
London Winter Session 2018

UK Culture & Performance Appreciation in London



Study Abroad Program Guide **Prepared by Maria S Horne and Chelsea L Horne**

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University at Buffalo *The State University of New York*



DESTINATION:
LONDON

SPECIAL NOTES REGARDING OUR DESTINATION

Climate

In winter, there can be drizzle and showers but pale sunshine as well, just not a lot of it. And that lack of sunshine is what may make people think that London in winter is undesirable, as the days are short which means less time for sightseeing as well as less sunshine. London is full of old buildings that typically alternate between drafty/chilly and overheated, so having a layer to peel off (and put back on) is important. Jeans, sweaters, and layers are recommended, as is a good pair of weatherproof boots (no high-heels), socks (and/or long underwear), a good winter jacket, a hat, scarf, and gloves. Remember that even though it may not snow like in Buffalo, it can still feel very cold in London! If you are cold while we explore the outdoors, you will not enjoy it at all! So plan ahead and keep warm. Take into consideration that weather is unreliable so we don't know how exactly it will be during our visit. Layers are the way to go, with a good jacket, boots, hat, and gloves. And, since we will be going to the Royal Opera House and other theatres, please also bring one outfit that is warm but classy (a nice pair of pants and shirt would do just fine.)

Transportation

Every student should purchase an Oyster card upon arrival. You can do this at Heathrow airport and use it right away to ride the Tube to where we will be housing. It is a pay as you go system. Plan to add at least £10-20 British pounds to your card so you have enough for the first days. For detailed instructions on how to go from Heathrow to our housing we will be sending an addendum "Heathrow to Housing." Oyster cards can be used to ride London's bus and tram systems and are the most economical way to make use of both. Cabs are available for hire when the yellow sign above the windscreen is lit; just stick your arm out to signal one. Fares are metered, with a minimum charge of £2.20 (covering the first 336m during a weekday), rising by increments of 20p for each subsequent 168m. Fares are more expensive in the evenings and overnight. You can tip taxi drivers up to 10%, but most people round up to the nearest pound. While London is generally safe, freelance "minicabs" should be avoided in favor of fully-licensed black cabs.

During our program we will walk a lot; I repeat, a lot! It is crucial that you bring comfortable shoes/boots. You don't need a lot of them, just 2 pairs, but they must be very comfortable and weatherproof. So wear one pair on the plane and pack the other one on your carry-on luggage. It is important that your feet are dry and warm all the time and that you don't get blisters or sprain your ankles.

In London you will participate in a “Living in London Orientation” where you will gain valuable information. London is quite safe, but like all big cities there are dangers you must become aware of. Keep in mind to always travel in groups, not alone; beware of pickpockets; beware of unstable individuals and of your surroundings.

Food

British cuisine has adapted not only to the climate of its cities, but also combines a great variety of ingredients from around the world. Traditional elements from cultures across the globe have been incorporated to the British diet. Being a global capital, London boasts some of the best food from around the world. However, be sure to indulge in traditional English fare like lamb in mint sauce, Yorkshire pudding, sausage and mashed potatoes, meatloaf, and roast beef. One of the most representative dishes of the city is "Fish & Chips" and the traditional, heartily portioned “Full English Breakfast.” And on Sundays there is the famous “Roast” at most Pubs, and it’s better to go early in the afternoon because they do run out! As part of our program we will experience an English Tea with scones, clotted cream and jam!

While eating out is tempting, it can drain a budget very fast. So plan ahead and use your kitchens. Every flat has a fully equipped kitchen and cooking together will create a great sense of community and save you a lot of money and it will also allow you to keep a healthy diet. Also, for our outings, prepare sandwiches/lunches to bring along so you can “eat on the hoof.” And before our outings, always remember to have a hearty meal. It will be cold and we will be walking so it is important to fuel up before we go out.

