

Riskline / Destination Report

This document was generated on 22 December 2023



UNITED KINGDOM

Overall risk level

Low Take normal safety precautions	Moderate Take normal safety precautions	Medium Exercise caution	High Reconsider travel	Extreme Defer non-essential travel
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The Overall Risk Level will be determined by the higher of the Security Risk Level and Covid-19 Risk Level.

Security risk level

Low Take normal safety precautions	Moderate Take normal safety precautions	Medium Exercise caution	High Reconsider travel	Extreme Defer non-essential travel
Safe, with few security risks	Generally safe, with some predictable security risks	Not completely safe, but typically presents predictable security risks	Can be dangerous and may present unexpected security risks	Extremely dangerous and presents unpredictable security risks
Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Chaotic; travel impossible

Covid-19 risk level

Low Take normal safety precautions	Moderate Take normal safety precautions	Medium Exercise caution	High Reconsider travel	Extreme Defer non-essential travel
Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to Low Risk locations, which have limited or no restrictions on international travel and domestic activities.	Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to Moderate Risk locations, which have few restrictions on international travel and limited or no restrictions on domestic activities.	Unvaccinated travellers should exercise caution when travelling to Medium Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should take normal precautions. These locations may have some restrictions on international travel, but few restrictions on domestic activities.	Unvaccinated travellers should reconsider their need to travel to High Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should exercise caution. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and partially restricted domestic activities.	Unvaccinated travellers should defer non-essential travel to Extreme Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should reconsider their travel. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and domestic activities.

Overview

Upcoming Events

23 December 2023 - 24 December 2023

- **Moderate risk:** Pro-Palestine activists to rally in Edinburgh, Scotland on 23 December

Local sources indicated that activists will rally outside the Barclays Bank (Princes Street) from 09:30-13:00 local time/GMT and near Duke of Wellington Equestrian statue from 13:00 local time on 23 December in solidarity with Palestinians amid the ongoing conflict between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants.

24 December 2023 - 25 December 2023

- **Moderate risk:** Travel disruptions anticipated at London King's Cross railway station on 24 December

Several train companies, including Great Northern, Grand Central, Hull Trains, LNER, Thameslink and Lumo, are recommending against travel to or from London King's Cross railway station on 24 December as extensive engineering works between the station and Peterborough, in England's Cambridgeshire, will result in the suspension of most services.

24 December 2023 - 25 December 2023

- **Moderate risk:** London's King's Cross, Paddington stations to close on 24 December - Update

The National Rail announced that London's King's Cross and Paddington stations will be closed on 24 December, due to engineering works, with services disrupted including to South Wales, Bristol, West Country, Edinburgh, Leeds, Newcastle, Peterborough and Heathrow Airport (LHR/EGLL). Services will start and end at Reading, and connect with Ealing Broadway and London Waterloo.

Travel Advisories

● Moderate risk: Nationwide strikes in transport and healthcare

Anticipate possible disruptions to travel and healthcare services nationwide, especially in major urban hubs, in the near-term, due to industrial action by several unions over pay and working conditions.

Upcoming strike dates:

Travel:

22 December: Unionised public transport workers employed by Translink plan to stage strikes across Northern Ireland on 22 December, amid an ongoing dispute over pay. All rail and bus services will be cancelled and cross-border rail services will also be severely affected. Cross-border rail services will also be severely affected, with a limited Enterprise service operating between Dublin and Dundalk only.

5-11 January 2024: London Underground staff represented by the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) plan to strike from 18:00 local time/GMT on 5 January 2024 through 11 January 2024, amid a long-running dispute over pay. Various workforces will participate in the strike on different days, including Track Access Control, Power Control and London Underground Control Centre workers and Service Controller and Service Operator members.

Healthcare

20-23 December: Junior doctors represented by the British Medical Association (BMA) will strike in England from 07:00 local time/GMT on 20 December until the same time on 23 December, amid an ongoing dispute over salaries.

3-9 January 2024: Junior doctors represented by the British Medical Association (BMA) will strike in England from 07:00 local time/GMT on 3 January 2024 until the same time on 9 January 2024, amid an ongoing dispute over salaries.

