

## 8.11 - Your Oyster Card

To facilitate your touring programme in London and especially to make the most of your unique audio guide MP3 player, you will need to be able to get from A to B as quickly and as efficiently as possible and for this you will need to use our excellent public transport system.

The mainstays of the system are the Underground (Tube) and the bus network, both of which cover central London and far beyond. While the bus network is excellent, particularly for very short journeys, it can be complicated for first time users. We therefore suggest that you use the Underground (Tube) wherever possible.



The Oyster Card is now the preferred travel ticket for millions of Londoners using the tube and bus network daily, which is why we have included a card for every traveller on your programme.

Each card will be loaded with enough funds to travel eleven one-way journeys in Zone 1 of the Underground, which will allow you to travel back from the Tower of London after your visit, and to travel to and from each of the five self-guided audio tours.

If you find that you need additional credit on your card(s), you are able to add value by using the automated machines at every tube station and in many shops across the Capital.

### 8.11.1 - How to use your Oyster Card.



When you approach the entry barrier at any Underground Station, or jump on to a London Bus, you are required to place your card on the yellow disc reader at the barrier. The reader will beep and will show you the value that is left on your card. On the Underground, the barrier will open for you to walk through. On the bus, the driver will acknowledge your payment and will allow you to take a seat. On the Underground it is very important that you also place your card on the yellow disc reader when you exit the network, otherwise you may be charged more for your journey.

If you take multiple journeys in **one** day, you will only be charged for the first four one-way transfers, so all other journeys will be 'free'.

For more information about the Underground, you may wish to visit the London Transport web site at ([www.londontransport.co.uk](http://www.londontransport.co.uk)). It has a map of the Underground and a journey planner.

## 15.1 - Deciding on places to visit

There are many hundreds of wonderful places to visit in London and you cannot hope to see all of them in the amount of unstructured time that you have. We recommend that on your site inspection you piece together a selection of 'days out' for your chaperones to offer to the students. You may find the following web sites useful;

- **Visit London.** The official government body responsible for promoting tourism in London ([www.visitlondon.com](http://www.visitlondon.com)).
- **Time Out Magazine.** The main listings magazine for London ([www.timeout.com](http://www.timeout.com)).
- **This is London.** An official guide to London produced by the only daily paper dedicated to London, the Evening Standard ([www.thisislondon.co.uk](http://www.thisislondon.co.uk)).

### 15.1.1 - Guidelines when planning your unstructured time

There are a number of factors that you may wish to take into account when planning your unstructured time. They are;

- Try not to cram too many activities into your arrival day. Everyone will be tired after the long journey and, although there is a temptation to keep everyone moving, be careful not to overdo the activities.
- If you can, divide your group into small chaperone units (10 to 15 persons) for ease of travel on the Underground and in public places.
- Research the unique audio guided ('Guidepod') walking tours on your site inspection, so you will be confident in explaining the start and finish points to your chaperones.
- Formulate several different tour/visit ideas' for the chaperone groups to choose from. Some will want more shopping than others, while others will want to visit as many sights as possible.
- Use the Underground stations as a map reference for the major attractions i.e. Knightsbridge for Harrods, Hyde Park Corner for the Hard Rock Café, Westminster or St. James for Westminster Abbey, and Tower Hill for the Tower of London etc. Even if you have never travelled to London before, you will find that the Underground stations will be your best point of reference.

## 15.2 - Some of London's most popular attractions

### 15.2.1 - The Tower of London

The number one tourist attraction in the capital is the Tower of London ([www.hrp.org.uk](http://www.hrp.org.uk)). This historic landmark has served as a royal palace, fortress, prison, place of execution, arsenal, mint, menagerie and jewel house during its 900 year history. Attractions include the Bloody Tower, Traitors' Gate, the Chapel of St. John, the Jewel House, where the Crown Jewels of England are on show, and the Fusilier's Museum.

Tower Hill, EC3  
Tube: Tower Hill  
Sun & Mon 10.00-16.30, Tue-Sat 9.00-16.30  
Entrance is included in your programme.

### **15.2.2 - The London Eye**

Since opening in March 2000, The London Eye has become an iconic landmark and a symbol of modern Britain [www.londoneye.com](http://www.londoneye.com). It was conceived for a millennium landmark competition and is one of the world's largest observation wheels, towering 450 feet above the River Thames. The views over London are spectacular – on a clear day you may see as far as Windsor Castle, 25 miles away.

Jubilee Gardens, SE1  
Tube: Waterloo or Westminster  
Daily 10.00-20.00  
Adults 16+ years £17.95, Child 5 – 15 years £8.55  
Group discount available.

**NOTE:** A visit to the London Eye is available to purchase from our London office for \$27.50 per adult (16 years and over) and US\$15.00 per child (15 years and under), see the additional services form 6 if you wish to book. You will need to request a specific time and date. Transport to and from the Eye is **not** included.

### **15.2.3 - British Museum**

Founded in 1753 by an Act of Parliament and based on the collections of Sir Hans Sloane, the British Museum is one of the great museums in the world. On display are the works of man from prehistoric to modern times, with collections drawn from the whole world. Famous objects include the Rosetta Stone, sculptures from the Parthenon, the Sutton Hoo and Mildenhall treasures, and the Portland Vase.

[www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)

Great Russell Street, WC1  
Tube: Russell Square  
Sat -Wed 10.00-17.30 Thu - Fri 10.00-20.30 - Free entry. Closed January 1st.

### **15.2.4 - Cabinet War Rooms & the Churchill Museum**

These underground rooms were the secret headquarters of the British Government from 1939 to 1945 and are preserved as they were when Prime Minister Winston Churchill worked there. New rooms have recently opened including Churchill's private kitchen, dining room and bedroom. There is also a small Churchill Museum. [www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/)

Whitehall, SW1A  
Tube: Westminster  
Daily 09.30 - 18.00  
Adults £14.95 Conc. £12.00 Child under 16 years - free

### **15.2.5 - Changing of the Guard**

A colourful display of pageantry outside the official residence of Her Majesty the Queen in London. Usually performed by the Queen's personal guard - the foot soldiers of the Household Division of the British Army. The old guard forms up in the Palace forecourt before going off duty and handing over to the new guard which leaves Wellington barracks at 11.25am. They march along Birdcage Walk, around the Victoria Memorial to the forecourt, accompanied by the band. For the best views, stand in front of the Palace railings or by the Victoria Memorial. The ceremony does not take place in very wet weather. [www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk) / [www.changing-the-guard.com](http://www.changing-the-guard.com)

The Mall, SW1

Tube: St. James or Green Park.

Certain days only: In 2010/11 the dates were 29 & 31 December & 03 January.