Alcohol

All 18-year-old participants will be of legal drinking age while in London. Every participant must behave responsibly in choices involving alcohol, as the abuse of alcohol endangers not only the individual who does so, but other participants in the program as well. Alcohol **abuse** is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program, at the discretion of the program director. However, wine and beer (especially in friendly pubs) are certainly staples of the British culture of food and drink, and can be enjoyed in moderation. Remember, alcohol consumption is never mandatory and students should feel no pressure or obligation whatsoever to participate in the consumption of alcohol.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Official London Tourism Page: <http://www.visitlondon.com/>

THE PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Once all participants have committed to the program by making their down payment, we will begin our program in Buffalo in October/November with a pre-departure Gathering where students will get to know each other. This will be a great opportunity to pose questions as well as gathering useful information on how to best plan your trip abroad. Next, we will have a pre-departure Orientation session run by the Office of Study Abroad in early December, time and place tba. There will be a general presentation followed by our specific program breakout session.

Students are expected to check their UB e-mail on a regular basis since this will be our method of correspondence throughout the program, particularly before and after the overseas component. Very important program specific information will be distributed via e-mail during the month of December. Students should check their UB email on a daily basis! It is also expected that students will read required books prior to the overseas portion of our program.

Program Description

Culture & Performance Appreciation in London is a 3 credit-hour course that fulfills a UB General Education requirement (Arts). This intensive and unique course integrates the study of culture and performance with focused research on its relationship with architecture, fine arts, history, music, ceremonies, urban design, and the contemporary landscape. Academically, the city of London will be our classroom. Learning and teaching takes place on-site at some of the world's most fascinating historic, cultural, and performing arts venues in London, (e.g. Tower of London, The Globe, British Museum, and much more). Our formal lectures will be held as "Gatherings." The daily itinerary takes our students on comprehensive day-long explorations of London's past, present, and future. Our walking tours and guided journeys through London allow the student to become knowledgeable and familiar with the city, experts in their own right. Students will also take on their own independent London artistic and cultural research project, where working in small groups they will conduct field research on a topic of their selection, while interacting with local counterparts and digitally documenting their discoveries. 2018 Day Trips will include Warner Bros. Harry Potter Studios and Henry VIII's Hampton Court.

Course Description

The arts do not occur in a vacuum. They are the indisputable reflection of the distinct culture responsible for its production. The language of performance encompasses a wide spectrum of artistic and cultural expressions, which are intrinsically linked to the people that create and produce it. To fully comprehend performance, it is necessary to also comprehend the culture that created it. Artistic manifestations illuminate humankind and they often are precursors of the future. They reflect on the effects of the past, pose questions on the present times, and dare with visions of things to come. Learning how to appreciate *performance and culture* expands our understanding of ourselves and of the people of different cultures, and in turn, of humankind in a global sense.

Objectives

- learn how to appreciate performance and culture
- identify a variety of genres, methods, and techniques in the performing arts
- develop tools on how to critically absorb and experience an artistic expression while gaining further knowledge of the people and culture that created it
- expand understanding of oneself and of the people of different cultures
- acquire the skills to become more globally and cross-culturally competent

Assignments

At the beginning of the course in London, students will also receive a daily schedule of activities. Prior to departure from the United States, students will also receive a course syllabus outlining assignments and required readings. Tentative plans for graded work: an e-portfolio/digital journal starting with a preliminary entry prior to departure and entries throughout the program; attendance to all Class Gatherings and scheduled activities/programming; oral presentations/reactions to performances and activities; an independent group research project to be presented on final days; and a self-reflective final paper due no later than January 22nd upon returning home.

Grading and Conduct

Students will receive a grade letter for the course. Conduct will affect the overall grade, hopefully in a positive way. While abroad, UB students are ambassadors to our university and our country, and are held to high standards and to all university regulations.

ACCOMMODATIONS

While in London, live like a Londoner. As our student you will live in a fully furnished flat in London, where everything is in reach within a short amount of time by foot, bus, or Underground. The apartments include a separate lounge/dining room, a fully equipped kitchen, complete with a cooker, refrigerator, oven, microwave, washing machine, utensils, and crockery/cutlery. And you will have wireless Internet access and telephone line, among other amenities. All apartments are cleaned at least once weekly, maintained by AES in-house staff and have an 0800 telephone number for maintenance issues, with a 24-hour call-out service. Detailed information on housing, address, phone numbers, emergency contact, etc., will be sent as addendums via e-mail and will also be available at the Study Abroad Office.

ADVICE ON MONEY, COMPUTERS, PHONE, ETC

Your UB Student ID can save you money!

