



London Life Hack: Joanna's journeys

Hi! I'm Joanna and I'm a Study Abroad Peer Advisor. In the four years that I have been living in London, I have spent a lot of time on the tube, on buses and on trains. Keep reading for my tips for getting around the city (and beyond!) like a true Londoner!



Recognise this? Chances are, you'll see a lot of this map during your time in London. It's the Transport for [London underground map](#) – or TFL as you'll get used to calling it.



At first, it may look confusing but once you get the hang of it, it's easy to understand. The map is split into different tube lines according to colour, such as the black Northern Line or the grey Jubilee Line. The map also displays the different zones of the underground system, starting with zone 1 which is central London, up to zone 9 (I have to say, I have never ventured this far!)

Peak times are Monday to Friday from 06:30 to 09:30 and 16:00 to 19:00 – off-peak fares apply at all other times. Peak times are the busiest, so if you don't want to spend time squashed up against strangers, try to avoid taking the tube at this time!

The tube and buses are the modes of transport that I use the most, but there is also the London Overground, the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), trams and even riverboats. If you're feeling adventurous, there are also [Santander bicycles](#) for hire at points across the city.





You can do this for as little as £2 – all you need to do is go to a docking station (which are everywhere in the city) with your bank card and touch the screen to get set up! You don't need to book in advance, just hire the bike, ride it where you like and then you can return it to any docking station in the city. It costs £2 to hire a bike for 24 hours – the first 30 minutes of your journey will be free and then for longer journeys, it costs £2 for every extra 30 minutes. Once you've paid, a code will be printed so the bike can be released.

Another great new addition to London transport is the Night Tube, which runs on the Victoria, Central, Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines at the weekend. There are also of course London buses that run all through the night.

💰 Paying for travel 💰

Now you're an expert on how to travel around London, you need to know how to pay for it!

To travel around London, most people use an Oyster card. This works on a pay-as-you-go basis, so all you need to do is top up at a machine at a station or online when you need to.

My Oyster card is linked to my 16-25 student railcard – this gives me a 1/3 off the price of off-peak journeys on the tube. To do this, I just took both my Oyster card and student railcard to a ticket office and they loaded my student discount onto my Oyster!



Another option is of course to get a student Oyster card – this allows you to get 30% off the price of adult-rate Travelcards and Bus & Tram Pass season tickets.

You may be wondering what the difference between a normal Oyster card with the student railcard discount added and a student Oyster card is... If you're planning on buying a Travelcard (more on those later) then a student Oyster card is better, as this will allow you to get a discount on the Travelcard. If, however, you will mainly be making individual journeys, a normal Oyster card is fine.

Yet another option for paying for travel is to use a **contactless card** – just tap this in the same way you would an Oyster card. Using your contactless card costs the same amount as using an Oyster, and you don't have to worry about topping it up!





When travelling on the tube, always remember to tap in and out at the start and end of your journey. Stations in central London have ticket barriers, but those a bit further out of the centre, for example if you have taken the Overground, may not so don't forget, or you will be overcharged for your journey!

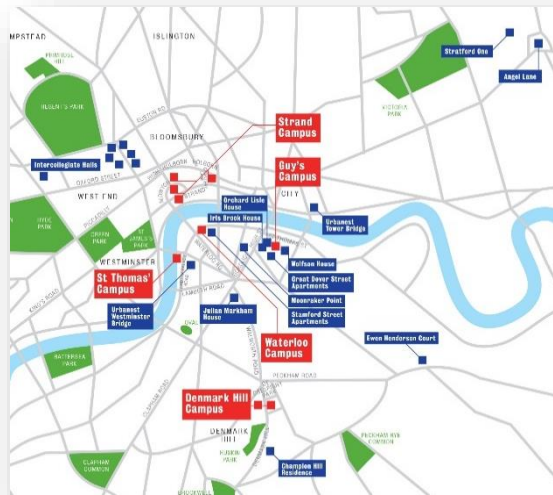


Travelcards

Now back to those [Travelcards](#) that I mentioned earlier. Travelcards give you the freedom to travel as much as you like on the London transport network – this is great if you know you'll be travelling every day from your accommodation to classes. Travelcards can be bought for your Oyster cards, but you should make sure that it covers all the zones you plan on travelling through. For example, if you live in Stratford One, you may wish to get a travelcard that is valid for zone 1 – 2.