Free

### **15.2.6 - Imperial War Museum**

Occupying the former Bethlehem Hospital for the Insane ('Bedlam'), the Imperial War Museum is the national museum of 20th century conflict. Founded in 1917, the museum not only contains a fascinating display of the vehicles and weapons of war, but also makes an in-depth study of the social effects of conflict. From the M4 Sherman tank, the V2 rocket and Polaris missile, to the walk-through recreation of a front line trench from the Somme, it represents all facets of fighting and its aftermath. Both World Wars are chronicled with thought-provoking displays of painting and poetry from Sassoon to Wilfred Owen, and a reconstructed air raid shelter and blitzed street from 1940. The sights, sounds and smells have been carefully recreated to really bring the experience to life. [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

Lambeth Road, SE1

Tube: Lambeth

Daily 10.00 – 18.00

Free entry

### **15.2.7 - Kensington Palace State Apartments**

The birthplace of Queen Victoria, Kensington Palace was also home to Princess Diana between 1981-1997. Originally a private country house, it was substantially adapted as a Royal palace in 1689 and for the next 70 years it was to become the focal point of the life and government of the country. Early one morning in June 1837 Princess Victoria, who was occupying apartments in Kensington Palace, awoke to the news that she was Queen of England. She immediately moved to Buckingham Palace. Visitors today can see the State Apartments, the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection that includes outfits from the 18th century to the present day, the Orangery and sunken gardens.

[www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)

Kensington Gardens, W8

Tube: High Street Kensington or Queensway

Daily 10.00 – 17.00

Adults £12.50, Students £11.00, children under 16 £6.25

Group discounts available.

### **15.2.8 - London Dungeon**

Experience some of the most ghoulish and terrifying events in Britain's history. Spectacular sets, special effects and actors recreate horrors such as Jack the Ripper's London, the plague of 1665 and the 1666 Great Fire of London. The New Traitor: Boat Ride to Hell will take visitors on a terrifying journey to meet their fate at the hands of the axe man. [www.thedungeons.com](http://www.thedungeons.com)

28-34 Tooley Street, SE1

Tube: London Bridge

10.30 – 17.00

Adults £23.00 students £21.00 under 16s £17.00

Group discounts available.

### **15.2.9 - Madame Tussaud's**

Madame Tussauds invites you to experience what it is like to be famous as you join a host of the world's hottest celebrities. With exciting interactive attractions running throughout the year, there's always something different happening at Madame Tussauds! Have your say on international politics at a press conference with Tony Blair and George Bush and join the Queen for your own private audience. Scream until your blood curdles in Chamber Live and try to escape from the prison cells as living, breathing, serial killers are out of their minds and out to get you. An additional charge applies for Chamber Live and is not recommended for children under 12 or those of a nervous disposition. [www.madame-tussauds.com](http://www.madame-tussauds.com)

Tube: Baker Street

Mon - Fri 09.30 – 17.30, Sat & Sun 09.00 – 18.00

Adult £28.00, under 16 £24.00

Group prices available

### **15.2.10 - National Gallery**

Occupying a prime location overlooking Trafalgar Square, the National Gallery houses a superb collection of over 2,000 paintings. Originally established by Parliament in 1824, the aim behind the gallery was to allow the public the opportunity to study and enjoy the riches of the collection. Since the 19th century this collection has increased dramatically and now includes some of the finest examples of Western European art from 1260-1900. Works on display include those of Botticelli, Monet, Constable, Van Gogh and Rembrandt. Holbein's 'The Ambassadors', 'The Hay Wain' by Constable, and Jan Van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Marriage' are just some of the major attractions.

[www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)

Trafalgar Square, WC2

Tube: Charing Cross

Daily 10.00 – 18.00 (Friday 10.00 – 21.00) Closed January 1st.

Free entry

### **15.2.11 - St. Paul's Cathedral**

A cathedral dedicated to St. Paul has overlooked the city of London since 604AD. The current cathedral, the fourth, was designed by Sir Christopher Wren after its predecessor was burnt down in the Great Fire of London in 1666. It has a superb baroque interior and attractions include the whispering gallery. It is the burial place for Lord Nelson, one of Britain's most famous seamen, who defeated Napoleon's fleet at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, exactly 200 years ago. He died in the battle and was brought back to England preserved in a barrel of rum, where he received a hero's burial. The exterior has recently undergone extensive cleaning. [www.stpauls.co.uk](http://www.stpauls.co.uk)

St. Paul's Churchyard, EC4

Tube: St. Paul's

Mon – Sat 8.30 – 16.00

Adults £12.50 Students £9.50 Child under 16 £4.50

Closed for tourism on Sundays.

### **15.2.12 - Shakespeare's Globe**

This recreation, that stands on the site of the original theatre which stood in Elizabethan London, was the dream of Sam Wannamaker, the American film maker. Rebuilt in 1995, it is now the world's largest exhibition devoted to Shakespeare and the London in which he lived and worked. The Globe is also a working theatre, with Shakespeare's plays being shown throughout the year on an open stage with most of the audience standing, as they did in the original. [www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org)

New Globe Walk, Bankside, SE1

Tube: Cannon Street

Daily 10.00 – 17.00

Adults £10.50 Students £8.50 Child £6.50

### **15.2.13 - Victoria & Albert Museum**

One of the world's greatest collections of fine and applied arts. The British galleries tell the story of British art and design from the reign of King Henry VIII to Queen Victoria and up to the present day. [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

Cromwell Road, SW7

Tube: South Kensington

Daily 10.00 – 17.45 Friday 10.00 - 22.00

Free entry

### **15.2.14 - Tower Bridge Exhibition**

Built in 1894, Tower Bridge became the largest 'see saw' bridge in the world, helping East London's burgeoning population to gain access to the South Bank. In the exhibition you can learn how it was built, see the Victorian Engine Rooms and enjoy spectacular views from the high-level walkways. [www.towerbridge.org.uk](http://www.towerbridge.org.uk)

London SE1

Tube: Tower Hill

Daily 9.30 – 18.00

Adults £7.00 Students £5.00 Child £3.00

### **15.2.15 - Westminster Abbey**

The setting for every coronation since 1066 and the burial ground for kings, statesmen, scientists, musicians and poets, Westminster Abbey is a true medieval masterpiece. Stunning Gothic architecture, the fascinating literary history represented by Poets' Corner, the artistic talent that went into the statues, murals, paintings and tombs, and the fantastic stained glass, combine to make Westminster Abbey the most enduringly stunning of London's churches. [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org)

Broad Sanctuary, SW1

Tube: St James's Park.

