



Getting Around London

Article: <https://virtually-fluent.com/getting-around-london/>

Transport in London is extremely expensive, so try to walk around the attractions as much as you can or buy a sightseeing card/tour that includes transport. The prices are calculated depending on the zone you travel in, the time you travel at and whether you are a child, adult, student or elderly traveller.

The transport system in London is slightly different to the normal transport system in the rest of the UK because this is run by Transport for London (TfL), under the Mayor of London's authority. The Mayor of London is elected every five years by the people of London, so rules, prices and many other things change regularly with this.

TRAVELLING BY TUBE

The most important means of transport in our capital city is the underground, or as the locals call it "the tube". This was the first underground railway system in the world and is the most extensive in the UK.

London has 11 different tube lines that operate very regularly. When waiting at a station, you'll notice that the central lines arrive every 3 or 4 minutes. The tube, however, isn't open during the night. It closes from midnight to 5am, with only a few exceptions on Friday and Saturday evenings with Night Tube services.

The best way to get around London using the tube is to use the TfL Journey planner, available as an app and a website, but Google Maps generally provides the right directions and tube lines too. You can normally get a copy of the underground map at tourist information centres, most tourist attractions and even in your hotel. I definitely recommend taking a look when you first arrive so you can see how the city is laid out.

London is divided up by zones. The city centre is zone 1 and as you get further outside the city, you reach zone 9. Travel is relatively cheap within one zone, but the more zones you travel, obviously, the more expensive it will become. When you purchase travel cards or travel discounts, they often only apply to certain zones, so make sure you always read the [small print](#)! Most tourist attractions are in zone 1, with only a few outside, so you should be OK if you're only visiting the sites. Note that London airports are either outside of the London zones or in further away zones.

DRIVING IN LONDON

In most countries, when travelling around different cities it can be much cheaper to hire a car and drive around yourself. In most UK cities, it is the same case, but in London this is different and this is all because of the congestion charge.

This congestion charge applies between 7am and 6pm Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays. If you are travelling in London, most of the city centre is covered by this congestion charge. You can see the congestion charge symbol when you are entering this area and there is a map that shows exactly where this area is. If you are driving into this area, you must pay this charge.

If you pay on the day you enter this zone or before, you will be charged £11.50, if you pay the day after you entered this zone, you will be charged £14. If you haven't paid this congestion charge, you will be fined £160. Your vehicle's number plates are registered and you'll be sent a letter through the post. If you have rented a car,

the rental company will receive this charge and pass it on to you, perhaps with an additional expense.

Note that this is a daily charge, so if you travel in this area every day, you'll need to pay £11.50 every day. However, you can travel in and out of this area as many times as you want within the day you have paid for. As you can see, this can turn out to be a very expensive means of travel, so public transport may be a better alternative.

DISCOUNTS IN LONDON

There are a few discount options that can help you travel around London better. There is the railcard for overground trains, a travelcard and the Oyster card. There are two different types of Oyster card that you can invest in as a tourist- Oyster Card and Visitor Oyster Card, both have their perks.

Both cards look the same and can be used on the bus, tube, DLR, tram, overground rail services and even boat. Both cards cost £5.00 and are top-up cards. So when you first receive your card, it will be worth £0 and you need to top it up. For example, you might add £20 to your card. You can top up your card at most tube stations in London on the machines or at a few ticket offices. Some newsagents around the city will also top it up for you. If you download the TfL app, you can insert your card details here and top up using the app instead.

Each time you travel using the tube, you will need to scan your Oyster card at the ticket barrier. You will do the same when you leave the next station and the cost of that journey will automatically be deducted from your card. You can easily check your card balance using the TfL app.

Another discount option is the travelcard. This can also be purchased from TfL and this is a physical paper card. It also provides unlimited travel on the bus, tube, tram, DLR and overground train services in all of London's nine zones. Travelcards are

only available for one day (both anytime and peak) or for seven days. At the time of writing, a 1-day adult travelcard for zones 1-4 costs £13.50, whilst a 7 day travelcard zones 1-2 costs £36.10. All travelcards are stamped with a date, so you cannot use them whenever you want and when you use the 7-day travelcard, these days must be consecutive.

It's clear to see that you need to be prepared when you visit London to make sure you're spending your money wisely on transport. This can be an **extortionate** cost and I definitely recommend saving up your money for the tourist attractions instead of transport around the city. If you visit in summer or are lucky enough to have good weather, all the main tourist attractions are fairly central and not too far from each other, so you could always walk around and take in the British culture along the way.