Travelcard Season tickets are available for 7 days, one month, or for any period longer than this up to a year. These can be bought from stations throughout the city, just like Oyster cards can.

Getting to classes



Once you've got your bearings in the city, it's time to start thinking about how to get to classes!

For classes in the Strand campus, the nearest tube station is Temple, and Holborn is only a 5-10 minute walk away. There are also numerous buses that also stop right outside the doors! Waterloo is, as the name suggests, next to Waterloo station. And finally, Guys Campus' closest station is London Bridge. While your classes will probably all take place on the same campus, it is useful to know how to get to all of the university's campuses.





Apps

So now you know how to get around London and how to pay for this – but how do you find the best route to new places? Or how do you plan a journey during a tube strike?

Your first port of call should be the [TFL website](#). This allows you to plan journeys, see tube maps and also get updates in case there are problems on the network!

While the TFL website is great, my favourite app is [Citymapper](#) - you may already be familiar with this app as it operates in a lot of cities. It's as simple as typing in your destination, and the app shows you the best, fastest or cheapest way to get there. It even shows you how much an Uber to your destination would cost, or how long it would take to walk there.



With Citymapper you can also set where your home is, so if you find yourself stuck in a new part of London wondering how to get home, you just tap 'get me home' and it will show you the best way to get there.

Google Maps, as I am sure you are aware, is also a great way for getting directions, particularly for walking. While transport in London is great, if you have the opportunity, you should definitely take time to walk around, as this is a great way to discover the city, especially when you first arrive!



As previously mentioned, Uber, like in many other cities, of course operates in London. This is useful if you're out late with a group of friends and need to get home.





London and beyond



If you fancy getting out of the city and exploring the rest of the UK, then the [Trainline](#) will be your new best friend. This is the best way to find cheap train tickets for travelling across the country. To make it even cheaper, make sure you get a 16-25 railcard, which will give you 1/3 off the price. If the route you want to take is with Virgin Trains (for example London to Liverpool or Manchester, or London to Edinburgh), check out their [cheap fare finder](#) for great deals.

Some recommendations for places in the UK to visit for a weekend break are Manchester, Liverpool, Bath, Brighton and Edinburgh – all of which are just a couple of hours on a train from London.

Taking the Eurostar to Paris for the weekend? Or flying to Rome for reading week? While London has a million things to do, as well as balancing your studies, it is of course nice to explore elsewhere during your study abroad experience. It's also useful to know the best ways to get to your dream destinations, and also how to get to the relevant airports or train stations in London.

If flying isn't for you, then the Eurostar is a great idea. With this you can get from London St Pancras to Paris, Brussels, Lille and even the South of France!

When you're first thinking about visiting a new place, it's useful to check [Skyscanner](#) for the best deals. EasyJet and RyanAir are the UK's cheapest airlines, so it is also worth checking their websites – RyanAir, like Virgin Trains, also has a [cheap fare finder](#).





For the braver ones amongst you, as well as flying or taking the train, there are coaches departing from London. Within the UK, [National Express](#) is the go-to option, but for getting to mainland Europe, [Megabus](#) is the way to go. These journeys can be bought very cheaply (even as cheap as just a few pounds) but spending hours on a coach is of course not for everyone!



London is lucky enough to have many international airports and I'm sure many of you arrived in the UK at one of those! Despite this, some of these airports can be a little tricky to get to from central London.

Heathrow – London's busiest airport. Can be reached on the Piccadilly Line, with stations in different terminals, in around 40-50 minutes. There is also the Heathrow Express from Paddington – this takes just 15 minutes, but is more expensive than the tube.

Gatwick – The city's second busiest airport – the easiest way to get there is to take the train that goes through London Bridge, Victoria or King's Cross St Pancras.

Luton – Again can be reached by train from central London, in as little as 22 minutes.

Stansted – Train services to London are on the Stansted Express train which goes to and from London Liverpool Street, taking around 45 to 50 minutes.

London City Airport – the closest airport to the city centre. This airport can be reached on the DLR.

Check out their websites and [TFL](#) for more information.