Mon – Fri 9.30 – 16.30, Sat 9.30 – 14.30

Adults £15.00, Conc. £12.00, 11-18 years £6.00

Under 11 free

Closed for tourism on Sundays.

## **15.3 - Shopping in London**

Shopping in London has never been as brilliant as it is right now! Whatever your fancy, you'll find it here. From designer fashion to comfortable home ware, London will pull at your purse strings.

With over 30,000 stores, where do you start? Well here are a selection of world-renowned department stores, shopping areas, (some very famous such as Portobello, from the film Notting Hill), and markets that we have hand picked as being the cream of the British crop.

### **15.3.1 - Shopping areas.**

#### **Bond Street**

Alphabetically it comes top of the list but it also wins in the style stakes. For serious fashionistas, Bond Street is the place to be seen in and shop! New Bond Street boasts one of the biggest and best concentrations of designer offerings and it's not unusual to spot celebrities doing a bit of what they do best in this area, shopping of course!

#### **Covent Garden**

A visit to Covent Garden is quite simply a must, whether you intend to shop, browse or soak in the carnival atmosphere. The focal point of Covent Garden, the market, has dominated the area ever since way back in the Middle Ages when monks actually tended their market garden here. Since the nineteenth century the market has expanded. At one point it was London's main fruit, flower and vegetable market, but nowadays visitors will find a variety of shops, restaurants and street entertainers, the latter of which are really fantastic and great fun to watch.

#### **Knightsbridge**

One of the most sought-after addresses in London, Knightsbridge remains relatively unchanged thanks to its proximity to a royal residence, namely Kensington Palace. And for the 'ladies who lunch' that fill the palatial residences of the area, there is plenty of shopping to be done on their highly polished doorsteps.

### **Oxford Street**

With over 200 million visitors a year, more than 300 shops and 5 million square feet of retail space, Oxford Street lays claim to being London's busiest street. Forget that, there is no claim, it simply is! The opening of Debenhams and Selfridges in 1909 marked the beginning of the street's dominance as a shopping centre. Amongst the chaos and bustle, retail therapists will find an oasis of calm in the area's unrivalled collection of high street department stores. There is also a very impressive apple (not the fruit) store which is worth a look into.

### **Regent Street**

Don't be put off by the fact that Nash's sweeping design for Regent Street was inspired as a means of separating the riff-raff (Soho) from the well to do (Mayfair) back in the 1800s. Regent Street is home to a number of large outlets offering everything from toys and trench coats to fabrics and food. A great place to window shop if nothing else.

### **Kings Road**

The Kings Road is the King of cool. It is probably as cool as you can get without freezing over! It is a 2 mile strip that runs from Sloane Square, (a place I spent much of my youth at) all the way to Putney Bridge. Peter Jones is a department store that oozes British-ness. It was built in 1935 and the department store was one of first glass-curtain structures to be erected in Britain. It is a must visit if not to see the building alone! In fact the whole area is dominated with slightly higher than average priced uber trendy boutiques and fashionista shops, which even if you do not fancy buying are great to just look at and browse. The Kings road is also where the Mini skirt revolution started and that alone is surely just reason to have a meander down the two mile strip! Similarly there are many fabulous cafe's and restaurants which you can while away the hours in, whilst watching the super trendy and the who's who in British society pottering about their daily routines.

## **15.3.2 - Famous Stores**

### **Fortnum & Mason**

Having met in 1705, Messrs Fortnum and Mason decided to set up shop together and the legend, that is now Piccadilly's most famous store, began. Much patronised by the aristocracy over the years, and still purveyor of food and wine to the Royal Family, Fortnum's is a must-see for anyone visiting London. It still exudes a pre-war gentility and its gilded furnishings and exquisitely wrapped produce will have you reaching for your purse in no time. Famous for its foodstuff (the Food Hall is a gastronomic treat) it also stocks women's wear, furniture and home ware.

### **Hamleys**

Living up to its reputation as the 'finest toyshop in the world' is no mean feat. But Hamleys still draws the crowds and boasts an astonishing array of more than 40,000 toys and games over its seven floors. The window displays regularly capture the imagination of children young & old and the atmosphere inside is reminiscent of a funfair. Staff eagerly demonstrate toys on the ground floor and there are frequent events and product launches. Your only problem will be knowing where to start.

### **Harrods**

Britain's most famous store, and possibly the most famous store in the world, it features on many tourists' 'must-see' lists - and with good reason. Its humble beginnings date back to 1849, when Henry Charles Harrods opened a small grocery shop that emphasised impeccable service over value. Today, it occupies a vast site in London's fashionable Knightsbridge and boasts a phenomenal range of products from pianos and cooking pans to pets and perfumery. The Food Hall is ostentatious to the core and mouth-wateringly exotic.

**Note:** there is a strict dress code at Harrods, you may be denied entrance if you are not smartly dressed i.e. no split jeans etc

### **Harvey Nichols**

Once over-shadowed by its more illustrious neighbour (Harrods) the store has experienced something of a resurgence and is now highly rated by the fashion conscious, who affectionately refer to it as "Harvey Nicks". Its sleek, streamlined interiors and clean and minimalist design allow the products to do the selling. And with great effect. All your favourite designer labels are here. If you want glamour, then look no further.

### **Liberty**

Since it opened in 1875, Liberty has captured the hearts of shoppers around the world and even spawned its own line in fabrics, which found fame and popularity with designers like Mary Quant and Jean Muir in the 1960s. Housed in a striking timber-framed building on Regent Street, Liberty's dedication to innovative design and Eastern influences reflects its founder's fascination with Japan following the International Exhibition of 1862.

### **The Westfield Centre**

This is the largest 'mall' we have in Britain, which only opened its doors to the public in 2009. There is just about every shop you could possibly imagine, ranging from high street shops mentioned above to the super trendy and expensive outlets such as Gucci and Armani, which actually have their own section in the centre. The food hall is quite simply exquisite and well worth any effort to get there. That however is not to say that it is difficult to get to, as it is very easily accessible. The Westfield Centre is in the heart of Shepherd's Bush, with train links, bus links and cab links. In fact the train or bus will take you right to the front entrance, and believe me, you certainly can not miss the large glass coated and very attractive empire that is the Westfield centre. I do advise caution though, as it is so big you may well get lost in a shoppers and food lover's paradise.

## **Selfridges**

Opening in 1909, the arrival of Selfridges in Oxford Street marked the beginning of the street's dominance as a shopping centre. Since then the building has been regularly re-vamped to reflect the cutting-edge and innovative style that is now synonymous with the store. Its founder would be proud that it still 'offers something for everyone' - the food halls are exciting, but not intimidating, there is a huge choice of fashions from high street to designer and plenty of toys, cosmetics, stationery and homeware to tempt you. It's relatively easy to navigate your way round the store and there are plenty of cafes and restaurants to keep your energy levels up!