15-18 January 2024: Junior doctors represented by the British Medical Association (BMA) will strike in Wales from 07:00 local time/GMT on 15 January 2024 until the same time on 18 January 2024, amid an ongoing dispute over pay.

A series of strikes over low pay and work conditions have affected several sectors across the country and are expected to continue as unions are balloting their members on further strike actions. After the refusal of the latest pay offer from the Rail Delivery Group following failed negotiation talks, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (Aslef), representing train drivers and other rail workers, announced a series of further strikes affecting nationwide rail services over the following months. There is typically no or very limited service on strike days, with most companies cancelling services altogether, while services are frequently delayed on the day following a strike. Strikes were also announced by security workers at **London Heathrow Airport (LHR/EGLL)**, while similar strikes are likely at **Edinburgh Airport (EDI/EGPH), Scotland**, in the near-term, as Unite union-affiliated airport workers, including those employed in security, terminal operations and search areas, were balloted on strike action in May. Unionised civil service workers, including workers in passport offices and border posts, have also staged sporadic strikes in recent months and further industrial action is scheduled through June. Meanwhile, more strikes are expected to be announced by healthcare workers, especially junior doctors and nurses, after they rejected the most recent pay offer.

Industrial disputes across healthcare, transport and other sectors started in the summer of 2022 over pay and work conditions, severely impacting services countrywide. While pay disputes with postal workers, London Underground drivers and unionised bus drivers, among others, were resolved at the beginning of 2023, workers in several sectors continue to strike, and there is a possibility of renewed strikes, including by workers in the aviation and healthcare sectors, in the near-term, as underlying grievances go unaddressed and the cost of living crisis worsens. While protests have generally been limited to picket lines outside workplaces, some demonstrations have taken place outside **Downing Street** in **London** and further rallies cannot be ruled out.

Further disruptions to healthcare services, rail services and other modes of travel, including flights and public transport, are likely on strike days. Anticipate increased demand for other modes of transport and allow for additional travel time. Confirm updated itineraries before departure. Avoid all demonstrations over the issue due to the risk of clashes. Track local media to stay informed of situational updates.

● Medium risk: Northern Ireland

Exercise caution for travel to **Northern Ireland** until further notice because of dissident violence and sporadic unrest.

Although the 1998 Good Friday Agreement largely ended more than three decades of violence between mainly Catholic Irish nationalists and Protestant unionists backed by the British security forces, dissident republicans continue to stage sporadic gun and bomb attacks on local officials, security officers and perceived civilian collaborators. Security forces, both on and off duty, are most likely to be targeted in these attacks, although government offices and banks have also been targeted in the past. Security forces are well-trained and equipped to deal with homemade explosive devices that frequently result in security alerts. Evacuations and travel restrictions typically accompany the discovery of such devices, but usually, they last only several hours and end without further incident after a bomb squad operation. Sporadic flare-ups of unrest and attacks on police and civilians have taken place in **east Belfast**, specifically centred around the **Short Strand area** and **Castlereagh Street**. Other possible flashpoints include the northern **Ardoyne district, Tyrone** and **south Armagh**. Demonstrations and bomb call-ins to police may be used as cover to stage attacks on the security forces and bystanders are at risk of being hit by errant gunfire or riot control agents.

In April 2021, multiple incidents of overnight unrest occurred across **Northern Ireland**, including **west Belfast, Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Ballymena** and **Derry's Waterside area**. Over 50 officers were injured and at least 10 people were detained during the violence. On 7 April, a bus was hijacked and set ablaze by petrol bombs on the **junction of Lanark Way and Shankill Road** in **west Belfast**, an intersectional area between nationalist and unionist communities. While no passengers were injured, the incident underscored escalating tensions and risk to bystanders. On the same night, clashes broke out on the loyalist **Shankill Road** and the republican **Springfield Road**. While the factors driving the uptick in violence remain unclear, the unrest follows discontent among unionist communities against 'the Protocol', which established a trade border between **Northern Ireland** and the rest of the United Kingdom as part of the Brexit agreement.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) continues to indicate that there is a "severe" dissident threat level against police, military and prison personnel, especially around the anniversaries of the 1916 Easter Rising on 24-29 April. In January 2019, a car bomb exploded outside a courthouse on **Derry's Bishop Street** without causing injuries. In June 2019, the New IRA (NIRA) claimed

responsibility for a bomb planted under a police officer's vehicle in **east Belfast**; the explosive was found before it could be detonated.

