



LYCOMING IN LONDON

~A SURVIVAL GUIDE~

Start Planning now

1. Get your passport and ISIC (International Student Identification Card) early. Don't put it off. Your passport can take 6 weeks, sometimes more, to receive and your ISIC can take up to 4 weeks. The IMS usually arranges to have a representative of the Prothonotary's Office visit the College so that you can apply for the passport easily and conveniently. Make a copy of the title page of your passport to keep in a separate location in case the original is lost. The only Visa you will need is for Poland which the travel agency will process.

2. Plan for lots of "Kodak Moments." Pack your camera/film along with you. You'll take more pictures than you expect. Be prepared!



3. Pack sensibly. Two words pretty much sum it up: one suitcase. That's all you get. Make sure you have a small suitcase with fat wheels and a small carry on suitcase/duffel bag. You will need to check the suitcase when you fly to London. You can get by with using the duffel bag on the weekend trips. Also pack an extra expandable suitcase/carrier to bring home all the goodies you buy. It's a general rule that you always return with more stuff than when you left.



4. Remember when you start shopping for clothes, we are visiting Northern Europe. The weather might be very warm to sometimes even hot. But it also might be cool and wet.

5. Understand what it really costs before you buy it. Learn the exchange rate and how to convert items prices in foreign currency to American dollars. It is helpful to understand "how many dollars" something costs before you buy it. Most American products are more expensive in Europe. Look for bargains and don't forget, when your credit card bill comes, you will have to pay it in good old dollars!



6. Be ready for a shock. The standard voltage varies in Europe. Ask Santa for an electrical conversion kit for appliances. Always handy to have!

7. Carry the card. Your ISIC should be carried at all times. It may be the only form of identification (besides your passport, and please don't carry your passport around) that will be accepted at pubs and clubs (in the unlikely event that anyone asks you for ID). But here's a reason to carry your ISIC; it saves you money. You get discounts on hundreds of museums and tourist destinations such as Stonehenge and the Arc de Triump. These places don't advertise this, so you'll have to ask.

8. Dress for success, at work and at play. On business visits, sponsors are expecting clean, well-groomed and well-dressed students. While business attire is not expected, plan to bring along attractive casual clothes. If you are thinking of going to the theatre or opera, it is not necessary to dress formally. You can wear the same clothes you wore all day. Of course, you can dress up if you want.



When it's time to play, bring some nice play clothes. This is especially true if you plan to go "clubbing." The clubs of London and most of Europe have dress codes. If you don't look nice, you won't get in. Wearing jeans, open-toed shoes, and sneakers is a great way to make sure you won't get in.



8. Get to know the natives. There are lots and lots of students in London, as well as lots and lots of places to meet people. Engage the natives. Try to meet new people. The friends you make may last a lifetime (and they may even invite you back for a visit!).

9. Bring an umbrella and a water-resistant jacket. You will get plenty of use out of them. Let's say the weather is very "changeable." It rains often, and it isn't unusual to have a healthy rain sandwiched between a sunny morning and a sunny afternoon. The weather changes very quickly so you'll want to be prepared for that. A nice, stylish jacket and an umbrella that folds up to the size of a pencil, and you're ready for anything.



10. Calling Home. When you arrive, buy an international phone card along with instructions on how to call home.

11. Bring your spirit of adventure. Try new things, as many as you can. You will find new foods everywhere you go. Don't miss the pub food. It's good and it's cheap. Sidewalk vendors also offer some tasty stuff. Stay away from the fast food. It's overpriced, and besides you already know what Burger King and McDonalds tastes like, don't you?



12. Take care of your “dogs.” Invest in a comfortable pair of shoes and break them in before you get on the plane. You'll walk more than you ever walked in your entire life. So get in shape.



13. Budget your money. Come up with a weekly budget and stick to it. There is nothing worse than running out of money before the end of the trip. You'll be broke and everybody else will be doing all those very cool things that they can afford because they budgeted their money.



How much do you need? Tough question because everyone is different. You can get by on \$150 per week, including food money, and some students have done that. You can also spend twice that amount, and some students have probably done that, too. It all depends on what you want to do while you are there. If you plan on getting to know the pubs and clubs, bring lots and lots of money. Having that kind of fun is not cheap. For those of you who just have to have a dollar figure, here it goes, but this is just a guess based on past experience and conversations with past participants. You can have a very good experience, and really do many things, with between \$1,200 and \$1,500. This would allow you to eat reasonably, take home souvenirs, and travel as well. Can you do it for less? Of course. But when you are planning your budget, remember you'll need money for laundry, bus fare, occasional cab fare, as well as the big ones like airfare and food money.

14. Take at least two credit cards. And notify your credit card companies that you will be traveling overseas. Murphy's law definitely applies here. Credit card companies have been known to deactivate credit cards that have “unusual activity.” There may also be restrictions on the amount that you may charge in any one day (we call that credit card meltdown). There is even the case of the credit card company that issued a new card (with a higher limit) to a cardholder while he was overseas. It seems that the credit card company gave the cardholder 30 days to activate the card. After 30 days, the old card was deactivated. Only problem was that the cardholder never received the card, with notice to activate it, because...you guessed it, he was out of the country.



Important! Make sure that the credit card you bring is in your name. Unlike in the US, salespeople in the stores in the UK watch carefully as you sign your name to the receipt. They openly compare signatures and they check to make sure that they match, and that it is the same as the front of the card. Also, make sure that your debit or credit card has a four digit pin number so that you can get cash from ATM's. (Six digit numbers often do not work in Europe). There is no need to exchange a large amount of cash before you leave and traveler's checks can be a hassle. Either use your debit/credit card to get cash from an ATM or cash exchange counters. Both are located widely in airports and cities.



15. Please remember that you are a guest. Behave, be polite and respectful at all times, and make every effort to fit into the culture. Sadly, Americans have a very poor image overseas. And more sadly, that image is well-earned. We are often loud, arrogant, insensitive, and ignorant. You'll be amused to find out that by the time you come home, you too will be able to "spot an American."

Don't expect to find everything you are accustomed to. Don't expect a twist of lemon with your water, or ice with your drinks. Be thrilled by the differences that you encounter, not frustrated. Be open to new things, and be respectful of different ways. Your way is not better, it's just different.

As part of this program, you are representing your country and your college. And that brings a very special responsibility. Enjoy yourself, but remember, you are the guest!



Before you leave

1. Ask friends or relatives who have traveled to the same countries where they would recommend visiting.
2. Buy a small pocket-size travel book-with a city map-which you can keep with you at all times.
3. Check out websites of the local tourist authorities to start a 'wish list' of what you would like to do or see.
4. When you have received a complete itinerary with flight details, addresses, and phone numbers make sure you leave a copy with your family/friends.