GUIDE TO LONDON

FOR

MEMBERS OF THE

COLGATE LONDON STUDY GROUPS

“But, really, I think there ought to be a book, of the laws and customs à-la-mode, presented to all young people, upon their first introduction [to London]”

-from Fanny Burney’s Evelina

OFF-CAMPUS STUDY/INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

201 MCGREGORY HALL

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

1987

REVISED 2008
First written by students in 1987, this guide has been updated a number of times since then with the input of students and faculty. The 1994 revision was made possible through the contributions of Cindy Fartlett, Atif Chauhdry, Tia Kolbaba, Michael Pickholz, Bryan Piskorowski, Mala Popli and Jennifer Proto. The 1995 revision benefited from the contributions of Megan McElroy, Lindsay Rovick and Jordan Vana. The 1999 edition owes a warm thank you to the Fall 1998 London-History Study Group. In 2000, the guide benefited from the contribution of Ray Douglas, and the 2003 edition owes itself to the efforts of Tracy Glass, Stacy Groll, Bret Hopman, Andy McCarthy, Matt Olson and Hayley Ostrager. Kay Traester and Casey Geloneck kindly provided their insights to update the guide in 2004, as did Ray Douglas once again. Mary Acoymo, Chantell Bowman, Emily Colahan, Jon Lopez and Darcy Richardson lent their expertise for the 2005 edition. Though bereft entirely of any expertise (according to themselves), Mike Lynch and Pat Kabat weighed in on the 2006 Spring edition, and Sarah Poulette, Marina Gibbons, Andrea Harrison and Ruthia Yi were kind enough to do so for the Fall edition. In 2008, the Fall 2007 Economics students contributed to updating this guide.

We welcome your suggestions and any new information you may have to bring this guide up to date. The easiest way for us to make revisions is to receive a marked-up copy of the guide. So, if you feel so inclined, make notes and corrections to the guide during your semester in London and return it to the Office of Off-Campus Study/International Programs in 201 McGregory Hall upon your return.

Thanks, in advance, for your help and best wishes for a great semester in London.
PREPARING FOR YOUR SEMESTER ABROAD

DO SOME RESEARCH

The earlier you start thinking about your semester abroad, the more prepared you will be. Begin by looking through as many books, pamphlets, web sites and other sources of literature as you can find. Talk to Colgate students who went on London study groups in the past and take their suggestions too. The 2006 Fall group suggests that students check Facebook groups to see who has gone in recent semesters, because “they’ll probably be willing to share some London love”.

Buy the book – Let’s Go Britain & Ireland. A must – all of the Let’s Go series are extremely helpful! Let’s Go London is especially good. Check out Let’s Go Europe as well if you plan on traveling around Europe. The series is put together by Harvard Student Agencies and includes almost anything a student traveler would need to know. Some students prefer the Lonely Planet series because it is more likely to include “off-the-beaten-path” places to stay, eat and visit. Amazon.com is a wonderful resource for cheap, high-quality tour books. You can even buy them used at reduced prices. It’s a very good idea to get a city map of London, too. (There’s more information on one such guide, A to Z, under the “Arrival” section that comes later in this guide.)

Surf the Web – You can start by heading to the Off-Campus Study home page on the Colgate website (http://offices.colgate.edu/oestudy) for links to information about your London study group and general travel information. Below are some other websites worth checking out.

- www.visitbritain.com – official website of the British Tourist Authority
- www.sta-travel.com – student travel website. On this site you will not only find helpful information, but you will also be able to make flight reservations at student prices if you so desire. STA is known as one of the least expensive travel agencies for students. From this site, or in one of their local offices, you will be able to buy an International Student ID card, also known as an ISIC, and, if you’d like, the International Youth Hostel card and supplemental travel insurance. The ISIC is quite useful to have, as you can often use it to get discounts on lodging, transportation and entrance fees throughout Europe.
- www.londonmaps.co.uk – site where you can buy all kinds of maps and travel/tour books of London. While it’s a good site to check out to have a look at the variety of maps and travel books out there, you should not order from this site, since the prices are in English pounds and you will get a bad exchange rate. The site does, however, include an exceptional reproduction of London historical maps.
- www.londontown.com – all kinds of information on tourism, going out, events, etc.
- http://visitlondon.com – all kinds of information on tourism, going out, events, etc.
- www.thisislondon.co.uk – online version of the London Evening Standard daily newspaper.
- www.timesonline.co.uk – online version of the London newspaper
- www.tube.tfl.gov.uk – everything you need to know about the London Underground. This is much more helpful once you are in the city; it will not make much sense to you before you arrive unless you have prior experience with London.
- www.journeyplanner.org – a great resource for getting directions around London. It includes driving directions, tube routes, bus routes and the user can select the means of transportation that she wants to use.
- www.timeout.com/london – website for the Time Out Guide to London. This is an excellent introduction to the best entertainment/event weekly guide of London. It does not hurt to buy the publication once a week while in the city, too.
- www.sirc.org/publik/pub.html – a guide to British pub etiquette. This site gives meaning and depth to the rich tradition of British pub life (and can help prevent you from making a fool of yourself in the London pub scene).
MAKE A CHECKLIST

There are many things you must do to prepare for your semester before you even step on the airplane. Begin by making a checklist of all the things you need to have before you leave the U.S.:

1. Passport and photocopies of your passport details page.

2. Any visas you may need – see the visa section under “Passport and Visas” below for more information on this.

3. Health insurance, medical and dental care, glasses and contact lenses – Make sure that your medical insurance extends overseas, that you are properly and sufficiently covered, and that you know the procedures for payment/reimbursement. If you have any pre-existing medical conditions, confer with your health-care provider about continuing treatment, prescription drugs, etc., and talk with your study group director as well. Be sure to keep any prescriptions in their original containers so they won’t raise any questions at Customs. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, you should consider taking an extra pair of them with you, as well as a copy of your eyeglass prescription because it is very difficult to get them repaired in the city!

4. International Student Identification Card (ISIC) – This card is internationally accepted and offers students special discounts in most countries in Europe. It is usually accepted as a valid form of identification within Britain and will be useful in proving your student status (a Colgate ID does not always work). Reductions in price will be available at many theaters, cinemas, museums, trains, buses, and more. The ISIC can be purchased from any STA Travel office or from their website. In London you can purchase the ID card at (among other places):

   **Campus Travel**
   77, Grosvenor Gardens,
   London
   SW1W 0AG
   Tel: (020) 7730 3402

   **STA Travel**
   11, Goodge Street,
   London
   W1P 1FE
   [www.statravel.co.uk](http://www.statravel.co.uk)

   **STA Travel**
   85, Shaftesbury Ave.,
   London
   W1P 5DX
   [www.statravel.co.uk](http://www.statravel.co.uk)

   (See website for more locations)

   The card currently costs £7.00 and is well worth the money. You will need the official certification letter stating you are studying abroad (the one with the raised seal) to purchase this in London at STA Travel. Late each fall the IDs for the following year are distributed. So, if you plan on spending an academic year in Europe you will need to purchase two cards at the appropriate times. Your program director might be able to help you apply for it before you leave.

5. Passport Photographs – Bring extra passport-size photographs. When you buy your London Underground Travelcard, student railcard, hostel card and ISIC, you will be required to bring a photograph or two. It is often easier to have a couple made before you leave and to keep them handy. (In case you forget to bring extra passport-size photographs, most airports, the larger train stations and many tube stations have photo machines where you can have pictures made while you wait. The cost is about £3 for four photos.) Local AAA offices in the U.S. offer 2 passport photos for $6.46 if you are a member and $9.50 if not. The Hamilton Post Office does passport photos. Call ahead of time for the hours.

6. Certification Letter from the Colgate Dean of the Faculty’s Office – **It is very important not to forget this letter! Make extra photocopies of it as well!** As mentioned above, it is necessary to show this letter to be able to purchase the ISIC card in London. (Also see note under “Visas” below.)

7. If you use a debit card, call your bank to make sure you will be able to draw on your account from
abroad (most checking accounts are accessible; savings accounts are NOT). Also, **be sure to notify your bank and your credit card companies that you will be abroad for the semester** and that foreign transactions will be appearing on your account(s). If you don’t, the bank/credit card company may think that your account number has been stolen once they start seeing “abnormal” spending patterns and consequently lock down access to your account.

**PASSPORT AND VISAS**

**Passport**

In Europe, your passport will function as your most valuable form of identification, especially when cashing Travelers Cheques and making travel reservations.

Your passport must be valid for the duration of your study group and the time you may plan to remain overseas at the end of the program – **at least**. Some countries require your passport to be valid anywhere from three to six months beyond your intended stay in the country. You should check the requirements of any country you intend to visit.

If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately. Passport agencies are located in most major U.S. cities (expect to wait in line for a while, though). It is also possible to obtain a passport from a federal or state court of record, probate court, or designated U.S. Passport Office (which include some Post Offices. The Hamilton Post Office accepts passport applications from 2-4 p.m. on weekdays. You can go to [http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_830.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_830.html) for information about applying for a passport and the documentation you will need to provide.

The typical processing time for a passport application is six to eight weeks, so make sure that you leave yourself more than enough time to obtain your passport before your scheduled departure. Expedited service is available for an additional fee. If you elect for this service, your application will be processed in three working days from the time it is received at the Passport Agency. Passports are valid for ten years.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Make **at least two photocopies of the first two pages of your passport and keep the copies separate from the passport itself. Leave one copy home and take the other(s) with you, but carried separately from your passport, when you travel. If you should lose your passport, your nearest embassy can process a lost passport application much faster if you can provide a photocopy of the first two pages.**

It is similarly helpful to have photocopies of credit cards and other forms of ID in the event that your wallet is lost or stolen. (This HAS HAPPENED to members of the London study groups in the past, so do take these precautions!) Be sure to keep all photocopies in a safe place though so that they don’t become lost or stolen themselves. Another good idea is to leave anything that you will not need in your travels at home.

**Visas**

U.S. passport holders will **not** need to obtain a visa in advance to study in London for the semester. For study under six months, students obtain a “student visitor visa without prior entry clearance” when they go through Immigration at the airport. Citizens of other countries should check the British Embassy’s website in their home country to determine whether or not they will need to get a visa to participate in the study group. If you are not a U.S. passport holder, you should notify Off-Campus Study/International Programs well in advance of your departure.
However, participants in the Economics study group need visas that allow them to participate in unpaid internships. Set up an appointment with the UK Border Agency (www.ukvisas.gov.uk) or by mail. Many students use an agency, which makes the process easier but costs around $100. You will receive additional information from Off-Campus Study/International Programs in the semester prior to departure. For London Economics students, it is critical to have a passport in hand one semester in advance of your study group since you need a passport in hand in order to apply for the visa.