## **Topshop**

You wouldn't think chic came this cheap! The high street darling of the fashion pack, the ever increasing popularity of Topshop knows no bounds. The flagship store on Oxford Street is a sweet haven for girls with four floors of everything you could desire. A snazzy hat range, an endlessly funky vintage section and a strikingly trendy accessory collection, all jazz up the usual selection of dresses, shoes and tops. It's worth braving the crowds in order to bag some of the best bargains in town.

### **15.3.3 - London Markets**

#### **Portobello Road**

The famous Portobello Road market in Notting Hill (remember the film?!) takes place every Saturday from 8:00am to 6.00pm although there are stalls from Monday to Friday, too. On Saturday, it's huge, with over 2,000 stalls, selling everything from books to bric-a-brac and lace to Limoges - even fashion and exotic cooking ingredients are on sale. (This is the place to shop-and-eat and then shop some more.) Even when the markets are not on however Portobello is a fascinating and unique area that is well worth a visit.

#### **Carnaby Street**

The name Carnaby Street is synonymous with 1960s "Swinging London" - a phrase coined by Time magazine. Nowadays the area has gone through something of a revival and is once again boasting cutting-edge designer talents and trendy streetware. With over 140 shops, bars and restaurants shoppers will find ad hoc collections like those at The Dispensary which stocks everything from John Smedley to Elspeth Gibson for the girls. There are also a couple of stores (notably Diesel and Animal) owned by multinational clothing corporations posing as urban clothing outlets. Carnaby Street is a fantastic place to buy footwear, but there's also great vinyl to be had at Deal Real records or Phonica, a number of fine cosmetics shops and a few boutiques selling vintage mod clothing - The Face is probably the best. There is a shortcut from Carnaby Street to Kingly Court, which hosts three floors of one-off 'concept' shops set around an open courtyard. This is the place to go if you want to find items not sold anywhere else in London.

## 15.4 - Eating out in London

Your programme includes a cold buffet breakfast each day and an evening meal, but there will be plenty of opportunities to eat out while you are in London.

Many of the restaurants will be familiar to you, such as Pizza Hut, and we have all of the fast food restaurants such as McDonalds, Burger King etc.

For the more adventurous, we have listed a number of individual and chain restaurants that you may like to visit.

London is a food lovers paradise, with around 7,000 restaurants serving cuisine from more than 70 different countries. The city offers many eatery delights and, whether you are having a delicious dinner using the vouchers that we have provided as part of your programme, or a quick lunch in between sightseeing, you can rest assured, you will never be far from a restaurant, cafe or coffee bar!

Luncheon Vouchers are the most popular restaurant vouchers in London. They are presented in a book that will be given to you by your group leader when you are in London. The book is valued at £10.00 and contains 50 pence, £1 and £2 vouchers. You may use any combination to make payment at your chosen restaurant, cafe or coffee shop. No change will be given but you may spend more than the value of the vouchers and pay cash to make up the difference.

When using the vouchers please double check before you sit down that the restaurant, cafe or coffee shop accepts them, just in case! We have listed some of the better known restaurants, fast food chains, sandwich shops, coffee shops and supermarkets around London who accept the Luncheon Vouchers.

These recommendations were made by Joe Bone, whose personal opinions are contained within the feature. As well as restaurants that accept Luncheon Vouchers, he has also suggested a few places that might be worth a look should you have a spare lunchtime or evening, where we can guarantee you will receive an enjoyable and, of course, a tasty meal.

### 15.4.1 - Restaurants

**Pizza Hut** We have a feeling that many of you will already know of, and will probably have sampled the delights of Pizza Hut and their range of pizzas and pizza bases, (my preference being the stuffed crust vegetarian). Pizza Hut are also now serving pastas which I can once again say through personal experience are really rather delicious. There is of course a splendidly stocked salad bar and so healthy eating is a very real possibility at Pizza Hut. My suggestion if you are hungry would be the lunchtime buffet. This includes all you can eat pizza and salad bar for only £6.50p. Another quick suggestion is always ask the waiting staff what deals they have on in that specific outlet, as sometimes they have fantastic offers for larger groups. [www.pizzahut.co.uk](http://www.pizzahut.co.uk)

**Pizza Express** is a personal favourite of mine. It offers delicious and very high quality pizzas in classy restaurant settings. However if you do not really have a pizza craving, then they offer some very authentic pasta dishes and salads to die for! The waiting staff are always really helpful and friendly and you will definitely have a fantastic time. I would strongly recommend the dough balls and probably a 'La Reine' pizza! Its worth noting that Pizza Express is more of a dinner venue, and that the portions tend to be smaller than at Pizza Hut, so my suggestion would be to visit a Pizza Express for a delicious and very fun dinner. [www.pizzaexpress.com](http://www.pizzaexpress.com)

**Bella Italia** is a very good Italian restaurant. The restaurants are always very welcoming and Italian food does of course dominate the menu, which I think is a very good thing! You can either have a quick pasta, salad or panini for lunch off their incredibly good value set menu for £5.95. However you can also choose to relax, unwind and have a delicious leisurely meal, ideal for dinner. Bella Italia caters for both possibilities. Indeed the pizzas, salads and the lunchtime panini's are all delicious, but personally I think that their pastas are the real winners, with the 'Fusilli Pollo Spinaci' being an absolute delight! [www.bellaitalia.co.uk](http://www.bellaitalia.co.uk)

**Spaghetti House** Now before I went to a spaghetti house, I honestly thought that they only sold different types of spaghetti! So I was and still am delightfully surprised at the range of dishes on offer. It is Italian fare, and their spaghetti bolognese is the best! However they also offer fantastic meat dishes, the 'Scallopini alla Milanese' being in my eyes the cream of the crop! Well worth noting they do a unique and I think brilliant offering of a large pasta dish of your choice for two people at £15.00, so £7.50p each. The staff are charming and the food quality never lets you down. [www.spaghetthouse.co.uk](http://www.spaghetthouse.co.uk)

**Luini's Restaurant** is a cosy little Italian restaurant that just specialises in brilliant and authentic Italian food. It is described as a family restaurant that people just want to get engaged in! It is very warm and friendly and full of locals, which is a testament to how good the food is, as people just keep coming back for more! The pizzas are a strong recommendation here, and a quick note of caution they do like to use a lot of garlic...The plus side to this of course is that the vampires will stay well away!

**La Quercia D'oro** is a traditional Italian restaurant. It is a very well run family affair, with the lasagne being of great quality. They serve traditional Italian dishes and cater superbly for vegetarians. They do not serve pizza, but their pastas more than make up for this. I would strongly recommend you to choose from the daily specials board rather than from the menu, as they are fresh and truly delicious. A charming Italian restaurant ideal for smaller groups for a hearty Italian meal.