While the Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH), another splinter group of the Real IRA, announced a suspension of "all armed actions against the British state" in 2018, further attacks by other dissident groups, including the New IRA, which vowed to continue its armed campaign in a new-year statement at the beginning of 2023, have continued to occur. In February 2023, the arrest of three individuals was made in relation to the attempted murder of off-duty PSNI Detective Chief Inspector John Caldwell in **Omagh**. The New IRA subsequently acknowledged their involvement in the attack. On 28 March 2023, British authorities raised the Terrorism threat level in Northern Ireland from 'Substantial' (an attack is likely) to 'Severe' (an attack is highly likely).

Visitors to **Northern Ireland** are advised to review personal security measures, immediately report suspicious packages or behaviour and exercise heightened vigilance near state security personnel and infrastructure as well as banks and other commercial establishments. Exercise caution in flashpoint areas, especially at night. Avoid all large crowds. Security alerts are likely to cause significant disruptions to local traffic, and visitors are advised to allow for additional travel time and plot bypass routes in the event of further restrictions.

● **Moderate risk: Localised polio outbreaks ongoing across multiple countries**

There have been localised infection cases of polio vaccine-derived poliovirus types 1, 2 and 3 (cVDPV1, cVDPV2, cVDPV3) reported across multiple countries in 2023. Unvaccinated children and adults are at greatest risk. Travellers should make sure they are fully vaccinated against polio before travelling to countries with an increased risk of exposure to the disease. Government officials might require inbound and outbound travellers to show proof of polio vaccination on their International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP) yellow card.

Polio is an acute viral infection, transmitted via infected faecal matter, usually in contaminated food or water supplies. Symptoms occur anywhere between two to five days after infection and include flu-like signs such as headache, tiredness, fever, stomach pain and nausea, and in some cases meningitis and paralysis. There is no cure for polio but vaccines to protect against the virus exist. In countries like Ukraine and the United States (US) where cases have been reported in previous

years, the risk of the outbreak has decreased in 2023. However, contamination is still possible

Although polio is not endemic to the above countries, vaccine-derived poliovirus types are routinely detected in wastewater samples presenting a risk of infection for unvaccinated individuals. Between 2021 and 2022, multiple countries, namely **Congo-Brazzaville, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, Indonesia, Niger, Cameroon, Algeria, Burundi, Sudan, Togo, Ghana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Benin, Mozambique** and **Niger** have also reported vaccine-derived poliovirus cases, which generally lower than five cases per year. Although rare, cases of wild poliovirus (WPV1) outside of Pakistan and Afghanistan (endemic countries for WPV1) remain a possible threat due to international travel, with only one case recorded in **Malawi** in 2022. **Ukraine**, due to the ongoing effects of conflict, is suffering from compromised sanitary infrastructure and shortages of drinking water, heightening the risk of further infections. Poliovirus circulation has been confirmed in the regions of **Rivne** and **Zakarpattia**. Two children were diagnosed with cVDPV2 in 2021, while a further 19 asymptomatic cases were also detected. Despite **Ukraine** remaining vulnerable to the disease, the outbreak was declared closed in September 2023 thanks to a prompt intervention of the Ministry of Health. **Israel, Yemen** and **Benin** recorded a significant decrease in cases compared to 2022. Samples of cVDPV2 bacteria have been detected in wastewater in **Jerusalem**. In the US, **New York City** authorities detected one infection case with onset paralysis in June 2022. The virus was also detected in wastewater samples from areas in and around New York City. British health authorities detected cVDPV2 in wastewater in **London** in May and August of 2022, but have reported no cases of infection. One sample of cVDPV2 was also detected in wastewater in **Montreal, Canada**, in August 2022.

