



EUROPEAN CONSUMER CENTRE IRELAND

Travelling to the UK?

Follow these tips and save money...



CURRENCIES

What is the best way of changing Euro into Pounds Sterling to avoid high currency-exchange commissions?

Any place where a guaranteed 0% commission is offered, such as post offices, is recommended for changing currencies to avoid unfavourable exchange rates or exchange commission.

Using your credit card to withdraw British Pounds or pay for goods/ services in the UK may incur transaction and currency conversion fees. It is recommended to check exactly what your credit card provider will charge you and to load up your card with cash before leaving as some providers do not charge conversion fees for cash withdrawals.



CAR RENTAL

What are visitors to the UK entitled to expect where renting a car? (Car description, pricing and insurance policy, fuel charge policy, etc)

A rental company should provide a clean, modern and safe vehicle that has been thoroughly checked prior to each hire period. The majority of rental companies will offer you various options for fuelling your vehicle.

There are usually three options to choose from:

- Purchase a tank of fuel from the rental company and return the vehicle empty
- Drive the vehicle away with a full tank and return it with a full tank
- Pay the rental company for the petrol you use

The rental company may offer you collision and loss damage cover, details of which will be shown on the rental agreement. If you accept this cover, you will reduce the extent of your liability to the excess shown on your rental agreement. But there may be exclusions to your loss/damage waiver insurance. For example, in most cases windscreen, tyres, roof damage and undercarriage damage are not covered.

For more advice and guidance in relation to car rental in the UK, please see: www.bvrla.co.uk/consumer/Vehicle_rental_top_tips.aspx





ACCOMMODATION

Where can I find information about accommodation in the UK?

(Self-catering, hotels, camping/caravan sites, B&Bs, etc...)

Full information about accommodation in Britain is available on the website of VisitBritain, at: www.visitbritain.co.uk

For Scotland see VisitScotland at: www.visitscotland.org

For Wales see VisitWales: www.visitwales.co.uk

For Northern Ireland see: www.discovernorthernireland.com

What star rating system applies in the UK to hotels and camping/caravan sites, and B&Bs?

VisitBritain, VisitScotland, Wales Tourist Board, and Northern Ireland Tourist Board have agreed to develop common grading schemes for assessing the quality of tourist accommodation in the UK. Hotels, Self-catering, B&Bs and Holiday Parks use the star symbol to denote accommodation quality – one star to five star. In addition to the grades awarded under the star rating scheme, Caravan Holiday Homes for hire on parks which achieve either a 'Four Star' or a 'Five Star' grading may be eligible for consideration for the Rose Award.

Does every hotel have facilities for disabled people?

The National Accessibility Scheme (NAS) identifies how accessible the accommodation is to people who may have difficulty walking, use a wheelchair, or have a sensory impairment.

The ratings are split into three categories, for:

- Mobility impaired people
- Blind or visually impaired people
- Deaf or hearing impaired people

• Mobility Impaired People

For mobility impaired people, there are four categories plus an additional accolade:

- **M1:** Typically suitable for a person with sufficient mobility to climb a flight of steps, but would benefit from fixtures and fittings to aid balance.
- **M2:** Typically suitable for a person with restricted walking ability and for those who may need to use a wheelchair some of the time and can negotiate a maximum of three steps.
- **M3I:** Typically suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair and transfers unaided to and from the wheelchair in a seated position. This person may be an independent traveller.
- **M3A:** Typically suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair in a seated position. This person also requires personal or mechanical assistance (e.g. carer, hoist).
- **Access Exceptional:** Achieves the standards above, for either independent wheelchair users or assisted wheelchair users and fulfils additional, more demanding requirements.

• Blind or Visually Impaired People

For blind or visually impaired people, there are two categories:

- **V1:** Typically provides key additional services and facilities to meet the needs of visually impaired guests.
- **V2:** Typically provides a higher level of additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with visual impairment.

• Deaf or Hearing Impaired People

For deaf or hearing impaired people, there are two categories:

- **H1:** Typically provides key additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with hearing impairment.
- **H2:** Typically provides a higher level of additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with hearing impairment.





RESTAURANTS

**Is a service charge always included?
What is the VAT charged in restaurants?**

A service charge added to the customer's bill before it is presented to the customer can be either mandatory or purely discretionary. In the latter case, it is made clear to the customer that the charge is optional and there is no obligation to pay.

In the UK, you pay VAT on most goods and services, including restaurants, at the standard rate, which is 15%. The standard rate increases to 17.5% on 1 January 2010.



TAXIS

What is the general schedule of fees?

(Distance, luggage, etc)

For taxi fares in London, please see:

www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/taxisandminicabs/taxis/1140.aspx

For further information in relation to taxi fares in the rest of the UK, please contact the local authorities in the places where you intend to travel.



ENTERTAINMENT

How can I find information on entertainment other than shopping and restaurants?

(Leisure parks, shows, theatres, museums etc).

You will find useful information on the websites of VisitBritain, VisitScotland, Wales Tourist Board, and Northern Ireland Tourist Board. (See above)



CAR PARKING

**Is car parking free of charge? What are the charges that tourists can expect if they bring their car to the UK?
e.g. London Congestion Charge etc**

For information concerning the London Congestion Charge, please see:

www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging/default.aspx

For further information in relation to parking and congestion charges in the rest of the UK, please contact the local authorities in the places where you intend to travel.



EUROPEAN CONSUMER CENTRE IRELAND

Remember that if things go wrong with any of the goods or services that you purchase during your stay in the UK you can contact the European Consumer Centre Ireland for free and confidential information, advice and assistance.

See www.eccireland.ie for more information.