are numerous. You'll find an interesting and diverse atmosphere here; sometimes noisy, others quiet and reserved while still in others, kids are running about, older family members meet their neighbors, children, etc., as they have for years. Between all of this, the dart games and easy going nature found here, this is an ideal location for an affordable and filling culinary experience. Also an easy location to start conversation with another solo diner -- male or female. Recommendation: *Admiral Codrington* in Chelsea -- go for the Shepard's Pie. But, a culturally and historical significant location, *Cheshire Cheese (Ye Olde)* has been serving pints of beer/ale since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This is London's most historic and most beloved pub. Our featured restaurant is *Daquise* a polish food restaurant, charming in its décor and service where the food quality is excellent and plentiful. Try the sauerkraut with garlic sausage and mushroom platter. Cost of the 4-course meal with a bottle of wine: \$26.00.

Medium Cost: Covent Gardens, *Porters*. This features a *to-die-for* lamb and apricot pie. This is popular among locals and business types as well.

High End: You'll find exquisite Greek Food at *The White Tower* -- clearly the most elegant Greek restaurant in London. Bring a huge appetite and your wallet. It will be memorable. This is an excellent location for entertaining those special clients. Also, and certainly not second on anyone's list, The Hyde Park Hotel restaurant -- the enormous *Park Room*. This is a rare instance where a hotel restaurant is considered for especially fine dining. This is a very civilized location for entertaining, the service impeccable and the site of numerous celebrity sightings.

**Dr. Culture Travel Tip:** To avoid surprises at check out, at this point (1-2 days prior to check out) in the business trip you should ask for a printout of the charges to date. This gives you plenty of time to resolve any unexpected charges. Also, to avoid last minute difficulties have Concierge find out Chunnel travel time, how long to get to station, etc., and overall have him/her arrange for transportation to Chunnel train station. Finally,

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considering how helpful this individual has been to you, don't forget to tip appropriately.