Travellers to polio-affected countries are advised to get vaccinated against polio before departure. Adults who were vaccinated for polio during childhood should get an additional lifetime booster dose of the vaccine. Once vaccinated, your doctor will provide you with an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP) yellow card; previously vaccinated adults should consult a doctor for vaccination procedures at least a month before travel, while unvaccinated adults should consult a doctor two months prior. International travellers who stay beyond four weeks in countries affected by polio may have to show proof of polio vaccination when exiting that country. To meet this requirement, travellers should receive a polio vaccine between four weeks and 12

months before the date of departure from the country having polio cases. Implement advanced hygiene practices during travel and avoid drinking tap water where possible. Monitor your health for any flu-like symptoms for at least a week after returning from travel.

● **Moderate risk: Seasonal Influenza in the Northern Hemisphere**

Seasonal influenza occurs in the **Northern Hemisphere** from October through May, peaking between December and February. Unvaccinated elderly adults, young children and people with chronic health conditions are at a higher risk. Travellers should ensure they have an up-to-date flu vaccine before departure.

Seasonal influenza is an infectious disease with mostly respiratory symptoms caused by several different influenza viruses, with types A and B causing seasonal epidemics. It is easily transmitted, predominantly via droplet and contact routes and by indirect spread from respiratory secretions on hands, tissues, etc. Infectious aerosols may also play a role in influenza transmission. The incubation period ranges from one to four days, usually around two days. The symptoms include a sudden onset of fever, cough (usually dry), headache, muscle and joint pain, severe feeling of unwell-being, sore throat and a runny nose. Children may also present symptoms of vomiting or diarrhoea. While most people suffer mild illness and recover from fever and other symptoms within a few days to a week or two without requiring medical attention, people of high-risk groups, including pregnant women, children under five years, individuals of age 65 years or older and individuals with chronic or immunosuppressive medical conditions, may suffer from severe illness or death.

Annual influenza epidemics are estimated to cause from three to five million cases of severe illness globally, and around 290,000 to 650,000 respiratory fatalities. However, up to 75 percent of the infections are estimated to be asymptomatic. In temperate climates, which in the **Northern Hemisphere** includes **the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Russia** and other countries, flu season runs primarily between October and May. In **tropical regions**, influenza may occur throughout the year. The 2022/2023 influenza season marked the return of influenza virus activity at almost pre-pandemic levels. The season was characterised by an earlier start and an earlier peak in positivity compared to the four previous seasons, with seasonal influenza A viruses accounting for the majority of infections globally.

The most effective way to prevent seasonal influenza is vaccination. Health authorities recommend a yearly vaccine, particularly to high-risk groups and healthcare workers, as the immunity from vaccination wanes over time. However, the effectiveness of vaccines against seasonal influenza varies annually based on several factors, including how well the inoculation is matched with the most prevalent strain of the virus in circulation. For instance, current vaccines tend to work better against influenza B and influenza A(H1N1) than against influenza A(H3N2). The World Health Organisation (WHO) and national health authorities monitor influenza activity in order to implement timely prevention and control strategies, including vaccination campaigns, as a means to avoid overcrowding of clinics and hospitals and high levels of worker/school absenteeism and productivity losses during peak illness periods. The WHO does not recommend any unique measures for travellers or travel restrictions due to seasonal influenza.

Travellers are advised to ensure they have an up-to-date flu vaccine before departure. Adhere to general hygiene measures, such as regular hand washing with proper drying of the hands, good respiratory hygiene – covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using tissues and disposing of them correctly, avoiding touching one's eyes, nose or mouth, avoiding close contact with sick people and early self-isolation of those feeling unwell, feverish and having other symptoms of influenza to minimise the risk of infecting others in the community. Seek symptomatic treatment and additional medical attention if health deteriorates. Those at high risk for developing severe or complicated illnesses are advised to seek antiviral treatment in addition to symptomatic treatment.

● **Medium risk:** Increased risk of terrorism, travel disruption and unrest in Western countries and their diplomatic representations abroad

Exercise caution for travel across **Western countries**, including **France, Belgium, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, Slovenia** and the **United States (US)**, particularly in densely populated urban centres, as well as in the vicinity of diplomatic representations, amid heightened security and related disruptions due to an increased risk of terror attacks and possible unrest.

Following the Hamas attack into southern Israel on 7 October and Israel's retaliatory strikes in the Gaza Strip, political and religious tensions are elevated

across Europe and North America. Groups or individuals may use the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas to justify attacks on perceived "enemies" or those whose governments are seen as implicated in the conflict. Such attacks have already taken place in **France** and **Belgium**. The risk of further attacks will be elevated for the duration of the conflict; targets thus far have included Israeli and Palestinian nationals as well as civilians whose governments have taken an unequivocally pro-Israel stance.