**Weatherspoons** is arguably the best value eating in London. It has a very pub like feel, and they offer a fantastic range of special deals throughout each week. For example they have the 'Curry Club', from 3pm till 10pm on Thursdays or a 'Steak Club' on

Thursdays. Their broad menu ranges from burgers through to salads and sandwiches. However my weakness is always the puddings they have on offer, and my what a selection they have! The profiteroles are superb, but then again so is the jam sponge pudding and not forgetting the Belgian waffle with chocolate sauce! Weatherspoons is ideal for a simple, casual and great value British meal, otherwise known as 'top pub grub'! [www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk](http://www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk)

**Yates** is similar to Weatherspoons in that it offers great value pub grub. They have tremendous offers available and my personal favourite is the 2 for 1 pudding offer they do! I am sure you are meant to share these but I tend to get 2 puddings for myself they are so good! They have a great deal of a burger, fries and a drink for £4.95p, something I have personally taken advantage of many a time. Their menu has a huge range and you will definitely find something you like. They have an award winning sausage and mash and some fantastic pies available, the 'chicken and bacon pie' being the pick of the bunch. They also do light bites, for example a bacon sandwich and hot drink for only £1.50p. I would strongly suggest looking at the many special offers Yates's do, as they are probably the best deals around. [www.weareyates.co.uk](http://www.weareyates.co.uk)

At **Garfunkel's** you are always welcomed very warmly and they pride their menu on being all things to all people. Indeed I am yet to have a bad meal there. They serve the most popular British and American dishes around, and once again the value is absolutely superb. I would personally go there for a good steak, or a piece of grilled chicken. However they have much more on offer, with omelettes, burgers and salads being of a very high quality. Lest I forget their rather brilliant pudding menu!! Ideal for lunch and dinner alike Garfunkel's never disappoints and I always leave with a smile on my face. [www.garfunkels.co.uk](http://www.garfunkels.co.uk)

**Nandos** is a Portuguese peri-peri good restaurant, excuse the pun! It serves fresh grilled chicken to order with your select marinade. They literally cook it to order, so its fresh and delicious. I would strongly recommend the half chicken in the hot peri-peri marinade. If you do not really fancy chicken, they also do fresh grilled steak. The side orders are also delicious. I generally opt for the spicy rice and the Greek salad. Nando's is a personal favourite, its tasty and really rather fun. A definite personal recommendation. [www.nandos.co.uk](http://www.nandos.co.uk)

These restaurants do not accept the vouchers, but the food is fab, the value superb and if you're fancying something different, definitely worth a go!

We recommend:

**My Old Dutch** Now as strange as it seems given the name, this is a superb sweet and savoury pancake restaurant. Now firstly let me warn you the pancakes here are ginormous!! However they are superb value and utterly delicious. My 100% favourite and thus the one I would urge you to consider is the 'My Old Dutch' Savoury pancake. I recently went in, and they had a fantastic meal deal, which is well worth asking about in

the various outlets. This was £6.00 for a one course pancake meal. Trust me, it is very unlikely you will want more than one pancake lol! [www.myolddutch.com](http://www.myolddutch.com)

**The Rock & Sole Plaice** is simply the best name for a fish and chip restaurant ever! It serves brilliant fresh and authentic fish and chips in a unique and altogether delightful surrounding! The food is very good, and well the prices are tip top for the quality you receive. Also with a name like this, it has to be worth a visit, if not for a photo opportunity!

**Carluccio's** is a regular of mine. However the key to a delicious meal here is to keep it simple. It is essentially a deli style Italian owned by the famous chef Carluccio himself. I reckon if you get a pasta dish here, you will fall in love with Carluccios, the lasagne being a renowned and world famous dish. My personal favourite at Carluccios are the 'Arancini Di Riso', These are unusual and well worth a try! A good pasta dish and a drink will be around the £10. [www.carluccios.com](http://www.carluccios.com)

**Wagamama's** is a personal favourite of mine, especially back in my university days. It is quick, simple and cooked to order. As the name suggests it is Japanese, and a noodle bar. You sit in rows of tables and its often a chance to have a chat with complete and utter strangers. The food in my opinion is fantastic, but I would strongly recommend two dishes that are favourites amongst regular Wagammama foodies. The 'Ginger Chicken Udon Noodles' are superb and the 'Chicken Katsu Curry' is just sooo good!!! For well under £10 you can have a delicious meal. [www.wagamama.com](http://www.wagamama.com)

**Gourmet Burger Kitchen (GBK)** as the name suggests, is a burger bar! However it is a step up from McDonald's or Burger King. The burgers are practically a work of art, and in truth I am yet to figure out the best way to eat them as they are stacked too high to bite into! The burgers are really yummy, however you must remember to add chips as a side order as they do not come with the burger. Again £10 will get you a delicious and monstrously big burger, chips and drink. A fun place, and well you don't often get to eat a work of art! [www.gbk.co.uk](http://www.gbk.co.uk)

These two are an unforgettable experience, and should definitely be tried for an exceptional evening out!

**The Rainforest Cafe** In truth this has to be seen to be believed!! No seriously!! It really is like eating in a rainforest. Tropical fish tanks and trees surround you... the food is also rather good too!! There is a dish for everyone, ranging from ribs, steak and burgers to pastas and salads. I would definitely urge everyone to pay a quick visit to the Rainforest Cafe, as it really is a unique and bizarre but brilliant experience. [www.therainforestcafe.co.uk](http://www.therainforestcafe.co.uk)

**Hard Rock Cafe** is so famous it transcends a description, however I will try. For a fun night out this is the place to be! You may have a little wait outside, but if you give them a call and book a table, this may well be a wait which can be avoided. If you decide to go

here, you must have a burger of one of their many varieties, enjoy the music and take a load of pictures. You will have a 'one hit wonderful time', that much I can guarantee. Please excuse the rather awful pun at the end there! [www.hardrock.com](http://www.hardrock.com)

**Planet Hollywood** - Enjoy a mouth-watering selection of Tex-Mex, Cajun, burgers, brownies and cocktails in this restaurant celebrating the very best of Hollywood. Planet Hollywood is the world's one and only dining experience inspired by the glamour of Hollywood. [www.planethollywoodlondon.com](http://www.planethollywoodlondon.com)

#### 15.4.2 - Fast Food

**Burger King** as you will all know, does rather good burgers. It offers a huge variety and now even offers some healthy eating baguettes. Sadly they do not offer the diddy doughnuts anymore, however the burgers are always tasty and well worth a nibble!