Almost all European countries do not currently require visas of U.S. passport holders for tourist visits of less than 30 days (Russia and Ukraine both do; visitors to Turkey may obtain a visa on arrival at the airport). If you are planning to travel outside Europe, be aware that some countries do require visas if you’re going to visit, or sometimes even if you’re just planning to transit the country en route to somewhere else. In order to find out if you will need a visa to enter a specific country, go to that country’s embassy website to research their visa requirements. If you do not hold a U.S. passport, take particular care to investigate visa requirements, especially for those countries you will visit on study group field trips.

IMPORTANT: Even if you don’t need a visa to enter Britain, you will need to present the Certification Letter that you receive from the Office of the Dean of the Faculty to immigration officials upon your arrival. (This is the one that says you’re a full-time enrolled student at Colgate and that you’re participating in a Colgate Study Group for the semester.) Therefore, keep this letter on your person when you travel to Great Britain – do not pack it in your checked luggage! Also, always take your Certification Letter with you if you travel outside Great Britain during the semester. You will need to present it to immigration officials each time you re-enter the country. As with your passport, make a copy of your Certification Letter and keep it in a safe place, separate from the original.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Before you leave home, check your insurance policy to make certain that it covers medical care abroad. If you do not have an insurance policy that extends overseas, you can purchase a short-term policy for your trip. STA (address above, under “Do Some Research”) offers this type of policy, as do the firms below. In addition, your current insurer will probably be able to provide you with information about short-term overseas insurance, as can Colgate’s Student Health Center.

**Hinchcliff International**
11 Ascot Place,
Ithaca, NY 14850.
Tel: (607) 257 0100

**Intermedic**
777 3rd Avenue
New York, NY 10017.
Tel: (800) 231 2330

**IAMAT**
736 Center Street
Lewiston, NY 14092.
Tel: (716) 754 4883

In the event you need medical care overseas, keep all medical and prescription bills for your insurance company. Be certain that they are dated and that your name and the treatment received are specified. It is also helpful to note the applicable exchange rate on the day of service.

You may want to ask your health-care provider before you leave if s/he can recommend any doctors in London. Students may also consult with SOS International. Information about SOS has been sent to study group participants and to their parents. Check on the SOS website for more information about the services SOS offers. A few study group members have gone to Dr. Stephen Count on Harley Street (off Oxford Circus) and would recommend him to others.

Before going abroad you might want to stock a few items that you are likely to need. Most American prescription medicines and over-the-counter products are available at “dispensing chemists” (pharmacies) but many product names are different. (Tylenol, for example, is called Panadol in England.) To prevent
the hassle of trying to locate your favorite aspirin, cold medicine or whatever, you may want to bring some of these items along. For prescriptions, it is recommended that you consult with your health-care provider before you leave. Most U.S. prescriptions will not be honored in the U.K. However, a local doctor may write a British prescription either on his or her own diagnosis or on the basis of such proof as an empty bottle or a note from your doctor. Again, it is best that you consult with your health-care provider and your study group director before going abroad if you have a medical condition that will require continued treatment while you are in London.

Unless it is an emergency, it is almost always necessary in Britain to see a general practitioner before seeing a specialist. Most Brits see their chemist (such as at Boots) for minor ailments before they see a physician. Most physician fees are at least £50 for an initial consultation. If you save your receipts, most American insurance companies will reimburse for British medical fees.

**WHAT TO PACK**

On international flights there is a limit of two pieces of luggage and one small carry-on that must be able to fit under the seat in front of you. These must all conform to the size and weight regulations set by the airlines, so make sure you check the regulations of your airline before departing. Remember there are domestic weight limits as well, which are lighter than international limits. When you arrive in the U.S. to make a connecting flight home, you might have to pay for extra weight and/or extra bags, or it is also possible that the airline will not let you board with the extra luggage. These fees generally range from $80-$100, but can be a lot more if your bags are really heavy or if you have several pieces of luggage. Take bags that are lightweight and have wheels.

Most importantly, **pack light**. Most students who have gone on a study group will agree that they packed too much stuff and really only needed a portion of what they brought. Your best bet is to favor clothes that are comfortable, versatile and easy to maintain.

Some suggestions:

- Pack for maximum efficiency. Short- and long-sleeve t-shirts, turtlenecks, and light sweaters are all good because they can be layered and are easy to pack. Do NOT forget a light winter coat, preferably one that is waterproof!

- A weekend bag that is small and lightweight (yet durable) will be useful if you plan to take advantage of the long weekends. Many students find a hiker’s backpack to be useful for traveling on the weekends and during the break. We suggest that you definitely go with the oversized backpack. It is much easier to carry your clothing and other personal items to and from airports, hostels, etc. with everything on your back. Suitcases, even medium-sized ones that roll, often end up being cumbersome and can get damaged or destroyed when traveling.

- Bring dress clothes (or a fewer number that you don’t mind wearing often). Students in London tend to dress casually, but overall Londoners dress up more than Colgaters, so you can use dress clothes just as often as everyday clothes. Do not forget that you will frequent the theater and other formal group gatherings, and will need to be dressed accordingly for those. Occasionally, you may even find it necessary to dress very formally – shirt, jacket and tie for men. **Economics students in particular need to have more dress clothes for their internships.**

- Bring comfortable shoes (dress and everyday). You will do a lot of walking – to class, to the theater, to the Tube, and around the city generally.

- An umbrella, waterproof shoes, and a water-repellent coat are a **must**!
Many people regret packing that heavy winter jacket; a good sturdy raincoat is more versatile. Local fashion would seem to dictate having a functional, light- or even medium-weight wool overcoat.

If you plan to bring a laptop computer or a portable printer, be sure that it is capable of running on either 110v or 220/240v. Most laptops and some portable printers can run on either voltage but it is best to check with the manufacturer before lugging heavy items that you will not be able to use. Having a laptop can make life much easier when you’re writing a paper – especially when the computer labs are busy 24 hours a day near midterms and finals. If you do bring a laptop and/or printer, you’ll need plug adaptors for them, which can be purchased in the U.S. or in London (they’re much easier to find and cheaper to buy in the U.S., though). An international plug adaptor might be helpful if you plan to travel around. Even within Europe, the plugs are different among countries. Normally you can buy one at any international airport.

Whether or not you choose to bring a laptop really depends on the environment in which you prefer to work. For students who do not mind working in the midst of much social activity and flurry in the flats or carrying their laptops to the FSU Centre, and want the versatility of being able to work at any hour of the day or night, laptops are a must-have. Wireless is available throughout the FSU centre for free—the people at the library will help you configure your computer if necessary—and through Acorn in the flats for a reasonable fee. You can print at FSU for free as long as you don’t go over your paper allotment (which is 500 pages – more than enough). There are definitely peak times in the FSU computer labs where computers are often scarce, so you have to be willing to be there either really early or late to guarantee yourself a computer. Ultimately, we suggest that if you have a laptop you should bring it; if not, don’t buy one specifically for this trip. For History students: recent groups highly recommend that you bring a laptop so that you can take it with you to work in the various research archives you will be using throughout the semester.

One final note if you do bring a laptop: laptops are still a popular target for theft, so you need to be careful not only when you’re traveling, but when you leave it in your flat as well. Between other residents and visitors, all sorts of people have access to the buildings you will be living in, so make sure to keep your flat locked when no one is going to be there, and if you’re expecting to have many people coming and going in your flat on particular occasions, best to keep valuables in general put away/out of sight.

Caution: The FSU computers, being much-used by a large number of people, are often heavily virus-ridden. To protect your own machine, avoid downloading files onto your own computer from a CD or disk that has been in one of these appliances. If doing so cannot be avoided, make sure you scan the CD/disk for viruses before saving or opening anything on your own machine. (And of course make sure that your virus protection software is up to date.)

If you plan on using a blow dryer, iron, shaver or any other small electrical appliance during the semester, you are better off just buying an inexpensive one in London rather than bringing your own and buying a converter for it because small appliances tend to blow out with converters/adapters. Boots, a local drug store, has decent hairdryers for £10 or thereabouts. The same goes with shavers. Acorn usually provides an iron and iron board for each flat.

The general consensus is that a Walkman, Discman, MP3 player and/or iPod (and of course the music to go along with it) is a must.

Most flats come with 2 shower towels per person. If you are afraid they might not be enough or the size that you are used to, you can bring towels or buy them in London. If you opt for bringing rather than buying, we recommend you bring only 1 or 2 large towels, 2-3 hand towels, and any wash cloths you plan on using.
You do not need to bring bedding; two sets of bedding will be supplied by Acorn Management.

Portable alarm clock (a battery-powered one that is small enough for weekend travel is best). The smaller, the better. Leave the large, big-numbered ones at home; it will just end up eating away unnecessary space in your luggage. Be efficient! Otherwise, you can just use your cell phone alarm clock.

**Clothing/Accessories Thought to be Essential**

- Book bag
- Clothes that can be easily layered
- Jeans
- Raincoat
- Sweatshirts, hoodies, and light sweaters are indispensable
- Three-prong (U.K.) plug adaptor
- Travel alarm clock
- Umbrella
- Waterproof shoes, such as walking boots
- Walking shoes—nice, comfortable shoes are a MUST. London is definitely a walking city!
- Wool sweater(s)
- A few pictures or things to make your room feel homey

Keep in mind that neither Acorn nor the FSU London Centre has facilities to hold any luggage or parcels for you before the beginning of the semester. If you think you might need to ship some of your personal belongings to London ahead of time so that it’s there when you arrive, or you want to arrive early and travel before the semester begins, check around on the web for both student storage services and the “left luggage” facilities at airports and rail stations. Shipping is very expensive and slow. Make sure to plan ahead. Here’s one site to get you started: [www.excessbaggage.co.uk](http://www.excessbaggage.co.uk).

**TIME AND WEATHER**

**Time Difference**

There is a five-hour difference between the U.K. and the eastern U.S., with the U.S. being behind the U.K. (i.e. when it is 12 noon in London it is 7:00 am in Hamilton). Daylight Savings Time starts the first Sunday in April and ends the last Sunday in October. These dates are sometimes different from the U.S., so there may be brief periods when the eastern U.S. is six hours behind the U.K. To find out the current time in London, or anywhere else in the world, go to the site [www.timeanddate.com](http://www.timeanddate.com). By clicking under the World Clock link, you can receive more details about individual cities, including when they change to and from Daylight Savings Time.