Since 14 October 2023, some 7,000 additional soldiers have been deployed in **France** as part of 'Opération Sentinelle' to reinforce security, as the country's terror threat level was raised to its highest following the fatal stabbing attack on a teacher by a radicalised 20-year-old male at **Gambetta High School** in **Hauts-de-France's Arras** on 13 October. This attack echoes the killing and beheading of another secondary school teacher by an Islamist militant in **Île-de-France's Éragny-sur-Oise** on 16 October 2020. In both cases, the militants were from the North Caucasus (Chechnya, Ingushetia). On 2 December, one person was killed and two others injured by a 26-year-old knife-wielding man with psychiatric disorders, who had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS), on the **Pont de Bir Hakeim** and **Quai de Grenelle** in **Paris's 15th arrondissement**; the assailant was arrested. In the wake of this latest attack and another foiled terror plot in **Hannover, Germany**, the European Union (UE) is warning of an increased security risk in Europe over the Christmas period, as the war between Israel and Hamas rages on.

On 16 October 2023, on the sidelines of a football match between **Belgium** and **Sweden** at the **Roi-Baudouin stadium** in **Brussels**, a gunman claiming allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) opened fire and killed two Swedish supporters near the **Place Saintelette** in **Brussels** at around 19:00 local time before fleeing. Following the fatal shooting, Belgian authorities raised the terrorist threat level in **Brussels** to level 4 - the highest possible - and lowered it to level 3 for the whole country, meaning an increased police presence on the streets and extra protection in certain sensitive locations, particularly those frequented by the Swedish community, after the alleged suspect was shot dead during a police operation in a café in the **Brussels' Schaerbeek district** on 17 October. This attack comes at a time when **Sweden** is the target of repeated threats due to a series of Quran burnings that took place on its soil in recent months.

Terrorist groups or lone-wolf attackers remain active across **Western countries**, including **France, Belgium, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Spain** and the **US**, and may target tourist areas,

transport hubs, markets/shopping centres, local government facilities and religious buildings. In the general context of very high tensions in the Middle East, terrorist acts committed by Islamists remain the most likely. But the recent targeting of three students of Palestinian descent near the **University of Vermont campus in Burlington, Vermont**, on 25 November, as well as the murder of a Muslim child in **Illinois, United States (US)** in October, is a reminder that attacks may also target Muslims, Jews or other identities viewed as supporters or enablers of the current conflict.

In recent days, a dozen airports in **Europe**, including **France's Biarritz (BIQ/LFBZ), Paris Beauvais (BVA/LFOB), Bordeaux (BOD/LFBD), Lille (LIL/LFQQ), Lyon-Bron (LYN/LFLY), Nantes (NTE/LFRS), Toulouse (TLS/LFBO), Pau Pyrénées (PUF/LFBP), Strasbourg (SXB/LFST), Rennes-Saint-Jacques (RNS/LFRN)** and **Belgium's Ostend-Brugge (OST/EBOS)**, were evacuated due to bomb threats, leading to delays in flight operations and flight diversions. Although similar threats have taken place in recent years, they have become more frequent in the wake of the current conflict between Israel and Hamas and recent terrorist attacks; similar disruptions to operations at airports, train stations, and other critical infrastructure cannot be ruled out in the near-term. Tighter internal border controls have been introduced across **Europe**, including in **France, Belgium, Sweden, Slovenia, Italy, Germany, Austria**, the **Czech Republic** and **Denmark**, due to the threat of Islamic terrorism in border areas, which may result in longer waiting times at border crossings.

Large-scale pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli demonstrations have also been reported in **Western cities**, notably outside Israeli embassies in **Athens, Greece; Madrid, Spain; London, UK; Paris, France**, as well as at **Western embassies** and **consulates** abroad, including the **French Embassy** in Tunis, Tunisia and the **US Embassies** in Doha, Qatar and Beirut, Lebanon, leading in some cases to scuffles with police and disruption to road traffic and public transport services. While most of these demonstrations have been banned by authorities, it cannot be ruled out that similar gatherings may still take place, leading to increased security measures and associated violence in the short to medium term.