**McDonalds** is another fast food chain, I am sure you will all be more than familiar with. In truth, I recently went to a McDonald's and was really very very impressed. They too offer the full range of burgers, however they now have a fresh Deli sandwich section, and a fresh salad section, both of which are delicious and healthy too..bonus!! I would strongly recommend the Chicken and bacon deli sandwich, with chips of course.

**KFC**, or should I say Kentucky Fried Chicken, from the Colonel himself. KFC is most probably the dearest on the purse of the fast fooderies, however if you want finger licking chicken, you simply can not avoid a trip to KFC. The Zinger burger is very zingy and splendid. However the three pieces of chicken option with chips always hits the spot.

**Gregg's** is the surprise fast food outlet in my eyes, surprising in that its really very good! Essentially it is a bakery offering sandwiches, pasties, pies and bakery options. I went there to sample their food, and what amazed me most was the value for money. It is incredibly inexpensive. You can honestly have good traditional Cornish Pasties, sausage rolls and pies with a drink for under £3. I would strongly urge a trip to Greggs, as its tasty, fresh and great value. P.S. Definitely try their jam doughnut!!

#### 15.4.3 - Cafe's

**The Bagel Factory**, serves as its name suggests - bagels! However, these are not just ordinary bagels, but fresh and delicious bagels. They have an infinite range of fillings and you simply choose what you wish to have. They are very good and if you buy a cookie also freshly baked and delicious, and a drink, you will easily be eating for under £5. I hear that they also serve very tasty hot drinks and juices, which are cheaper than other comparable cafe's and coffee shops.

**Prêt a Manger**, with such a glorious name, you would expect glorious food and they do not disappoint. They stress the natural qualities of the food, no additives or preservatives, just fresh, quality ingredients. They serve a range of sandwiches, sushi to go, baguettes, wraps and cakes. However they often do a good soup of the day with a

delicious crusty bread, this being my recommendation. They also serve the hot drinks and fresh juices one would expect. On a side note, the most interesting option that you have to see to believe is the 'breadless sandwich' that they serve, a pretty novel ideal I thought anyway!

**Subway**, need I really say more...In truth this is a favourite American export of mine, great sandwiches, very quick, great prices and well try the 'Reggae Reggae Chicken Sub'!! Also I have a weakness for their Smarties cookie, so naturally I would strongly recommend the trying of one, I hear they are super healthy!

#### **15.4.4 - Coffee shops**

**Starbucks**, now I am not sure of your view on Starbucks, but I am a big fan of their hot chocolate. In truth I would feel dishonest trying to explain Starbucks to those who invented the franchise, so I will just tell you that I am a huge fan of their cinnamon swirl, and well in London Starbucks is quite remarkably the only place where I have ever found one!

**Coffee Republic**, if we are being brutally honest is a creation born out of the success of Starbucks! It is in essence the child of the mother of all coffee houses. However that is not to say that it is not as good, just slightly different, maybe not as predictable, however sometimes unexpectedly better! I would say through personal experience that they do very good espressos and often have some great paninis and sandwiches on offer, although the cakes and hot chocolate are still better at the more experienced mother like Starbucks.

#### **15.4.5 - Supermarkets**

**Tesco's** are a saviour to me personally, they have 24 hour a day Tesco metros at virtually every corner of London. They offer everything you would need and do good sandwiches and wraps, plus have excellent bakery sections! The prices are good and the convenience is quite simply marvellous!

**Waitrose** is if you like the Hugh Grant of supermarkets, while Tesco's is the charming in its own right Jamie Bell of supermarkets. Waitrose is quality and slightly more expensive than the likes of Tesco's, however why not treat yourself to their Waitrose finest range of sandwiches, cakes and specifically their Waitrose finest biscuits. My suggestion to you would be to get essentials and basics at Tesco's, but occasionally when you feel you deserve a treat, pop into a Waitrose!

#### **15.4.6 - Where to use your Luncheon Vouchers**

Below are listed the names, addresses and map references of a range of restaurants in key areas that you will be visiting, including close to your hotel, that take luncheon vouchers. The listings have been divided into popular tourist areas: Piccadilly, Covent Garden, Westminster, Victoria, Tower Hill, Notting Hill and Marble Arch. Each of these

covers a wide area, for example, Marble Arch covers Bond Street, Oxford Street, Paddington and Edgware Road.

### **Piccadilly**

Stations: Piccadilly Circus, Hyde park, Green Park, Shaftesbury Avenue.

Attractions: Royal Academy, Piccadilly Circus, China Town, Hyde park, Selfridges, Hamleys, Libertys, Planet Hollywood.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>Map ref</u> (Itinerary)
Book)			
Nandos	Soho, 10 Frith Street	020 74940932	C7
	57-59 Goodge Street	020 76370708	C7
Bella Italia	61-63 Shaftesbury Avenue	020 74940288	D7
	64-66 Duke Street	020 74951110	C6
Garfunkels	265 Regent Street,	020 76291870	C6
	6 Sherwood Street	020 74370130	D7
	55 Duke Street	020 74995000	D6
Spaghetti House	15 Goodge Street	020 76366582	C7
	74 Duke Street	020 76296097	D6
	47 Bryanston Street	020 77249615	C5
	12 Woodstock Street	020 74080648	C6
Pizza Express	Langham Place	020 75803700	C6
	Barrett Street	020 76291001	C6
	Bruton Place	020 74951411	D6
	Thayer Street	020 79352167	C6
	Charlotte Street	020 75801110	C7
	Dean Street	02074379595	C7
	Greek Street	020 77347430	C7
Soho Pizzeria	16 Beak Street	020 74342480	C7
Pizza Hut	67 Duke Street	020 76290030	C6
	79 Oxford Street	020 77344534	C6

### **Covent Garden**

Hotels: The Royal Horseguards The Charing Cross

Stations: Holborn, The Strand, Aldwych

Attractions: Covent Garden, Somerset House, National Gallery, Leicester Square, Trafalgar Square.

Nandos	66-68 Chandos Place	020 78364719	D8
Bella Italia	22 Leicester Square	0207 3210016	D7
	1 Cranbourn Street, Leicester Square	020 77341246	
	D7		
	70 St Martins Lane	020 78360484	D8
	30 Henrietta Street	020 78368396	D8
Yates (Pub)	30 Leicester Square	020 78397967	D7
Garfunkels	3 Northumberland Avenue	020 78395148	D8
	420 Strand	020 78365631	D8
Spaghetti House	24 Cranbourn Street	020 78368168	D7
	30 St Martin's Lane	020 78361626	D7
Pizza Express	147 Strand, London	020 78367716	D8
	81 St Martin's Lane	020 78368001	D7
Pizza Hut	19 Leicester Square	020 79309114	D7
	140a Shaftesbury Avenue	020 73794655	D7
	56-59 Strand, London	020 79250050	D8
J. D Weatherspoon	105-107 Charring Cross Road	0207 287 6039	C7

### **Westminster**

Hotels: The Westminster Bridge Park Plaza, The Riverbank Park Plaza

Stations: Waterloo

Attractions: London Eye, Tate Modern, Westminster Cathedral, Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, St James' Palace.