**Climate**

If you are studying in London during the fall, the average highs will be in the 50s in the daytime, and the evening lows will be in the 40s. It will rain regularly, and you will encounter a lot of fog. In all likelihood, you will never see snow. In December, the average temperature is 45 degrees in the day and 38 degrees at night.

If you are studying in London during the spring, you can expect to encounter highs of 45 degrees and lows in the 30s at night early in the semester. In April, though, the temperature can get as high as 58 degrees and as low as 45 degrees. As in the fall, do expect regular rain showers and fog.

**THE MONEY QUESTION**
Money for Arrival

There is no question that you will need money the minute you step off the plane. You can obtain spare cash in English pounds from banks in the U.S. before leaving, but you must request the amount (typically) three weeks in advance. The People's Foreign Exchange in NYC (highly recommended), on the other hand, gives you pounds on the spot for a flat $2.00 fee. They have two locations: 575 5th Avenue and 204 Broadway. Tel: (212) 883-0550 (for both locations).

You can exchange money in any of the London airports; however, the problem with this is that there can sometimes be long lines where you will have to wait while simultaneously trying to guard all your luggage (although the hassle can be diminished if you use the buddy system and make sure your luggage is always attended to). In addition, airport concessionaire exchanges charge an inordinately large commission compared to AmEx or most High Street banks. If you have to exchange money at the airport, the Travelex offices will usually have the slightly better rates, and if you show your ISIC card they will exchange it for free. Avoid Thomas Cook like the plague. Overall, avoid exchanging money in airports or large train stations.

If you do opt to convert cash, the best way to go is to exchange money together with friends. That way you will only have to pay one service charge, instead of everyone paying individually. Most places that exchange money will also take credit cards. You may want to consider going that route if you feel uncomfortable carrying around a large amount of cash when you’re traveling, but keep in mind that it will show up as a cash advance on your credit card, and those are charged at a much higher interest rate than regular purchases.

When exchanging money in the city centre, the exchange booth on the second floor of Marks & Spencer’s supermarket in Oxford Street, ten minutes’ walk from FSU, has typically offered better rates and lower commissions than the banks.

Caution: Because of the high number of counterfeit notes in circulation, many British and European bureaux de change are leery of accepting $100 bills. Fifties and twenties normally have no problems. Do not bring a lot of American dollars to London as you are more apt to loose them and will have high transaction costs when exchanging.

You may wish to forego exchanging money completely by withdrawing British pounds from an ATM. The best way to get money is to use a debit or credit card. Not only are you going to get the best exchange rate, you do not need to carry large amounts of money around. If you can, find a bank that has low or no withdrawal fees. Many banks in London do not charge withdrawal fees. Bank of America only charges 1% for withdrawals (this is cheap).

The consensus among past study group members is that the easiest thing to do is to get money out of an ATM once you arrive in the London airport. The one possible hitch with this is that if for some reason your ATM card does not work properly, you need to have a back-up option.

START SAVING MONEY IMMEDIATELY. London is very expensive.

Banking/Obtaining Cash during the Semester

You can choose to handle your money one of four ways in London: using ATMs, using Travelers Cheques, using an American Express card, or opening a bank account.

**ATMs were the best way we found for most financial situations.** There is at least one on almost every block of the city. Be sure your ATM card is on a checking, not a savings account, since ATM cards with just savings were rejected by nearly all ATM machines. Any card on the Plus or Cirrus networks that
draws on a checking account can usually be used throughout Western Europe. The great advantage of obtaining local currency via an ATM, apart from the convenience (there are banks all over London with ATMs), is that you will obtain the “interbank” exchange rate – what the banks charge each other – rather than the “tourist” rate, which is significantly worse. Most banks charge a fee of around £1 per transaction, so you’re better off always withdrawing the maximum allowable on each occasion. Transactions at Barclay machines are usually free, though your own bank will also probably load on a charge of a few dollars per withdrawal. DO be careful when entering your PIN that others do not see it, as with it they can access your account, sometimes without even getting a hold of your card. Most European ATMs only take 4-digit PINs, so you might have to change your PIN if yours has more. Do not, however, rely solely on an ATM card. Occasionally, cards will not work in certain countries or in certain machines because the system and/or the card are outdated or incompatible with each other. The network has also been known to crash from time to time, sometimes for days. Furthermore, if you lose your card, or the magnetic strip becomes damaged or degraded, it can be almost impossible for you to obtain a replacement without returning to the U.S. Especially when traveling beyond London, using Travelers Cheques is the most reliable option.

Some short-term visitors to London (i.e. friends, parents, significant others who visit) may be better off carrying Travelers Cheques, and spending them as needed. Get Travelers Cheques in varied amounts (hundreds and fifties are best), since sometimes you will only want to exchange a little bit of money into a foreign currency. If you exchange too much and then have to change it again either back into dollars or into another currency, you will lose a lot of money in service fees. It is usually fruitless trying to speculate against the exchange rate; the gains and losses are likely to be small and exchange rates are notoriously difficult to predict. Travelers Cheques, though, are the best option along with ATM machines. If you do buy Travelers Cheques, photocopy them or write down each cheque number and denomination in case they get lost or stolen. Keep those records in a safe place, and make sure your family has a record of them being purchased back in the United States in case anything should happen. AAA offices will typically provide you with the best exchange rate; they now issue Visa Travelers Cheques instead of American Express.

If you want to withdraw cash, we suggest you only use an American Express card as a last resort. Its advantage is that you can usually withdraw money as needed in amounts that depend on whether the card is green or gold and whether it is your own or your family’s; however, it’s a pretty costly way of getting money. There is an administration fee of around 2.5%, and interest at the usual outrageous rate is charged from the moment of your withdrawal rather than from the end of the billing period (as is usually the case with purchases). Using other cards, such as Visa or MasterCard, for cash withdrawals can be expensive as well. Our suggestion is to use credit cards for major purchases because you usually get quite a good exchange rate (like with an ATM card), but not for getting cash. Also bear in mind that both Visa and MasterCard have begun imposing a conversion fee of up to 3% on purchases made outside the U.S. Make sure that somebody at home is making the payments on time – late fees add up quickly, and the higher your unpaid balance, the more you are paying in interest fees.

Most students have difficulty starting an account in London because banks believe that six months is too short a period to do all the paperwork, etc. and make a profit. It is especially hard to do – and therefore not recommended because we are students. Before opening an account, you must have a permanent address in London. Most banks require a copy of a phone or utility bill with your name on it as proof of that address (neither of which will be readily available to you.) You will also need a personal reference. It is easiest to use as a reference someone who has an account in the particular bank in which you wish to open an account. For students who have been able to clear these hurdles, Barclays and Lloyd’s have been the most popular banks to work with.

In an Emergency

Money can be wired from the U.S. to a U.K. Post Office (Money Bank). Up to £500 can be sent at a cost of about $25. The money order will then arrive in pounds and can be cashed right in the Post Office.
Western Union also has offices in Britain: see the Golden Pages (local version of the Yellow Pages) for the nearest branch.

There is also something relatively new offered by AAA called a Cash Passport. It is a Visa card that can be purchased at an AAA office or on the Internet and mailed safely overseas because it requires a PIN and password to activate (which your parents can tell you if they are the ones that buy it). It operates like a gift card; that is, you start with a fixed amount of money on the card and the remaining balance declines as you make purchases. The card can be set up so that it is attached to a bank account and more money can be added to the card from that account via the Internet or a toll-free phone call. Go to www.aaa.com and look up AAA Travel Money for more information.

**Planning a Budget: Typical Costs**

It is almost impossible to judge in advance what your costs in London will be. Although each student receives a cost estimate of expenses for his/her study group based on the reported expenditures of participants in last year’s group, fluctuations in exchange rates and changes in the British cost-of-living can drive those estimates off the mark. The best advice, then, is to be careful in your spending. The current exchange rate is hovering around $2.00 per pound (as of May 2008). The cost of living in London is higher than in most American cities, and certainly a good deal higher than in Hamilton, so you are going to need more money for the semester than you would on campus.

**Books**

Check with the study group director to see what books will be required for the semester and where s/he suggests that you buy them. Books are rather more expensive in London than in the U.S. Whether it is better to buy and carry books to and from London or to just buy them there is a matter for each person to decide. Sending books by first-class mail is very expensive. Sending them surface mail can take six or more weeks, and is only a little less exorbitantly-priced. If buying in London, don’t overlook the used book stores on Charing Cross Road – they have lots of good, resourceful books! Some popular book stores you might want to check out:

- **Foyle’s** – Charing Cross Road
- **Book Warehouse**—Charing Cross Road (much smaller selection but quite cheap)
- **Borders** – Charing Cross Road and Oxford Street
- **Waterstones** – Charing Cross Road & Gower Street; smaller branches throughout the city

It may be the case that your director provides you with the titles of the required books over the summer (for fall programs) or winter break (for spring programs) so that you may purchase them new or used online in advance. While carrying the books over to London will weigh down your luggage, it may be worth the extra weight to save yourself the money. Some directors also make use of Blackboard or Internet sites for some of the course materials, which makes life a lot easier and prevents your luggage from being overloaded with textbooks.

**E-mail**

You have two options for communicating via e-mail: establish an ISP account with your own computer, or use public computers.

Most students on recent groups have felt that setting up an ISP account was more trouble than it was worth. It was too inconvenient, pricey, and unnecessary with the computers (with Internet access) at the FSU Centre only 10-15 min. away. We recommend that you save yourself the money and keep your Internet/email usage to the FSU computers. Use your laptop for writing papers and working in your flat. It is, however, easy to hook your laptop up to the FSU network in adjacent study rooms to the computer labs. The only downside to this is having to carry the laptop to and from the Centre, especially during full days of classes, sightseeing, and library research.
For those who wish to endure the hassle of setting up an ISP, one option is to purchase dial-up from AOL UK for about £20 per month (that everyone in the flat can share if you choose). It is slower but allows Internet access without going to FSU. Demon Internet is cheaper (£11.99/month, 30-day free trial) and their tech support is considered by some study groupers to be more helpful than AOL. Most people just prefer to rely on desktops at the FSU centre for the email and Internet access.