Travellers are advised to anticipate heightened security and associated travel disruptions across major urban hubs in the near to medium-term. Due to heightened security measures, there is an increased likelihood of evacuations or disruptions due to bomb scares, false alarms and other security precautions.

Remain vigilant at all times and report suspicious behaviour and objects to local authorities. Remain indoors in areas where police operations are ongoing and comply with all instructions from authorities. Ensure all necessary travel documents are updated and ready to be displayed should authorities request them. Exercise general caution near all places of worship and religious community centres.

Summary

Overall ● Moderate Risk

The United Kingdom (UK) is a **Moderate Risk** destination: take normal safety precautions.

Security ● Moderate Risk

Moderate Risk locations are generally safe, with some predictable security risks. Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays.

Covid ● Moderate Risk

The government has periodically imposed lockdowns and tightened restrictions in response to rising infection rates. While a mass vaccination campaign has significantly reduced the number of deaths, the country has seen periodic sharp upticks in COVID-19 cases driven by the spread of virus variants. Authorities lifted all entry restrictions in March 2022.

Political Instability ● Moderate Risk

The United Kingdom (UK) is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy with a strong economy and significant influence over world politics. It remains largely stable despite ongoing political and economic uncertainty following the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's exit from the European Union (EU).

Conflict ● Low Risk

The UK is currently not a party to any conflict with other states or non-state actors. The country has also been a key member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) since its inception.

Terrorism ● Moderate Risk

Due to the country's colonial past, its support for interventions by the United States (US) in Muslim-majority countries and growing anti-immigrant sentiment, the United Kingdom remains at risk of terror attacks by Islamist extremists and the far-right. The country is also at risk for attacks by republican dissidents, particularly in **Northern Ireland**. However, security forces are experienced, prepared and equipped to respond and prevent attacks.

The risk of terrorism affecting the entire UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) is "Substantial", standing at the third-highest level on a five-tier scale, indicating a likelihood of an attack. Specifically for Northern Ireland, the threat from terrorism originating within Northern Ireland is "Severe", standing at the fourth-highest level on the five-tier scale, signifying a high probability of an attack.

Unrest ● Moderate Risk

Protests and strikes are common across the country, especially in **London**, but they are predominantly peaceful. However, far-right rallies and protests related to football are relatively common and can turn violent. Sectarian riots in **Northern Ireland** are also a recurring issue.

Crime ● Moderate Risk

Crime rates in the United Kingdom (UK) vary across different regions and types of offences and have increased in recent years, particularly in England and Wales. Most unsafe areas across both England and Wales include Cleveland, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, Merseyside, London and Durham. Common types of crimes in the UK include theft, burglary, robbery, and certain types of violent crime.

Natural and Environmental ● Low Risk

The United Kingdom (UK) is not typically associated with frequent or severe natural disasters, however, the country does experience some natural events that can be disruptive, including floods, storms snow and cold weather, and heatwaves. The country's infrastructure and excellent emergency response services are capable of significantly mitigating risks.

Local Travel ● Low Risk

The United Kingdom is one of the easiest countries to navigate for local travel. Road conditions are excellent, public transport is well-maintained and widely available, and air travel is safe and relatively cheap.

Health and Medical ● Low Risk

Health services meet international standards across the country. High-quality prescription drugs are widely available and infectious diseases present little to no risk to travellers.

Political Overview : ● Moderate Risk

The Conservatives secured a landslide victory during the 2019 general election after taking 365 seats, their highest number since 1987. Under the leadership of Boris Johnson, the party made significant gains in traditional Labour areas across **northern England**, with Brexit dominating the campaign period. However, Johnson was forced to resign in July 2022 after losing the support of his party due to several scandals while in office. Liz Truss was appointed prime minister in early September after defeating Rishi Sunak in the subsequent Conservative Party leadership election. However, after only 44 days in office, Truss announced her resignation – making her the shortest-serving prime minister in British history – after her botched economic plan triggered turmoil in global markets. Rishi Sunak was then appointed following a second Conservative leadership contest in late October, becoming the country's third prime minister in as many months. Sunak inherited several crises from his predecessors, including political infighting among the Tory party, a cost of living crisis, and the long-term impact of Brexit.