Do not forget to bring your UB student ID to get discounts at theatres, attractions, and more!

Money for Students from the US

Your credit card is a good alternative to carrying cash and it will automatically convert the local charges into dollars on your statement, often with a service fee in most cases, unless you own a credit card that has “no foreign transaction fees.” The advantage is the written record of purchases that will appear on your monthly statement and also that you won’t need to pay until billed. However, despite the convenience (carrying a credit card is highly recommended) it can be very easy to overspend. Carry at least some cash and be disciplined about purchases. You are not required to acquire British currency until you get to England, however, it may be a good idea to arrive in London with at least some GBP (Great British Pounds) which you can order ahead from your bank (plan ahead, it takes several days). Personally we use an ATM/debit card to get cash on location, usually at the airport in London. You get the bank's exchange rate, and there is usually a fee per transaction. Before departure, find out how much your bank fee is per transaction so that you are not unpleasantly surprised and make sure your bank account allows for international withdrawals. Double check that your PIN number will work abroad! Not all ATM cards automatically do: some need activation. There also may be problems if your debit card is linked to a savings account vs. a checking account. Make sure you contact your bank before departure to set a “travel alert” and to

check on how to use your debit card/ATM in London and what it will cost. Additionally, be aware that there could be two service fees per transaction: one charged by your bank and then another one charged by the British bank. In order to avoid the 2nd service fee check with your bank and ask for a list of “sister” or “partner” institutions that will not charge a 2nd fee .

Do not buy traveler’s checks, almost no one uses them. Do not carry large amounts of US currency, but have some as a back-up that you can exchange in a pinch, in case of difficulties with your credit or debit card. To summarize: Use cash whenever possible (using an ATM card to withdraw cash as necessary) and keep very close track of debit and credit card usage and fees.

Computers and Personal Electronics

In England, the electricity runs on 220-240 volts, which is not what we use in the USA. Additionally, they use a different kind of electrical outlet. So you will need two things: 1) to find out if your electrical computers and personal electronics have a built-in converter that makes them safe to use with 220-240 volts (otherwise they will fry upon connection). If the answer is yes, you are OK, if the answer is no, then you need to purchase an electricity converter. And 2) you need to buy an electrical outlet adapter for the UK. Outlet adapters are available at AAA, Wal-Mart, Target and most electronics stores for less than \$10. Electricity converters however are more expensive.

Phones Generally

Contact your cell/mobile phone carrier and find out if your (typically locked) US phones will work in London. You may wish to investigate purchasing a local SIM card with short-term data plan from a retailer in London. Skype, WhatsApp, and Facetime are free and convenient ways to check in with home. Additionally, all flats have telephones that allow for incoming calls. United Kingdom country code: +44.

Time

At this time of year, there will be a 5-hour differential between London and the US Eastern time. That means that noon in Buffalo will translate to 5:00pm in London.

Water

Tap water in London is clean and safe to drink. Save money by using a refillable water bottle, instead of purchasing water or other drinks.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Students are responsible for making their own international travel arrangements and ground transfer to/from airports. Main international airports in London are London Heathrow (LHR) and London Gatwick (LGW.) Preferably, fly to Heathrow because you can catch the London Tube for easy and cost-effective ground transfer to our housing in central London, when you use the Oyster card.

Early arrivals/late departures cannot be accommodated. Students are expected to arrive in the morning of Tuesday, January 3, 2018, which means taking an overnight flight departing from the USA on January 2, 2018. All students will leave flats in the morning of January 17, 2018, by 10:00am.

Students will check in upon arrival the morning of January 3. Our first scheduled activity is on that same day.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Program participants must have a valid passport. Check the expiration date and ensure it will still be valid at the time of travel. Expiration date should be no less than six months after travel dates.

KEEP YOUR IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND ITEMS SAFE

Carry all important documents such as money, credit cards, passport, and plane tickets with you in your carry-on bag. One of the best ways to keep these items safe from harm is to purchase a holder that you wear under your clothes. These are available from most luggage stores, AAA, etc. and usually in two styles: with a string to wear around neck or with a strap to wear around your waist.