If you do not bring a laptop with you, there are two options: the FSU computer lab and Internet cafés. The availability of internet-accessible computers in London, and across Europe, once a nightmare, has become infinitely easier (and cheaper) with the opening of a chain of massive Internet cafés called easyInternetcafé (http://www.easyeverything.com/map/lon.html). Each of these establishments contains 400-500 machines; charges vary according to the time of day, the most expensive period being early afternoons. Typically, £1 will buy you an hour’s use, but rates can vary depending on how busy the place is. All are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or darn well close to it. Some of their locations in London are:

- 9-16, Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 1BQ (Tottenham Court Road tube, exit 2)
- 358, Oxford St., London W1N 9AG (Bond Street tube)
- 456-459, Strand, London WC2R 0RG (Trafalgar Square end) (Charing Cross tube)
- 160-166, Kensington High St., London W8 7RG (High Street Kensington tube)

easyInternet no longer hold the monopoly on cheap Internet access, though. Internet Lounge on Tottenham Court Road, W1 (opposite the Astoria) was last seen to be offering a price of £1 for two hours.

Entertainment
Expenditures in these categories need to be budgeted in advance. Theater tickets, for example, once cheap by U.S. standards, are now comparable to those in New York. Often, however, one can find student “concessions” and there is a half price kiosk at the south end of Leicester Square open from 2 p.m. for the evening of the performance. The kiosk opens at 10 a.m. for matinées. Many theaters offer special last-minute deals for students. If you have a student card and show up half an hour before curtain, they will sell you whatever tickets they have left at half price. It might be worth looking into any particular shows you are interested in early in the semester because you might not be able to get tickets for a month or more. For movies, most cinemas offer student discounts for Monday screenings on presentation of an ISIC.

To estimate your budget for other types of entertainment, refer to Time Out London (http://www.timeout.com/london/) or a travel guide such as Let’s Go London for information on various things to do in London and their associated costs. Those publications will provide much more information than can be listed here.

Food
Most supermarkets offer more moderate prices than small, private shops. The largest are Sainsbury and Tesco (a few others that you might see on occasion are Safeway, Waitrose, Somerfield, Budgen’s, and Asda). It is most convenient to purchase groceries from Waitrose as it is the closest. The food at Waitrose is of higher quality than Sainsbury’s and other grocery stores, but it is also more expensive as well. If money is tight, one can go to the Sainsbury’s, but it is about an additional 10 to 15 minute walk from the where you will be living. One distinction to make, however, is that the city centre Sainsbury’s Local and Tesco Metro chains have much less of a variety or selection of foods than the bigger superstores, and charge more for the same items. Most food brands found in the U.S. are available in London. Sometimes foods have different names (e.g. zucchini = courgettes, turnips = swedes, eggplants = aubergines, rocket = arrugula). Check out the street markets for fresh fruits and vegetables. Street markets such as Leather Lane (located on Leather Lane, EC1N, open M–F 10 am – 3 pm, closest Tube station: Chancery Lane/Farringdon) offer snacks, fruits, smoothies, and other practical foods at VERY low prices (but it is still nice quality).
For those preferring a large superstore, the nearest one to the city centre is the big Sainsbury’s on Wilton Road, three minutes’ walk from Victoria Station. This one offers an excellent selection of cooked food to take away. If you should need a 24-hour supermarket, there’s an enormous Tesco at the corner of West Cromwell Road and Warwick Road (West Kensington or Earl’s Court tubes).

London, like any major city, has a wide array of organic food stores (Planet Organic, Alara Whole Foods), ethnic food stores (e.g. Indian, Caribbean, Korean, Chinese), and other specialty shops. Have fun looking for them online or on your own as you explore London.

Everyone should be aware of how expensive dining out can be. Even fish and chips can cost the equivalent of more than $10 or so per person. Students may want to do everything possible to cook their own meals, which, while certainly less expensive than eating out, will nonetheless cost a bit more than doing the same thing in the U.S. Pasta, Sainsbury’s low-fat T.V. dinners, and fresh veggies and fruits were the major staples of recent groups. Most people cook on their own or with the rest of their flat—it’s cheaper and can be fun! Potlucks with other flats are a great idea too.

Mail
In case your semester abroad spurs you to revive the lost art of “snail-mail” letter writing, an air-mail postcard and letter costs more than 50p; an air-mail letter stamp (20g/⅓ oz.) more than 72p; a first-class stamp (10g) within Britain more than 32p and to the continent more than 44p. Air-mail to and from the U.S. takes a minimum of four days, more typically a week. (And sometimes it can take a lot more if there is a post office strike going on). Packages can take quite a while to arrive to you in the city. Make sure that whoever is sending you a package from the U.S. declares everything enclosed as “personal items needed” and not other bizarre and/or unnecessary classifications. If other descriptions are used or something is poorly or unclearly worded, the package will get sent through Customs, and you will have to take the Tube to the far outskirts of the city to retrieve it and end up paying for its delivery – sometimes in excess of £30 – and also whatever duty the Customs people choose to impose. (Cautionary tale: a recent Director’s Colgate-owned laptop died in the middle of the semester. ITS shipped him a replacement machine for the remaining six weeks of his stay, and innocently put down its value on the customs form as $1,000. Although the computer was being taken back to the U.S. only weeks later, Customs refused to release it until they were paid a duty of £165, based on the declared value.) You will also end up waiting another 3-5 weeks to actually receive the package in the first place. During the semester have all packages sent to FSU and not your flat, because the delivery person will not leave a package in the front hall or at the door of your flat if you are not there. Do not have packages sent to you at the FSU London Centre before you arrive for the semester though. The Office of Off-Campus Study will give you your address in London before you leave.

Phone
The direct-dial access code to call the U.S. from the U.K. is 001, followed by the area code and number.

To call the U.K. from the U.S., dial 011 44 and then the number, ignoring the first “0” in the area code of the number (011 is to get an international line and 44 is the country code for the U.K.)

Thanks to deregulation, telephone calls to the U.S. can now be made ridiculously cheaply – as low as 8p per minute, without time restrictions. The best rates are obtained using prepaid telephone cards, a bewildering array of which can be found on sale at any newsagent, and there are some that you can purchase in the U.S. to use abroad. These may be used at any touch-tone phone by dialing a free (0800) number and entering the identification number printed on the card. Some of them, however, have nasty catches such as additional access charges concealed in the small print, so read the details before you buy the card. The best cards to get for calls to the U.S. are First National, America First, Eurocity Cards and Pay for Peanuts, which do not incur access charges. They may also be used for making domestic or local calls. The greater the denomination of the card you buy, the more bonus minutes you get.
Caution: pre-paid telephone cards from no-name companies offering unbelievably cheap rates are usually a rip-off. If you buy them, you’ll find that the 0800 access number is always busy or unobtainable.

If you choose to buy a cell phone (mobile) for the semester, check out a store called The Link on the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street. Students have also had luck with Orange and O2 services. If you go in a large enough group, they will give you a better discount! Opt for “Top-Up” or another pay-as-you-go plan rather than contract. You are better off buying a phone once you are in London, since most American cell phones do not operate on the same frequency that is used in the UK and Europe.

Most students do buy mobiles. They are not only convenient for meeting up with friends, but also a good safety precaution in case you are traveling around the city and need help or end up lost. You can purchase a decent but simple one for $60-$75 typically, depending on where you go and what type of discount you can get. “Top-Up” is definitely still the way to go for all cell phone services (Link, O2, Orange, etc.). We have not encountered any other plans that are better or more convenient. Check with people who have gone on recent trips to see if they’ll give or sell their phones to you.

Transportation
Walk whenever you can! It saves money, allows you to see more of the city, and is great exercise.

The Underground (Tube) and buses are very convenient and will prove to be most useful during your stay in London. Depending on the zones you need, the price will vary. See the Tube website for prices (www.tube.tfl.gov.uk). It is very advantageous to buy an Oystercard, a travel pass for public transportation. For a small one-time fee (currently £5 for students), it gives discounted fares for Tube and Bus. You can buy it in weekly, monthly, or pay-as-you-go (recommended). Oystercards save fumble-time for change in buses and you need not wait in line to purchase tickets on the Underground. A Zone 1 pass should meet most of your transportation needs. (Members of the History Study Group, though, should remember that the Public Record Office is in zone 3, and the Newspaper Library at Colindale in zone 4.) With this pass you can use the underground, buses and suburban trains in Zone 1 as often as you like. If you go out of your zone, you will simply need to pay an add-on fare at the ticket counter. Be sure to get an extension before going out of your zone, as a £10 on-the-spot fine will be imposed if you are found traveling without a valid ticket for the whole of your journey.

The suburban rail system is often overlooked by students, but depending on your route (especially if you’re travelling south of the River Thames) can be a real time-saver.

Buses are a cheaper and more scenic, though usually considerably slower, way of getting around the city. The system is intimidating at first, but maps are available online and bus stops themselves give detailed information as to where the lines go. While the Tube stops running a little after midnight, there are buses that operate all night; most of these originate in Trafalgar Square. There are very few buses, though, that go all the way across London, and on very long journeys two or even three changes may be necessary. There is a flat charge of £1.50, with tickets needing to be bought at the street vending machines before you board. You are allowed an unlimited number of transfers for up to 60 minutes from the time of purchase. One-day Travelcards are valid on the ‘buses up to 04:00 the following morning.

Travel
Travel to and on the continent is reasonable by both air and train (also see the section titled “Travel” below for additional information). Shop around a bit for deals online before you settle on anything. More and more students have concluded that getting Eurail Passes simply are not worth the expense. Depending on your itinerary, you might be able to save money by just getting a train pass for whichever country or countries you’re going to. If you do decide to get a Eurail Pass, some things to keep in mind are:

1. It is not valid in the U.K.; only in Ireland and the Continent.
2. Make sure you allot enough time before your first journey with the Eurail Pass to get your pass validated. It must be validated (stamped with approval/validation) the first day you plan to use it. Do not get it stamped beforehand because you will start the clock running on your pass the day it is validated.

3. There are many different passes you can buy that are valid for various lengths of time and that cover different countries, so decide your travel itinerary beforehand and buy your pass accordingly. Remember, if your plans change partway through your trip and you decide to go to another country, your Eurail Pass may not be valid for your new itinerary, and you may have to buy a supplemental pass.

4. It is generally much less expensive to buy your pass before you leave for the U.K. as opposed to buying it once you’re in London.