Nandos	107-108 Wilton Road	020 79765719	E7
Bella Italia	152 Victoria Street	020 78287664	E7
Garfunkels	122 Victoria Street	020 78345124	E7
	Victoria Place	020 76305991	E7
Spaghetti House	3 Bressenden Place	020 78345650	E6
	77 Knightsbridge	020 72358141	E5
	66 Haymarket	020 78393641	
	D7		
Pizza Express	26 Panton House Haymarket	020 79308044	D7
Pizza Hut	53-54 Haymarket	020 83950417	D7
J. D Weatherspoon	The Lord Moon of The Mall 16-18 Whitehall	020 7839 7701	D8

### **Victoria**

Stations: South Kensington ,Knightsbridge, Sloane Sq

Hotels: The Grosvenor, Park Plaza Victoria

Attractions: Albert Memorial, Victoria and Albert Museum, Natural History Museum, Science Museum, Kensington Palace, Harrods and Harvey Nichols.

Pizza Express	154, Victoria St, London	020 78281477	E7
Spaghetti House	3 Bressenden Place London	020 78345650	E7

Nandos	107-108, Wilton Rd, London	020 79765719	E7
Garfunkels	Victoria Place Shopping Centre, Victoria Place	0207 630 5991	E7
J. D Weatherspoon	The Willow Walk Wilton Road Victoria	020 7828 2953	E7

### **Tower Hill**

Hotels: Tower Hotel  
 Stations: Monument, St Pauls  
 Attractions: Tower Bridge, Tower Of London,

Pizza Express	Byward Street London	020 76265025	D11
	St Pauls Cathedral, 1 New Fetter Lane	020 75838880	C9
Nandos	114-118 Commercial Street	020 7650 7775	B11
Bella Italia	28 Wellington Street	020 72409740	C8
J. D Weatherspoon	The Pommelers Restaurant		
	196-198 Tower Bridge Road	020 73781399	E11
The Liberty Bounds	15 Trinity Sq Tower Hill	020 74810513	C11

### **Notting Hill**

Hotel: Hilton Kensington  
 Stations: Shepherds Bush, Holland Park, Notting Hill Gate,  
 Attractions: Portobello Rd, Westbourne Grove, Westfield's Shopping Centre

Pizza Express	37, Notting Hill Gate, London	020 72296000	D3
	Unit 3126, Westfield Shopping Centre,		
	Ariel Way, London	020 87491500	Off map
Spaghetti House	The Loft, Ariel Way, Westfield	020 73950390	Off map
Nandos	63, Westbourne Grove, London	020 73139506	C3
	58-60 Notting Hill Gate, London	020 7243 1647	D3
Bella Italia	60 Old Brompton Road	0207 5844028	E5
J. D Weatherspoon	The Central Bar, Unit 1 West 12, Shopping Centre		
	Shepherds Bush Green	020 77464290	Off map
	The William Morris Swan Island		
	2-4 King Street Hammersmith	020 87417175	Off map

### **Marble Arch**

Hotels: Thistle Marble Arch Hotel , Cumberland Hotel, Hilton London Metropole  
 Stations: Edgware Rd, Bond St, Oxford Circus, Paddington,  
 Attractions: Oxford Street, Hyde Park, Winter Wonderland

Pizza Express	23, Bruton Place, Mayfair, London,	0207 4951411	D6
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Bella Italia	108-110, Queensway, London	020 72292439	C4
Caffe Uno	5 Argyll Street, London W1	020 7437 2503	C7
Garfunkels	Oxford Street	020 75188290	C6
Nandos	57-59 Goodge Street London	020 7637 07082	C7
	Berners Street London	020 7323 9791	C6
	10 Frith Street- London	020 7494 0932	C7
J. D Weatherspoon	The Tyburn 18-20 Edgware Rd	020 77234731	C5
	The Metropolitan		
	7 Station Approach Marylebone Road	020 7486 3489	B5

Your vouchers are intended to be used to purchase dinner, so we have listed only full service restaurants in this feature. There are however, a number of other eateries that accept your vouchers.

If you would prefer to eat on the move a number of fast food restaurants accept the vouchers including Mc Donalds, KFC and Burger King. Soup, salad and sandwich cafes such as Pret a Manger and Eat. If you are not feeling particularly hungry the vouchers can also be used in coffee shops such as Starbucks and Coffee Republic. If you would prefer to pick up food and go back to your hotel, the vouchers are accepted in supermarkets including Tesco, Asda, Sainsburys, Morrisons, Waitrose, Boots and Iceland.

## 15.5 - Evening Entertainment

London is a vibrant city and the entertainment does not stop when the sun goes down! There are numerous theatres in the West End – see your hotel concierge for what’s on, or go to the TKTS booth in Leicester Square, where you can get discounts of up to 50% for some shows leading up to the day of the performance ([www.tkts.co.uk](http://www.tkts.co.uk)). There are also many cinemas showing the latest movies (usually several weeks after they have opened in the US!) – see your resource person for advice. There are malls that open late, such as the Trocadero, and interesting places to visit such as Covent Garden.

### 15.5.1 - Trocadero

Open from 10.00am to midnight everyday, The London Trocadero is a grand centre of leisure, shopping and entertainment located in the heart of the West End. A vibrant place where you can meet up, shop, eat and have endless fun.

[www.londontrocadero.com](http://www.londontrocadero.com)

### 15.5.2 - Covent Garden

When the evenings set in, London’s most historic area becomes an even more magical place to be. There is so much to do, from late night shopping to watching the madcap entertainers and dining in one of the many varied restaurants and cafés. [www.covent-garden.co.uk](http://www.covent-garden.co.uk)

## 15.6 - Shakespeare Wot!

If you are looking for an inexpensive way to spend an evening, and one that has been very well received by participants in the Festival over the past ten years or so, then you may wish to consider joining Geoff Towers for his one man presentation of Shakesperare Wot! The evening will be appealing to not only those who love the theatre and the works of William Shakespeare, but especially to those who don't.

If a night out at the theatre, particularly Shakespeare, sounds as inviting as major dental work, then this show is for you.