Make two photocopies of your passport and leave one at home with someone you can easily be in touch with should you lose your passport. Hide the other copy in your luggage, separate from your passport. In addition scan and/or copy all credit cards/ATM cards you carry and leave a copy at home with someone easy to contact and also upload a PDF that you could easily retrieve online if needed. In the unfortunate event you were to lose passport and/or cards, you will be then able to retrieve the information and contact the appropriate agencies.

There is a safety box in your flats so make sure to leave all valuables there, including, most especially, passports. Lastly, do not bring irreplaceable items on this trip. No need for jewelry either.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

Guiding Principles:

- Only pack what you can carry without outside help! Travel light.
- Plan on carrying the luggage with you on board to ensure you and your luggage arrive together.
- Check with your airline for baggage allowances and carry on regulations (particularly in terms of fluids, etc.)
- Only bring what is necessary. You can buy at the supermarket any toiletries you forget and London has also plenty of everything else you may need.
- Dark clothing may be easier to keep clean.
- Technically you only need 2-3 outfits: two for everyday so you can change clothes and one for more dressed up occasions such as going to the Royal Opera House or if you choose to go out at night. Anything else is extra. Remember you don't need to impress anyone. And besides every day we will be in a different place so no one will know you are repeating outfits!
- There is laundry in your flats so you can wash your clothes.
- After you finish packing, pick up your luggage and go up and down a flight of stairs. If you can't do it with ease or if it is cumbersome, rethink your packing until you are self-sufficient. There will be no porters assisting you once you are abroad.
- You are representing your university and your country abroad!

Additional Observations:

- Winter in London is still winter and is cold and could get colder (or warmer.) Plan to dress in layers, have comfortable weatherproof boots and a good outer layer (coat, hat, scarf, and gloves.)

- Sheets however will be provided.
- Plan on bringing something that says UB! A shirt, a hat, etc., so you can take photos for the contest proudly displaying our colors and logo.

Recommended Clothing:

- Warm jacket/parka!!!
- Hat or at least earmuffs!!!
- Scarf!!!
- Gloves!!!
- Socks, long underwear, tights
- Shirts long sleeves, T-shirts, turtlenecks, etc., for under layers
- Sweaters for over layers
- Jeans/long pants
- Shoes/preferably boots, weatherproof because it will be cold and wet, and that are comfortable for extended walking (No high heels please! No dress shoes! at least for our walks/excursions.)
- Re-read the guiding principles above

Personal Care:

- Travel size toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, moisturizer and other creams, etc.)
- Antiperspirant
- Make-up, shaving needs, if needed
- Vitamins, and other medical needs
- If you wear prescription glasses, bring a 2nd pair in case you lose or break your 1st pair.
- Contact lenses and contact solution, and your glasses for when you are not using contacts. Actually, it is best not to travel on a plane with contact lenses on because eyes dry out very much. Use your glasses for the flight instead.

Other Necessities:

- Your UB student ID
- Neck wallet that hangs inside your shirt to hold passport, etc.
- Important addresses and phone numbers for contacting friend and relatives
- Camera
- Small folding umbrella, but then again they sell them in London too and they make a great souvenir
- Prescription medication in original container carried on plane with you. Depending on the prescription you may need a doctors' note to import prescribed drugs or medical equipment in the UK. If in doubt check directly with the UK consulate

***Lastly, it is not how much stuff you bring to London,
but what you take away from being there!***

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

UB Study Abroad Programs

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Fax: +1 716 645-6197
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United States Embassy in London

24 Grosvenor Square
London, W1A 2LQ
United Kingdom
Switchboard from US: 011 44 2074 999000
Direct dial in London: 0207 499-9000

In the case of an emergency involving a U.S. citizen **outside of office hours**, telephone on: 01253 501106 if dialing from the UK; 011 44 1253 501106 if dialing from the U.S.; or International dialing code +44 1253 501106 if dialing from elsewhere.

In the case of an emergency involving a U.S. citizen **during office hours**, you can telephone the Embassy on: 02890-386104 if dialing from the UK; 011 44 2890 386104 if dialing from the U.S.; or International dialing code + 44 2890 386104 if dialing for elsewhere.

Office hours are Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm, except closed on American, British, and Northern Irish holidays. **The above numbers are for emergencies only.**

Police/Fire/Ambulance emergencies in London: 999