5. When flying, make sure to check where the flight is leaving from. Most of the cheap flights are from airports outside of London and require a bit of time to get to. This is also true airports you are flying to. Make sure you work out the details of your entire trip, specifically how you get to and from airports.

6. Check discounts available with different student cards. STA Travel near the Russell Square tube sells ID cards that give you discounts on tickets.

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**ONCE YOU’RE IN LONDON**

**ARRIVAL**

For a newcomer, London can be a bewildering place. Assume you have just arrived in Heathrow* around 8 a.m. You have gone through the entry halls, through passport control, and bypassed baggage inspection because you have followed the sign for those with “Nothing to Declare.” Now you may need to change some money. You stop at an ATM or change a Travelers Cheque (maybe £100) in the airport on your way out. Here are some of your options for getting to the Acorn office to pick up your keys and on to your flat:

**Coach:** The once-popular “Airbus” express service to Euston station has been discontinued; in its place National Express now runs one to Victoria, on a somewhat erratic schedule. No longer especially cheap (£10 o/w, £18 r/t); with a lot of baggage it’s not very practical; and you still have to get from the rail station to the Acorn office and your flat. Can take 40 mins to 1 hr.

**Heathrow Express:** (£14.50 o/w, £28 r/t) There are trains every 15 mins and the journey takes about 15–20 mins. Fastest way into London, but it brings you to Paddington station on the west side of the city, so you still have to get to where you’re going from there. The Express is impractical and unrealistic for anyone arriving in the city for the first time, but you may want to use it for weekend or holiday travel during the semester. For online ticket purchases, saver fares and timetables: [http://www.heathrowexpress.com/](http://www.heathrowexpress.com/). If you’ve got time to spare, a train service called Heathrow Connect that stops at several stations en route to Paddington is cheaper at £9.50 each way.

**Taxis:** Really convenient but costly (£60). This is the best option for those concerned with carrying and keeping track of luggage. If you travel with 1 or 2 other people, the price is more reasonable. The taxi driver will be able to take you directly to get your keys at the Acorn office and then to your flat, which makes life a LOT easier on your first day in the city. **Note: Use licensed black taxis only! Don’t take gypsy cabs!** They account for a lot of thefts and sexual assaults – you don’t know
who you’re riding with. **HoteLink: (strongly recommended)** is a van service in the airport. If you’re traveling with a group, this might be the easiest option. For a reasonable per person fee (about the cost of the Heathrow Express), these vans will take a group from airport to flat.

**Tube:** Hard to get around with luggage – lots of stairs, it can be crowded, and being jet-lagged will not help your ability to decipher the at-first complex tube map – but it is the cheapest of the lot (£4.00 o/w) and, at 55 minutes’ journey-time, probably the fastest to get you all the way into the city. If you feel adventurous and can carry everything you brought, this option can save you money. Take the Piccadilly Line to Russell Square, then walk a short distance to the Acorn Office to pick up your keys.

*Most students agree that it is easiest to fly into Heathrow when you arrive.*

You must be able to locate yourself in the city. The best resources for getting around London and familiarizing yourself with the streets are the London classified maps published in book form and generically known as **A to Z** (pronounced “A to Zed”). The book of maps is much easier to consult than a big, fold-out accordion map. The spiral-bound book holds up well, too; it does not lose pages or start to fall apart at the folds. Even London cab drivers will be carrying some form of **A to Z**, so do not think that having one will automatically classify you as a tourist. Carrying large, bulky maps with you on the street, however, will make you conspicuous and more vulnerable immediately. The light, small size of the **A to Z** makes a whole lot more sensible to carry around with you on a daily basis.

You will also immediately need a Tube map. Get used to using the Tube and locating which line is best to take early on; do not depend on other students or flatmates to know where they are going and just blindly follow them. This will only make life difficult for you later on. Save yourself the aggravation, and master this very easy-to-understand transportation system as soon as possible. You can ask for the map at most ticket counters in Tube stations; these are small and can easily be folded to fit into your Travelcard holder for quick access. You can also get Tube and bus maps and schedule information online from London Transport (see website above).

**APARTMENTS**

In recent semesters, the flats have typically accommodated five to seven students. They have been located in the district called Farringdon, to the east of Bloomsbury. Each apartment has a kitchen, a living room with color TV and one or two full bathrooms. The kitchens come equipped with basic cook- and dinnerware, but not a lot of each one. The flats are cleaned weekly, and linens are provided. Heat, electricity, appliances and other normal conveniences are also included. The flats have wireless internet access for a reasonable fee (through Acorn).

Apartments are normally available three or four days before classes begin, and must be vacated three or four days after classes end. The Office of Off-Campus Study will notify you of your address over the summer if you’re on a fall study group and usually before the end of final exams in the fall if you are on a spring study group. It would be helpful if you could coordinate your arrival plans with your study group director and the people you will be living with.

Once you arrive in London, take the tube, a cab, or any other appropriate means of transportation to the address below, you can pick up your flat key:

Acorn Office
19, Bedford Place,
London WC1B 5JA.
If you take a cab, you might want to ask the driver to wait, as you should have your key in a matter of moments – the office is within walking distance of the flats. The office is staffed 24 hours a day. If you need to call, the number is (020) 7693 5368.

A mandatory housing orientation meeting will be held a day or so before classes begin. In this meeting, you will learn the “house rules” and how to contact Acorn Management for repairs.

**NB: On your departure, Acorn Management will inspect the apartments. Any damages will initially be billed to, and paid by, Colgate. Colgate will then bill the damage costs out to the residents of the apartment. Any damages to common areas, unless claimed by the individual(s) causing the damage, will be split evenly among all study group participants.**

**CLASSROOMS**

Classes will be held in the Florida State University London Study Centre. The address is:

Florida State University,
London Study Centre,
99-103, Great Russell Street,
London WC1B 3LA.

There are four levels to the FSU Centre, with regular-sized windowed classrooms on each floor, each equipped with appropriate desks, blackboards, and technological capabilities. The rooms tend to get hot during classes, so dress in layers whenever possible. There are two main computer labs in the basement available to use 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You will need to swipe your student ID card (either your photo will be taken at the start of the semester by the FSU staff and made into an ID necklace or you will have to submit a photo to Off-Campus Study in the semester prior to the study group so that they can send it to FSU for the ID necklace to be made prior to your arrival) each time you enter the building or either computer lab, so always keep your ID handy and in a safe location. The staff requires you to present your ID by wearing it around your neck whenever inside the FSU building.

There is also a study lounge in the basement with a soda machine and TV as well as a small but useful lending library with books on a variety of British-related subjects. Many have been donated by past members of U.S. study groups to London, and students are highly encouraged to donate unwanted books to FSU at the end of the semester. It saves you additional room in your suitcases and allows others to benefit from the resources. Bathrooms are located throughout the Centre and are easily accessible.

The FSU Centre is very centrally located in the heart of London, literally a block away from the British Museum and the same distance from the Tottenham Court Road tube stop. Many students walk to and from class each day; London is such a walking city, and the more of it you can see by foot, the better your experience there will be.

**CLUBS AND PUBS**

- China White
- Fabric – Usually has a £12 cover charge. Investigate the DJs before you go so you know what kind of music you’ll be hearing.
- The Goose (located on Leather Lane).
J.D. Wetherspoon – casual, cheap chain pubs with a full menu and constant drink specials. Especially recommended: Printworks on Farringdon Road
Long Island Iced Tea Shop (1, Upper St Martin's Lane, Covent Garden, WC2H 9EA) – Cocktail bar & nightclub
MoMo’s (5-27, Heddon Street, Mayfair, LONDON, W1B 4BH) – Moroccan restaurant
The Pint Pot (183, Tottenham Court Road, W1T 7PE)
The Queen’s Head (13, Brook Green, Hammersmith, LONDON, W6 7BL)
The Roadhouse (35, The Piazza, Covent Garden, WC2E 8BE).
U. of London Student Union – The Jeremy Bentham (Pub) (31 University Street, Euston, WC1E 6JL)
Walkabout, also a chain pub/club
The White Horse on Parson’s Green (1-3, Parsons Green, Fulham, SW6 4UL) – a bit of a tube ride, but the real ale is worth the trip.
Ye Old Cheshire Cheese (145, Fleet Street, EC4A 2BU, by the Holborn tube station) – has been around since before the Great Fire of London (1666) and has excellent traditional English food at very reasonable prices.
Ye Old Mitre (1, Ely Court, off Ely Place, EC1N 6SJ) – traditional, rich history, great food and ale.
Ministry of Sound – similar to Fabric. Highly recommended!
NYT – a small hip-hop club just off of Leicester Square
Champagne Bar (top floor of Harvey Nichols’ department store in Knightsbridge)

A few notes: Pubs are great for cheap dinners out. Many clubs have a cover charge after 10pm, but are free before that. Check the ZagOuts Night Club Guide for more club listings and info.

Leicester Square and the surrounding area is always full of prowling promoters who offer good deals to get into the nearby clubs (which tend to be cheesy and touristy, but always a sure thing). Angel is another hip area, boasting a lot of cool pubs.

CULTURAL EVENTS

You can check any guidebooks you’ve brought (Let’s Go London, Lonely Planet, etc.) for information on the bigger, recurring events that take place in London and look in Time Out (£1.50) to find out what entertainment is available in and around the city from week to week. Then again, most of the information contained in these publications can be obtained more cheaply in The Guide, provided free with the Guardian newspaper on Saturdays, or ES, given away with Friday evening’s edition of the Evening Standard. A few events to be on the lookout for are Carnival (end of August in Notting Hill), and all of the markets (Portobello, Covent Garden, and Spitalfields) are great all year round and have special events to watch for. Many of the holiday-related events are fabulous as well!

The website http://www.londonfreelist.com/home.asp lists all kinds of free events and attractions taking place in London. (Okay, so actually they also list things that cost up to £3, but come on – for London that’s practically free.)

Another freebie tip: on Sunday evenings The Green (bar & restaurant that is located near the student flats at 29, Clerkenwell Green) has been doing free screenings of indie films, shorts, and sometimes old films.

