

# How to Survive a Trip to the UK: The Definitive Guide for First-Time Visitors To the British Isles [B1]

Se vi recate nel Regno Unito, la conoscenza della lingua non è garanzia di una comunicazione efficace. Ci sono molti aspetti da considerare per evitare un imbarazzante shock culturale.

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So you have finally done it. You had been dreaming of this trip for months, maybe years, and now you really are there, in Piccadilly Circus, the rain [soaking](#) even your underwear, about [to be run over](#) by one of those massive [poppy-reddouble-decker buses](#) (for the third time), and surrounded by [packs](#) of loud tourists with no sense of personal space — or [embarrassment](#), because, of course, you couldn't go to London and not take that photo. Congratulations: your followers must be [thrilled](#) — all fifteen of them! Now, here is the article you should have read before setting foot in Albion.

## THE WEATHER

First things first: you will need a jacket. Is it the 5 August? Jacket. The sun is shining? Jacket. The thermometer marks 30°C? [Grab](#) that jacket! The British Isles are located in a geographical area where several weather systems meet. When these air masses interact with each other, the weather changes, sometimes drastically, and in a matter of minutes, no matter how [unready](#) you are. That is why you will need that jacket. Oh, and take a bottle of sun cream with you, too. As you should know by now, the Earth is basically [melting](#) and not even Scotland is [spared](#) from [scorching](#) hot temperatures during the summer. In fact, the four hottest days in British history were recorded in 2021 and 2022, the record figure being an impressive 40.3°C. So, when in the UK on holiday, always check the [weather forecast](#); it is not entirely [reliable](#), but at least you will feel [entitled to blame](#) someone else when the sun suddenly shows up and you realise that those awful fake leather leggings weren't the [wisest choice](#) you made today. Also, don't pay much attention to the locals' outfits, especially if you are from Southern Europe. British people are made for cold weather; they start wearing shorts and [flip flops](#) as soon as the thermometer hits 15 °C, a temperature in which your warm-blooded Mediterranean body is not summer-ready yet. So, yes, the jacket.

## UNDER YOUR FEET

Next topic: [carpets](#). [There is no use](#) in denying that the number of [carpets](#) per square metre in the UK is ridiculously high and [utterly](#) unnecessary. You will see them in pubs, public buildings, offices... they are everywhere! In fact, the carpet is probably the first thing you notice when you enter any British airport after getting off the plane; that [bloodcurdlingly](#) ugly blue carpet that contains all the [smudges](#) and sadness one can imagine... Ugh! If you stay in a house, you will [recall](#) the horror stories that everyone has heard about the Britons' love of covering every centimetre of their floors with [carpets](#). Even the bathroom! Whatever your position on the carpet debate, you must keep their omnipresence in mind to avoid embarrassing situations: if you are invited to someone's house, you will probably be asked to take your shoes off so that you don't [stain](#) the carpet, so please make sure that you're wearing decent socks — no one wants to see your toes [peeping out](#). Thank you. There is a good reason why Brits love [carpets](#), though: they can be quite soft and [cosy](#), they mitigate noise, and they help insulate houses, keeping the heat in and the cold air out; this is very convenient in the winter months — not so much during heat waves, as they are discovering now. However, this quintessentially British décor seems [to be falling out of favour](#), and in many houses nowadays you will only find it in bedrooms, [if that](#). The reasons are quite obvious: [carpets](#) attract too much [dust](#), animal hair and [dirt](#) in general; [hardwood flooring](#) can be almost as warm as carpet, it is much easier to clean, and it makes life nicer for asthmatics, cleanliness freaks, and lazy people in general. So yes, [hooray](#)!

## TEATIME

By the way, would you like a cup of tea? The right answer to this question is always “Yes, I'd love a cup of tea, thank you”. Why? Because tea is more than a hot drink in Britain: it is a cultural symbol, a social must, the basic indicator of civilisation, and the [glue](#) that holds society together. This is not an exaggeration. When a Brit offers to make you a cup of tea, they are welcoming you into their bubble of sacred rituals, [so turning it down](#) is a big no-no. As you probably know, Brits value manners a lot, and you don't want [to come across](#) as [rude](#). It doesn't matter if your host is the King of England or someone living under Waterloo Bridge: you will be offered a cup of tea, and you must accept it by saying “Oh, lovely”, and drink it with [joy](#). The British love of tea is also present in accommodation. Even if you stay in the cheapest, [seediest](#) hotel in Britain, you will find a tea kit in your room, with a [kettle](#), a couple of cups, some sugar, and some English breakfast teabags. The room might have no window, no toilet, no [blankets](#), but it will have a tea kit. Why? Because when everything else goes wrong, British people can always rely on a nice ‘cuppa’ to keep calm and [carry on](#).