Geoffrey Towers, an actor for thirty years, and who for the last thirteen years has worked at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London as an actor, director, lecturer and workshop leader, has devised a special evening's entertainment that makes the works of William Shakespeare fun and entertaining for audiences of all ages and tastes.

This ninety-minute performance is based not only upon Geoffrey's experience as an actor, but also on the hundreds of lectures and workshops he has given at Shakespeare's Globe theatre to audiences ranging from Hawaiian high school students to undergraduates from Harvard University and Imperial College, London. Amongst Geoffrey's Shakespearean performances are leading roles in Romeo and Juliet, Midsummer Night's Dream, Love's Labour's Lost, Julius Caesar, As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night, The Merchant of Venice, and The Taming of the Shrew.

The audience is encouraged to watch and especially participate in scenes from some of Shakespeare's more famous plays. The occasion is nothing short of hilarious, combining the skills of speaking blank verse with improvisation and stand-up comedy. Excerpts from specific plays can be organised in advance.

The performance comes directly to your hotel (or perhaps one adjacent to you). Audience members are encouraged to dress comfortably and are welcome to eat and drink during the show. As a special offer for participants in the New Year's Day Parade and Festival London, tickets are only **US \$10.00** per student. Teachers and adult supporters are free (based on 1 per 10 students). Although, in accordance with UK copyright law, neither video nor audio recordings are permitted, audience members are encouraged to take still photographs – and there will be some 'Kodak moments'!

If you are unsure what to do with your free evening in London during your stay and want something unique and fun to do, then this show is for you. Be like good Queen Bess and have the show come to you!

## 15.7 - Currency exchange

Shops and restaurants in Britain will only accept British currency i.e. £ Pounds Sterling.

There may be exceptions, for instance at the airports, but everyone should expect to exchange their U.S. Dollars into Pounds.

### 15.7.1 - Pound Sterling bills

The bills (or notes as we call them) are in the following denominations; fifty pounds, twenty pounds, ten pounds and five pounds (see pictures below);





### 15.7.2 - Pound Sterling coins

The following coins are used in the United Kingdom; two pounds, one pound, fifty pence, twenty pence, ten pence, five pence, two pence and one penny.



The face of every coin looks similar to the above. The reverse of each coin is below (approximately to scale);



Two pound coin



One pound coin



Fifty pence coin



Twenty pence coin



Ten pence coin

Five pence coin

Two pence coin

One penny

### 15.7.3 - Sterling conversion chart

When out shopping, you may find the following information helpful when looking at prices.

<b>Quick Conversion Chart</b> <b>£1.00 = \$1.60</b> <b>(approx as of February 2011)</b>	
<b>Pound Sterling</b>	<b>U.S. Dollars</b>
<b>£0.63</b>	<b>\$1.00</b>
<b>£1.00</b>	<b>\$1.60</b>
<b>£5.00</b>	<b>\$8.00</b>
<b>£10.00</b>	<b>\$16.00</b>
<b>£50.00</b>	<b>\$80.00</b>

We do recommend that individuals (or chaperone groups) take out safety deposit boxes in the hotel to keep money reserves and passports. We also recommend that everyone brings a money belt with them to carry cash around at all times.

#### 15.7.4 - Changing US Dollars into Sterling

There are several ways that you can obtain Pounds Sterling in the U.K.

- You can exchange US\$ at any bank or exchange bureau. We do not recommend that you bring large amounts of cash with you, as you are not insured in the event of loss. If you do bring a small amount of cash, you generally get better rates of exchange at the banks, but their opening times are restricted to 9.30am to 4.30pm. They are also closed on holidays and weekends (some are open on Saturdays). Exchange bureaux are open much longer hours.
- You can use your bankcard and pin number to obtain cash in Pounds Sterling from ATM's in London. Check with your local bank for a list of charges.
- You can buy travellers cheques in US\$ or in Pounds Sterling before you travel and exchange them for cash at banks, travel offices or change bureau. This is a safe way for individuals to carry 'cash' as lost or stolen cheques can be replaced, free of charge, at any time throughout the period you are in London.

American Express ([www.americanexpress.com/travel](http://www.americanexpress.com/travel)) and Thomas Cook ([www.thomascook.com/](http://www.thomascook.com/)) are the biggest suppliers of travellers cheques. Check with your local office for a list of their charges.

Both American Express and Thomas Cook have offices throughout London and in all major cities in the U.K. and neither charges a commission for exchanging their own \$ travellers cheques.

Please note that banks and exchange bureau do charge commission so it is best to ask what their rates are before you exchange. This is often a flat fee or a fee per cheque so bring higher denomination cheques with you if you can i.e. one \$50 cheque may be cheaper to exchange than five \$10 cheques.

You will need to take your passport with you to exchange travellers cheques, a photocopy will not suffice.

Your hotel can exchange travellers cheques for you at any time (although their insurance does not allow them to hold large cash reserves), but this is only recommended in an emergency as their rates are not as good as in a bank.

Credit cards are accepted in most restaurants and all shops. Master Card and Visa are used widely in the U.K. American Express and Diners Club are used but are not accepted in as many places. You generally get a good rate of exchange on all credit card transactions.

### **15.7.5 - Credit cards and pre-paid charge cards**

Most visitors to the UK pay for their major purchases using credit cards, which usually offer a very competitive rate of exchange. The most popular credit cards are Mastercard and Visa, although American Express and Diners are widely used.

For student visitors, who may not have a credit card, we can recommend a pre-paid credit or charge card, which are widely available in the US. These can be used to purchase goods and services and obtain Sterling cash from ATM's. Parents can pre-pay the credit prior to travel and top up the card during the tour if required. You do need to check with your provider what charges apply, especially for using ATM's aboard.

### **15.8 - Tax free shopping**

Value Added Tax (VAT) is charged at the standard rate of 20.00% (as of January 2011) on most store-bought goods and is always included in the advertised price. As a visitor to the U.K. it is possible for you to re-claim the VAT back on any goods you buy. Not all shops operate the **Retail Export Scheme** and a minimum purchase may be required so you should check at each store. They will ask to see your passport before completing a VAT 407 form.

You then present the goods together with the invoice and form to H. M. Customs at the airport on departure (so keep them in your hand luggage). The store will send you the refund, less an administration fee. Please note that you cannot claim back VAT on restaurant and hotel services.

### **15.9 - Taxis**

If you are lost or just too tired to use public transport, we recommend that you hail one of London's famous black cabs or taxis, licensed to carry up to 5 persons. They will always know the quickest way back to your hotel.

If a taxi is for hire the yellow light on top of the cab will be lit. All you need to do is hail them i.e. stick out your arm and wave!! There is an initial charge on the meter (higher at weekends or late at night), which increases as you travel along. You should tip the driver, 10% is a guideline.