EATING OUT

Brick Lane Brasserie (67, Brick Lane).
Ecco pizza joints (there’s Ecco Holborn, 186, Drury Lane, WC2; and Ecco Victoria, 40, Strutton Ground, SW1) – great pizza and great prices.
Exotica (7, Villers Street Strand, in Covent Garden area) – Very reasonably priced ethnic food.
The Forum Café (8-10, Cooper’s Row, The City, EC3N 2BQ) – Italian restaurant.
The Gaucho Grill (125-126, Chancery Lane, Holborn, WC2A) – Argentinian restaurant.
New Picadilly (8, Denman Street, W1) – Not feeling like Starbucks or Bewleys? Check out this old-school coffee shop.
The Brunswick – A number of great restaurants, all in the same plaza – across from the Russell Square tube stop.
Pizza Express – They even have great desserts! All over town.
Caffè Nero – tasty, cheap alternative to Starbucks. Plenty of these too.
Prêt à Manger – a chain of quality take-away sandwiches and snacks.
Wagamama noodle bar (4, Streatham St., WC1) – an awesome, popular Japanese noodle bar worth trying; get take out to save money.
Any Italian restaurant in Soho, though the standard of food often isn’t that great.
Kebab places abound (about one per block) – try it!
All of the restaurants in and around Exmouth Market (esp. Smith’s of Smithfield, Pride of Siam, St. John).
The little sandwich shops/panini places – great for a lunch or a late breakfast; can be found all over the place.
Ginnan, on Rosebery Ave, has an all-you-can-eat sushi buffet Mondays and student concessions.
PUBS!! (See previous section.)
To-go specials and sandwiches from local markets, Sainsbury’s, and other small food stores.
Hotels also offer fancier and pricier meals – perfect for when the parents come to visit, etc.
Just wander around, some of the best places are off the beaten track and spur of the moment

Check out [http://www.toptable.co.uk](http://www.toptable.co.uk/) for information on and special deals for London restaurants (other UK cities available too).

**HEALTH CLUBS**

- Central YMCA – down the street from FSU on Great Russell Street. It costs about £140 for a semester-long membership. Apart from the convenience, the big attraction is the swimming pool.
- Oasis – High Holborn Street, also close to the FSU centre.
- L.A. Fitness – the centre by Chancery Lane closed in 2005, but there is still one by Holborn which is large, has plenty of machines and a pool, and offers special fall membership deals (i.e. pay for 2 months’ membership, get the 3rd free). Here, you will spend £75 max.
- UCL Gym-Bloomsbury. Monthly memberships are pretty cheap.
- Pineapple Dance Studio (can pay per class instead of buying a membership).
- Fitness First – conveniently located near the Russell Square tube stop, on Marchmont street across from the Brunswick. Between the FSU building and the Burton St flats. Constantly running specials, especially for students. Coram Street; Bloomsbury; London; WC1N 1HB

Take your time picking a health club. You’ll want to consider where the gym is located, who you like to work out with, and how much it will cost. Take at least a week or two feeling out the city before you settle in on one club. Decisions are final and the cost is substantial. Also check to see if any clubs are offering special deals like the three months for the price of two mentioned above, or even two memberships for the price of one (as has happened in the past). Watch the street for deals and fliers for local gyms.

**HOMESICKNESS CURES**

- Burger King
- McDonald’s
- Pizza Hut
- Sports Café (Haymarket, SW1) – Has NFL, NHL and some college games live.
- Subway – pay special attention for the sub of the day, and the guys on the street handing out coupons
- TGIFriday’s
- Starbucks

Warning: Fast food in Europe is not like fast food at home. Something tastes different… Try at your own risk.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES

Emergency
For ambulances, police, fire department: dial 999
(This call is free from all phones.)

U.S. Embassy
24, Grosvenor Square,
London W1A 1AE.
Tel: (020) 7499 9000
Tube: Bond Street or Marble Arch
Open Monday – Friday
9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Rape Crisis Centres
Watford Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre (women)
149 The Parade Watford Hertfordshire WD17 1RH
01923 674674 Helpline
www.wrc-info.org

Survivors UK (men)
12A Evelyn Court, Grinstead Road, LONDON, SE8 5AD
Helpline 0845 122 1201

City of London Information Centre
St. Pauls Churchyard, London, EC4M 8BX
Tel: 020 7332 1456

Hospital
In an emergency you will be treated free of charge in the Accident & Emergency (A&E) ward (i.e. emergency room). You will have to pay for routine medical care, however. Cromwell Hospital at the corner of Cromwell Road and Marlowes Road, W14, is an American hospital.
+44 (0)20 7460 2000

Pharmacies (Chemists)
Every Police Station has an emergency list of chemists and doctors in the area. Some chemists have longer hours:

- Boots (equivalent to Kinney’s)
  Locations throughout the city
  Most are open Mon – Sat, 9 am – 8 pm
- Zafash Pharmacy
  233-235, Old Brompton Road,
  London SW5 0EA.
  Open 24 hours (only one in London)
Police Stations

Police Headquarters
New Scotland Yard
Broadway and Victoria Street, London SW1H 0BG
Tel: (020) 7230 1212
Tube: St. James’ Park

Snow Hill Police Station
5 Snow Hill, London, EC1A 2DP
Tel: (020) 7601 2406

Emergency Number: 999

Samaritans (Support services to anyone in crisis)
46, Marshall Street, London W1F 9BF
Phone: 020 7734 2800 (Phones are staffed 9 am – 9 pm)
London branch website: http://www.samaritans.org/cls/index.html
Main Samaritans website: http://www.samaritans.org.uk/

RELIGIOUS FACILITIES

Nearly all religious denominations are represented somewhere in London. Look online to find local places of worship if you wish to attend services during the semester.

Synagogues in London:
The New West End Synagogue: www.newwestend.org.uk/
The New London Synagogue: www.newlondon.org.uk/

Mosques in London:
East London Mosque: www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/

RESEARCH FACILITIES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- Charing Cross Reference Library (4, Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0HF)
  http://www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/findalibrary/charing.cfm
- City of Westminster Archives Centre (10, St Ann’s Street, SW1P 2DE)
  http://www.westminster.gov.uk/archives/
- Guildhall Library (Aldermanbury, EC2P 2EJ) – an amazing resource for all subjects. Most students agree that this library was the easiest to use and most reliable for all the research projects and papers they had. The reference libraries and archives there are remarkably helpful. The library itself is also very close by the Bank tube stop. Information on the library accessible through http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/
- London Metropolitan Archives Library (Formerly Greater London Record Office) (40, Northampton Road, Clerkenwell, EC1R 0HB) – Information on the Archives is accessible through http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/
- Holborn Reference Library (32-38, Theobald's Road, WC1X 8PA)
  http://www.camden.gov.uk/holbornlibrary
- Westminster Reference Library (35, St. Martin's Street, WC2H 7HP)
  http://www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/findalibrary/westref.cfm
When you are doing local research, go to the library in the part of London in which you are interested because they will have the most information. Once you are in a library, ask for the yellow listing guide of all Central London libraries. Online indexes and addresses are also available. You will not be able to check out books out of most libraries, as they tend to be reference libraries rather than lending libraries, but you can photocopy or take digital pictures of most resources you will use. Be sure to ask permission from the librarian beforehand and have spare change available for copying costs, as many libraries cannot make change from larger bills for you.

Keep in mind that most London public libraries open around 9:30 or 10 a.m. and close between 4:30-5 p.m. Many are not open on Saturdays or Sundays.

SHOPPING

- Argos (5, Grays Inn Rd, WC1X 8PH, Tube: Chancery Court) – for home needs.
- Bond Street, Regent Street for Burberry, FCUK, other British clothing chains.
- Brick Lane & Cheshire Street Market (Brick Lane & Cheshire St, SW9) – clothing, antiques, furniture and all kinds of odds and ends. Also check out Beyond Retro at 110-112, Cheshire Street; the cowboy boots are not to be missed!
- Camden Market – funky paraphernalia (Camden Town or Chalk Farm tube).
- Carnaby St. for trendy boutiques.
- Covent Garden area shops.
- Goodge Street and Mason for quality teas and other British food items and souvenirs.
- German Street for fun window-shopping.
- Leather Lane Market.
- Goodge Street for plenty of cheap thrift stores.
- Notting Hill—Saturday morning markets. (Go there hungry!)
- Oxfam Bookstore (26, Marylebone High Street, W1) – also has a considerable music selection. Get cheap books & music and have your money go to a good cause.
- Oxford Street for inexpensive London-style apparel and souvenirs (also chains like H&M, Gap, MNG).
- Portobello Road Market – for just about anything you can think of. Huge. Go Friday for better deals and Saturday mornings for the most vendors (Ladbroke Grove tube).
- Primark. Really cheap clothes and housewares, somewhat of a free-for-all. Go weekday mornings to avoid crowds otherwise the check out lines can be very long.
- Sloane Square, Brompton Road – posh fashion area, think Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Prada.
- Selfridges (Bond St. Tube) is a must.
- John Lewis Partnership – beside Selfridges; good selection and prices
- Marks & Spencer – where everyone in Britain goes to get their underwear: but often has pretty decent men’s and women’s clothing also.

Check out the following website for information on all the various markets (antiques, clothing, food, etc.) in London, including descriptions, opening times, locations and how to get them: [http://www.talkingcities.co.uk/london_pages/shopping_markets.htm](http://www.talkingcities.co.uk/london_pages/shopping_markets.htm)

TELEVISIONED SPORTS

For those pining for news of the home team, the newest of the terrestrial television channels, **Channel 5**, now carries Monday Night Football live, hosted by a hilariously incompetent pair of local commentators. The bad news is that with the time difference, kickoff is not until about 1 a.m., so the use of a VCR for taping and subsequent consumption is strongly recommended. **Channel 5** also broadcasts Major League Baseball playoff games in season and a weekly NHL match-up, whose commentary team, reputedly, is
even more inept than the one featured on MNF. For Sunday NFL games, the cable channel Sky Sports 1 broadcasts live whatever game is being covered by CBS that week. And NBA is shown Tuesdays at 2a.m. on Channel 5. An overseas ESPN channel called ESPN Orbit usually carries a live feed of the game shown by Fox. However, do NOT rely on getting these channels in your flat without cable; you typically will get 4-5 channels max.

These games can be seen at the Sports Café Restaurant, New Zealand House, Haymarket (Piccadilly Circus or Charing Cross tubes) (020) 7839 8300. This is essentially an American-style sports bar, much patronised by expatriates, and it’s a good place to go to if you want to run into lots of other American students on study groups (and a bad place to go if you don’t). Keep in mind that sports bars are great places to go, especially when wanting to get more of a flavor for the English love of football (our soccer) and rugby. The Rocket is a nearby pub on Euston Road, between Euston Station and Kings Cross Station that is cheap and always has sports on TV. Tends to be a college-aged crowd. Either Wednesday’s or Thursday’s have burger and a pint for 3 pounds. Go there for one pound pints on Saturday nights (ask for the yellow card at the bar).