## CARS AND CASH

Another thing that makes Brits special is the fact that they drive on the left side of the road. Although they complain about public transport as if it was less [reliable](#) than a Russian electoral [poll](#), the truth is that trains and buses work relatively well in Britain. So for safety and environmental reasons, it is a good idea to use them when you are there on holiday. You might be thinking about renting a car, though; you might feel it would be fun. Well, don't do it — you are extremely likely to crash it at the first [roundabout](#), and you don't want to find yourself in hospital, trying to explain that you might have broken your [collarbone](#) and a few [ribs](#) just for fun. Nowadays, we can pay by card — or even by phone — almost everywhere. But if you need to pay in cash, you will handle another great British symbol: the pound. Yes, Brits would never abandon their beloved currency for the modern but [charmless](#) euro, so you'd better get used to the shapes, sizes and colours of their coins and banknotes. It might be a good idea to write down some of the alternative names they use for their money, too: 'quid' is not a shorter name for '[squid](#)' but a colloquial synonym of 'pound'; '[pence](#)' is usually abbreviated to 'p'; 'a fiver' is a five-pound note, and 'a tenner' is a ten-pound note (that one was easy...)

## PUB ETIQUETTE

Speaking of money, you will probably find everything expensive in Britain. Brits do too, but that doesn't stop them from practising one of their national hobbies: going to the pub and drinking until they [pass out](#). Yes, British people famously drink like there's no tomorrow, despite the fact that the average beer costs around six pounds in the UK. [Funnily enough](#), pub pints are often [watered down](#), which means that in order to get drunk they need to drink a river of beer... which is exactly what they do. The trick is to start early, at around five o'clock, a time when you would still be digesting your lunch back home. My advice to you if you go out with Brits is not to try to keep up and to close all access to balconies. Just in case. There are more things to keep in mind when you go to the UK for the first time, like never [skipping a queue](#), always saying "please" and "thank you", [stocking up](#) on [nuts](#) for the [squirrels](#) if you go to a park and, of course, [minding the gap](#) (between the train and the platform in the underground.) But you will discover them [in due time](#). For now, take my advice and [enjoy](#) your trip, [come rain or shine](#).

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# Glossary

- **to be run over** = investire
- **entitled** = in diritto di
- **poppy-red** = rosso papavero
- **bloodcurdlingly** = raccapricciante
- **roundabout** = rotonda
- **scorching** = roventi
- **recall** = ricordare
- **cosy** = confortevoli
- **glue** = collante
- **seediest** = trasandato
- **poll** = sondaggio
- **stocking up** = fare la scorta
- **packs** = branchi
- **wisest choice** = la scelta più saggia
- **smudges** = macchie
- **if that** = al limite
- **hardwood flooring** = pavimenti in legno
- **squid** = calamaro
- **reliable** = affidabili
- **nuts** = frutta a guscio
- **in due time** = tempo debito
- **flip flops** = infradito, sandali
- **utterly** = completamente
- **dust** = polvere
- **joy** = gioia
- **charmless** = non attraente
- **pence** = penny
- **come rain or shine** = succeda quel che succeda
- **embarrassment** = disagio
- **dirt** = sporcizia
- **hooray** = evviva
- **pass out** = svenire
- **to blame** = incolpare
- **Funnily enough** = curiosamente
- **melting** = sciogliersi
- **spared** = risparmiare
- **rude** = scortese
- **collarbone** = clavicola
- **minding the gap** = fare attenzione allo spazio vuoto
- **double-decker buses** = autobus a due piani

- **unready** = impreparato
- **so turning it down** = rifiutare
- **blankets** = coperte
- **ribs** = costole
- **squirrels** = scoiattoli
- **to come across** = apparire, sembrare
- **weather forecast** = previsioni meteorologiche
- **skipping a queue** = saltare la coda
- **thrilled** = entusiasti
- **carpets** = tappeti, moquette
- **stain** = macchiare
- **peeping out** = spuntare
- **soaking** = inzuppare
- **There is no use** = essere inutile
- **to be falling out of favour** = passare di moda
- **kettle** = bollitore
- **watered down** = annacquare
- **Grab** = prendere
- **carry on** = mantenere