TOURIST SIGHTS AND ATTRACTIONS

It will be to your great advantage to familiarize yourself with the city and all the wonderful things it has to offer. To begin with, a walking tour (or bus tour if you are willing to spend £18-20) of London is one of the best (and cheapest!) ideas. Then, you may want to see some shows, visit museums, stroll through the parks and zoo, and lots more. Below are a few suggestions, but there are countless other things to explore as well.

- **Tour of London** – London Transport, leaves from Piccadilly Circus. There you will find double-decker buses which will drive around the city to the see the various sites, like Big Ben, Parliament, etc. This is a great way to get acquainted quickly with London.

- **Museums and Art Galleries** – Look in Time Out for weekly exhibitions. Most museums and galleries are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 2 to 5 p.m. Sundays. For the most part, museums are government supported and charge no admission. If they do, it is usually a modest price, although when there are special exhibitions within the museum there may be an additional charge to enter those specified areas. When there is an additional charge or entry fee, don’t forget to inquire about a student rate. The museums which have been frequented by Colgate students in the past include:

  - **The British Museum** (Great Russell St, WC1, near the FSU Centre) – Famous for its Greek sculpture, Assyrian and Egyptian antiquities, manuscripts of famous writers, the Magna Carta, Rosetta Stone, and clocks from around the world. Known as one of the great museums of the world. Should be visited at least once by all those who visit London.

  - **Museum of London** – Cute, touristy, with period costumes and great souvenirs. Very interactive and mainly deals with the history of London.

  - **The National Gallery** (Trafalgar Square, WC2) – Britain’s major collection of “old master” paintings; important works by the most famous painters up to about 1900. There is also a bookstore and souvenir shop inside that is worth a browse.

  - **The National Portrait Gallery** (Charing Cross Road, WC2) – This gallery contains pictures of almost every famous British person. Starting from the top floor and descending down the stairs, you begin in the early 14th and 15th centuries and finish in the present on the ground floor.

  - **The Tate Britain** (Millbank, SW1 4RG) – The national gallery of British art from 1500 to the
The Tate Modern (Bankside, SE1 9TG) – Britain’s national gallery of international modern art (1900 to present). Good view of Thames from the 5th floor.

The Victoria and Albert Museum (Cromwell Road, SW7) – This museum focuses on the “decorative arts.” There are beautiful exhibits of fashions from different periods, furniture of all styles and centuries, jewelry, Indian art, miniatures and more.

Those are the larger, more famous museums, but the smaller ones should not be overlooked:

- Cabinet War Rooms (Westminster) – Winston Churchill’s WWII artifacts.
- Courtauld Institute (Somerset House, Aldwych from Woburn Sq.) – Impressionists.
- Foundling Hospital Museum (Bloomsbury) – art gallery and history of caring for abandoned children in London
- Hayward Gallery (Waterloo Station and in Piccadilly) – Modern art gallery that houses temporary exhibits.
- Imperial War Museum (Lambeth North Underground) – War and wartime life in Britain and the Commonwealth in the twentieth century.
- Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) (The Mall, SW1) – Contemporary art.
- Museum of Childhood (Bethnal Green Underground) – Dolls and toys; these days, more of a children’s museum.
- Sir John Soane’s (13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, WC1) – Soane’s private art collections and personal effects.
- The Walles Collection (Oxford St.) – 18th century French furniture.

If you are interested in finding even more museums, check out the “24 Hour Museum” website which has information on over 2,500 UK museums, galleries and national heritage attractions: www.24hourmuseum.org.uk

- Some of the most enjoyable and memorable times students mention are the unusual events, clubs, places and things they saw. It might be useful to find out about all the events in Hyde Park while you are there. These are free and usually lots of fun (i.e. Westminster Horse Show, World Crew Tournament and, especially, Speaker’s Corner). Or, you may want to treat yourself to a medieval dinner in a stately home (Hatfield House, approx. 21 miles from central London, tel. (01707) 287 010, http://www.hatfield-house.co.uk/). Some students have enjoyed concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, Town & Country, or Wembley Arena. If you are interested in sports, you may want to get a cricket, crew, football or rugby schedule of local teams. These sports could prove to be a real cultural experience.

- Theatres: Student concessions or stand-by are available at most theatres; call in advance.

  - National Theatre – Located on the South Bank; fun area.
  - The Globe Theatre – very close to the Tate Modern.
  - Lyric Hammersmith – famous, fallen upon hard times but Kevin Spacey’s adopted it
  - Orange Tree Theatre – Theatre in the round
  - Royal Court Theatre – good shows, historically rich.
  - Royal National Theatre – grand setting, big name shows
  - Barbican Centre – cool place, near most of the flats
  - Riverside Studios – “on the fringe,” more experimental

- Some outdoor places and areas that you might want to visit include Battersea Park, Covent Garden, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, Piccadilly Circus, Regent’s Park (look for Charlie – he feeds
squirrels), Leicester Square, Kew Gardens, Canary Wharf (the new financial area), Hampstead Heath, Soho and St. James’ Park.

- Explore different cultural areas like Hackney, Little India, New Malden, and Chinatown (by Leicester Square).

- And, of course, there are the tried and true tourist attractions that you just cannot leave London without having seen, such as the Houses of Parliament, the New British Library (St. Pancras), St. Paul’s Cathedral, the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, Windsor Castle and the London Eye.

**TRAVEL**

Although you will find countless cultural experiences right in London, you will no doubt be tempted to travel on some long weekends or during the break. Travel in Europe can prove to be inexpensive if one does some research beforehand and use student travel agencies. They are particularly useful for planning your travels during the longer break which will likely have multiple destinations. Below are some student agencies in the U.S. and in London:

In the U.S.:
- **STA Travel**
  - [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)
- **StudentUniverse.com**
  - [http://studentuniverse.com/](http://studentuniverse.com/)
  - Free sign up needed to use this service. The company has a good reputation in the student travel world.
- **Travelosophy**
- **Orbitz**

In London:
- **STA Travel**
  - Several offices in London
  - See immediately above for website and #4 under “Making a Checklist” for more details.
- **Trailfinders**
  - 194, Kensington High St, W8 7RG
  - (020) 7938 3939
  - [www.trailfinders.com/index.htm](http://www.trailfinders.com/index.htm)
  - (They are especially good for long-haul flights.)
- **Trailfinders**
  - Lower Ground Floor Waterstones, 203-205, Piccadilly, W1J 9HD
  - (020 7292 1888)

**Travel by Air**

Flying can be astonishingly cheap if you shop around and compare prices. All the Sunday newspapers advertise bargain specials, and London Student Travel often has weekend specials. Check websites such as lastminute.com, Travelocity, etc. Also check the airlines’ websites, as they often run special, web-only deals. **See note below about low-cost airlines.**

- Flights to Scotland are worth looking into. **EasyJet** and **Ryanair** have low fares each way from London to Edinburgh or Prestwick (for Glasgow). (EasyJet and Ryanair are the two primary airlines most frequently used by students in London.) **BMI Baby** is a good option as well.

- Flights to Paris and Brussels are about the same length and as cheap as or cheaper than going by train, although the airports are on the outskirts of the city, so you still have to get from the airport to the city center. Train is a much more convenient option – the Channel Tunnel trains, or **Eurostar** ([http://www.eurostar.com/](http://www.eurostar.com/)). Since November 2007, Eurostar trains leave from the St. Pancras.
International station, making the train rides shorter by at least 20 minutes. The train is by far the easiest way to get to Paris, and the advantage is that you arrive in the heart of the city (journey time about three hours). If you buy a student rate on the Eurostar (about £40 each way) you must have an ISIC student card to receive a student ticket. Also, try book at least a month in advance or you would have to pay more.

- Flights to Greece, Spain, and locations ever further a field can sometimes prove to be real bargains. Compare prices, especially at Thomas Cook, London Student Travel and Alapes Travel. These agents usually list inexpensive charter flights. During vacation time, Thomas Cook (Kensington High Street, Queensway, Earl’s Court) and Abreu (Westbourne Grove) have package deals including airfare, hotel, and some meals that are quite good deals. As always, shop around and do not be pressured into buying on the spot.

**London Airports**
There are three major airports and two smaller ones. The student travel agencies often use the less popular airports for their cheap flights. When flying, always make sure you give yourself plenty of time to arrive at the airport and check in.

- **Heathrow** is the largest and is 15 miles west of London. The airport is usually very crowded and quite confused. Make sure you know which terminal you need (there are four of them) and give yourself plenty of time to get there and check in. Easiest way to get there is the Tube – Piccadilly trains will take you right to the airport. You can also use Heathrow Express that leaves from Paddington Station [https://www.heathrowexpress.com](https://www.heathrowexpress.com). It is very convenient and fast – only takes 21 minutes, but roundtrip would be around 24 pounds with ISIC student discount.

- **Gatwick** is somewhat smaller than Heathrow and it is further away: about 40 miles to the south. There is a train referred to as the “Gatwick Express” that leaves from Victoria Station every half hour. These trains go non-stop to the airport and take half an hour. They cost £14 o/w and £25 r/t; tickets may be bought on board. Conveniently, these trains leave you in the middle of the airport with easy access to all flights. Gatwick has two terminals: North and South. A cheaper option is the Southern Railway service to Victoria, which takes about 5-10 minutes longer but costs only £9 each way. Tickets for the one type of train aren’t valid for the other.

  If a bunch of you are going together, the Gatwick Express has a “four-for-two” deal: four people travelling together can get a group ticket costing £28 o/w and £50 r/t. These tickets cannot be bought on the train – you have to get them from the ticket office before boarding.

- **Stansted**, 43 miles to the north-east, used to be the most user-friendly of the lot, but its facilities are now severely strained by hordes of passengers traveling on the low-fare airlines that predominate at this airport. Expect major delays at security throughout the day. A West Anglia/Great Northern (WAGN) train, the Stansted Express, runs four services an hour, seven days a week from Liverpool Street station in the city centre between 05:00 and midnight. Journey time: 48 minutes. Cost: £15 o/w, £25 r/t. If your flight leaves in the very early morning (as many Ryanair services do), you’ll have to take the National Express coach from Victoria Coach Station (NB: not the train station – this one is about half a mile away, on Buckingham Palace Road). Services throughout the night run at approximately 20 min. intervals; journey-time around 75 mins. Advance reservation highly advisable. Cost £13 each way.

- **Luton**, like Stansted, is used primarily for cheap charter flights and is about 40 miles to the north. The fastest way there is by taking the Thameslink train from St Pancras to Luton Airport Parkway (35 minutes) and connecting there with the free shuttle bus (15 minutes). The cost around £11 each way. There is also a bus (Green Line 757) from Buckingham Palace Road, at the side of Victoria Railway Station, which goes directly to Luton airport. It takes between one and two hours, depending on the time of day. The cost varies depending on how early you book, and what Airline you are flying, but it is around £10 o/w, £14 r/t. Can be as low as £2 each way if you book way in advance with EasyBus.
London City Airport is the newest, and smallest, departure point. It’s in the Docklands of east London, and is the closest of all the terminals serving the city, just six miles from the Bank of England. The runway is actually built over a disused dock and is pretty short for commercial aircraft. Because it’s mainly used by financial types willing to pay extra for the convenience of travelling from there, fares to the principal European destinations tend to be on the high side. To get there, take the Docklands Light Railway to Canning Town station, and transfer to the airport shuttle-bus which leaves at ten-minute intervals (£3 o/w)

A Cautionary Note on Low-Fare Airlines: With the deregulation of the European airline system, a host of new operators have appeared, often offering comically cheap flights to various destinations (Ryanair, the largest of the low-fare airlines [LFAs], has periodic seat sales starting at £0.01 plus tax each way, although various “charges” and “fees,” many of them bogus, will add another £10-15 per leg to that. Also, even if you decide not to check in luggage, Ryanair will slap on a luggage fee because a carry-on counts as one piece of luggage.). When choosing a low-cost carrier to travel, there is always a chance of something wrong happening. A lot of Colgate students, however, have been badly caught out while traveling with the LFAs. Nevertheless, as college students, Ryanair flights remain attractive because of its costs and if luck is on your side, you do save a lot of money. Please do consider some of the points below:

- Many of these flights land at remote airfields far from their stated destinations. Ryanair’s service to Frankfurt, for example, actually lands in Hahn, a small former military base some 60 miles away. Not only is this inconvenient, but you could easily get stranded at the destination point. If your flight is delayed and arrives late at night, you may find that the last “bus to civilization” has long since departed or the metro system has closed (in Europe, it is common for metros to stop running between 11pm-12am or earlier, ie: London), confronting you with the choice between an extremely expensive taxi fare or cooling your heels outside a closed terminal until morning.

- Many of these airlines close their gates 45 minutes before the scheduled departure time. That means that you have to have cleared the initial check-in desk and be at the departure gate well before that time or else you’re out of luck. Even if you’re en route to the gate after having checked in, after that 45-minute mark is past they close up shop and will not let you on the aeroplane. Nor will they refund your ticket, so you’re stuck buying a full-price fare for the next available flight.

- Some of these airports are also places that have been abandoned by the full-fare airlines because of unfavorable weather patterns. Jerez de la Frontera in southern Spain, also used by Ryanair, is regularly shut down in the winter for days at a time because of fog. If you have to be back in London for a Monday-morning class, your return flight might be more expensive than you had originally bargained for.

- If you’re trying to make a connection on an LFA (e.g. London Stansted to Charleroi, then Charleroi to Rome Ciampino) and your outbound leg is delayed because of the airline’s fault, under European law they are under no obligation to find you a seat on a later service. You will have to buy an entirely new ticket for the Charleroi-to-Rome leg; and without any advance purchase, it’s likely to cost you a lot more than what you originally paid.

- Should the airline cancel a flight, their only legal responsibility is to find you a seat on the next available service or to refund your money. If there’s only one flight a day, and it takes five days to clear the backlog of stranded passengers, that’s just too bad.

- Most of the LFAs have now done away with the free baggage allowance. Ryanair will charge you £7 for each checked bag up to 20 kg (44 lb), and a swingeing £5.50 for each excess kilo. A hand bag of up to 10 kg may be carried free, but only if its dimensions don’t exceed 18” in length, 14” in width
and 6” in depth. Passengers travelling together aren’t allowed to combine their allowances.

None of this is to suggest that you shouldn’t use LFAs, but you need to know what you’re getting for your money. Don’t assume, though, that the lowest fares are always to be found on Ryanair or EasyJet. Aer Lingus or British Midland, for example, often beat the low-fares to Dublin or Milan. You should also bear in mind that flying from Stansted rather than Heathrow will add somewhere in the vicinity of £20 to the overall cost of your trip, when transport to and from the airport is factored into the equation.

**Note:** Since the attempted terrorist attack of August 2006, passengers travelling from Britain are not allowed to carry on to the aircraft any cosmetics, toiletries, liquids (or containers capable of holding liquids, even if empty), gels, pastes or lotions. Your pockets must be completely empty of everything except your ticket, boarding card and passport. Laptops, mobile ‘phones and iPods are OK, although these must be taken out of your hand baggage and screened separately. Medicines in liquid form needed for the flight are permissible, but must be declared to security.

Travel by Coach

In Britain, “buses” mean local transportation and “coaches” mean long-distance travel. Coaches in general are significantly cheaper than trains, and are sometimes more convenient into the bargain. The British equivalent of Greyhound is called National Express. It operates out of Victoria Coach Station, about a five-minute walk from the railway terminus of the same name. Many coach companies offer student discounts; inquire in each case. These buses are great for day trips to Oxford, the Cotswolds, or Bath, and also for getting to the airports. The Oxford coach has laptop ports and reclining seats, and makes for a fantastic weekend trip – there is a four-star hotel masquerading as a hostel (YHA Oxford) which will treat you very nicely – see [http://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/hostelpages/836.html](http://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/hostelpages/836.html). Also see [www.nationalexpress.com/neh.cfm](http://www.nationalexpress.com/neh.cfm) for more information on traveling by coach in the UK or Europe. Be wary of Terravision, which offers cheap shuttle service to airports and elsewhere: their ‘buses have a bad reputation for not showing up on time, or even at all.

Travel by Rail

The rail network in Britain is extensive. The recent and badly bungled privatization of the railways, which by common consent has resulted only in a deterioration in services and a huge increase in prices, has created a situation in which even the various rail companies themselves do not fully understand the range of options involved in getting from A to B. The train is still the preferred, and in some cases, the only means of travel to many parts of the country; however, expect confusion and delay en route. Information – although not always accurate – about destinations, prices, and times can be obtained from the main train stations in London (Charing Cross, Euston, King’s Cross, Liverpool Street, Paddington, St Pancras, Victoria, and Waterloo) and online through the National Rail website (www.nationalrail.co.uk). Some tips on saving money using the train:

1. If you plan to do a fair amount of traveling by train, buy a “young person’s rail card” at any main-line station. These cards are for anyone under the age of 24 and can save the holder up to 33% on the regular fare. You will need a passport-sized photograph to obtain the card. When you receive your card you should be given a pamphlet that will describe other discounts the card offers.

2. If you are traveling for only a day, ask for a “cheap day return” ticket. These can only be used after 9:30 am on weekdays but anytime on weekends. With your youth card, a return ticket (roundtrip) will cost about the same as a single (one-way) ticket.

3. If you are traveling to one of Britain’s major cities and plan to stay more than a day, ask for an “intercity saver ticket.”

As always, the cheapest fares are to be had by booking well in advance.
Popular Destinations in the U.K.

Some popular cities and towns: Bath, Cambridge, Cornwall, Coventry, Devon, Dover, Oxford, Stratford-upon-Avon, York, Winchester, Cardiff, Swansea, Edinburgh and St. Andrews to name a few. If you are planning to go to Scotland, go early (autumn) or late (spring) because it gets very cold, very fast. It also rains twice a week – once for three days, the other time for four days, as the saying goes.

IF I HAD KNOWN THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW, I WOULD HAVE...

- “...traveled much more in the beginning and brought fewer clothes. A warm jacket is key.”
- “...read Let’s Go London.”
- “...remembered that you have to bring everything you buy home.”
- “...brought more money. Things in London are more expensive than you can imagine.”
- “...gone to more museums earlier in the trip.”
- “...traveled more and earlier! You never know when you’ll have another chance.”
- “...saved earlier on and more for the entire semester.”
- “...spent less on Tube fares and chose to walk to destinations more.”
- “...learned the art of buying cheap sandwiches early on and avoided eye-catching, tempting, and touristy food joints and restaurants.”
- “...tried more Indian food.”
- “...gotten a better memory card for my digital camera to save money on developing regular film.”
- “...bought an A to Z guide earlier on and actually used it more often.”
- “...not have blown all my savings in the first month there.”
- “...tried harder to burst the ‘American Bubble’ and made some British friends.”
- “...done any assigned reading before getting to London.”
- “...planned trips before getting there or within two weeks of arriving.”
- “...bought a Eurail Pass before leaving for London.”
- “...tried to see more of the English countryside and the outskirts of London.”
- “...tried more new things instead of settling into a routine.”

A FEW NOTES FOR HISTORY MAJORS:

- Research your archives in advance: know where you are going and what you are looking for.
- Start early – the semester will end and you will wish you had just one more week to track things down.
- Take immaculate notes: you won’t be able to retrace your steps.
- Don’t spend too much time in the beginning of the semester reading secondary sources: spend your time in the archives.
- On research trips, pack a lunch. You’ll save yourself a considerable amount of money, and there is NEVER any good food in archival cafeterias.
- Talk with each other – some of the most productive moments that students from last year’s group experienced were in coffee shops discussing their research and theses.
- Talk with UK professors – look up their bios online, find a professor with your research interests, and introduce yourself. They will point you to new sources, and may lead to useful intellectual friendships.
- Make friends with the archivists: they will find things for you that you hadn’t even considered.

FINAL NOTES
This guide is meant to be used as a starting point and a tool to help get you oriented when you first get to London. Do not rely on the guide too much – half the fun of being in a different country is exploring and discovering things on your own! You are in for an amazing semester; just do not expect things to fall into your lap. You will need to get out there and make the effort to try new and different things and meet some Brits!

Be aware, too, that other countries have different ways of doing things and part of the education that comes with studying abroad derives from experiencing how other cultures operate. Britain is no exception. Things will be different, and you’re going to be expected to adapt to the British way of life, not the other way around. Remember: “When in Rome (or London!)…”