One of the biggest challenges facing Sunak in the near- to medium-term will be maintaining the backing of his party. Despite inheriting a large majority in the House of Commons, Sunak was not selected during the first Tory leadership election, and many of the party's MPs, who remain loyal to former prime minister Boris Johnson, could derail his attempts to implement legislation. Sunak is the fourth Conservative prime minister in only six years, and aside from the immediate impact on the stability and reputation of the Conservative Party, successive scandals and deep divisions within the ruling party hamper the government's ability to impose effective policies and tackle the economic issues facing the country.

The government is also under increasing pressure to tackle the cost of living crisis, with inflation reaching its highest rate for 30 years and energy prices soaring to record highs. The situation, worsened by Brexit, COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, has triggered a substantial increase in the price of bills and everyday items, with the poorest households being hit hardest. The cost of living crisis is also likely to bankrupt businesses and exacerbate the existing crisis within the National Health Service (NHS). Protests over the issue have been held in **London** and other cities, and economic issues have been a major reason behind the wave of industrial action in several sectors since 2022, including transport and healthcare. With more cuts and austerity measures on the government's agenda as they try to balance the books,

demonstrations and strikes are likely to continue in the near- and medium-term.

Despite years of political and economic uncertainty in the run-up to the country's exit from the European Union (EU), the Withdrawal Agreement Act was ratified by both houses of Parliament and then by the European Parliament, clearing the last hurdle for the country to exit the EU on 31 January 2020. However, the country continues to face uncertainty following Brexit, the full economic impact of which remains unclear. Several major financial institutions in **London** have expanded their presence in the EU or moved their European headquarters to EU member states, to continue benefiting from EU regulations and treaties. Brexit also poses a question for the UK's territorial integrity. The majority party in the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish National Party (SNP), has backed holding a second independence referendum for **Scotland**, however, the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon in early 2023 could delay a second vote on Scottish independence. A majority of voters rejected the 2014 independence referendum but overwhelmingly voted to remain in the EU in the 2016 Brexit referendum. The Northern Ireland protocol – an agreement negotiated during Brexit talks to avoid a hard border between **Northern Ireland** and the Republic of Ireland – also continues to trigger disagreements, which have periodically stopped the Northern Ireland Assembly functioning. However, these disputes are unlikely to result in a push for Irish unification or a resumption of sectarian strife between republicans and loyalists. Brexit also exacerbated tensions along ethnic and religious lines, and police have noted an uptick in racially- and religiously-motivated hate crimes since the 2016 referendum.

Recent incidents

06 May 2023 - 07 May 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Coronation of King Charles III scheduled in London for 6 May 2023

Officials at Buckingham Palace announced that the coronation ceremony of King Charles III will be held at Westminster Abbey in London, on 6 May 2023. Camilla, the Queen Consort, will also be crowned in the ceremony.

Conflict : ● Low Risk

The potential for secessionist conflict in **Northern Ireland (NI)** has subsided since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the Provisional Irish Republican Army's (IRA) declaration to end its armed campaign in 2005. Nonetheless, there has been an increase in acts of political violence in Northern Ireland in recent years, with police and intelligence reports suggesting that recruiting for paramilitaries by smaller Republican and loyalist groups is on the rise. The country's decision to leave the European Union (EU), with loyalists embracing the leave campaign while republicans voting to remain, has the potential to be a destabilising factor, and issues such as the border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, a full EU member, and the dual citizenship of some NI residents could contribute to a slow deterioration of improvements made in NI since 1998.

Terrorism

An elevated threat of attacks by militant Islamists, including the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda, remains. Since the July 2005 **London** suicide bombings by al-Qaeda operatives, there has been an increase in lone-wolf style attacks carried out by British nationals that have been encouraged by Islamist extremists and propagandists but not actually coordinated by overseas actors, including the deadly March and June 2017 car-ramming and knife attacks outside of the **Palace of Westminster** and **London Bridge** and **Borough Market**, respectively, and the May 2017 suicide bombing that targeted concert-goers at the **Manchester Arena**.

In the event of a terror attack, travellers are advised to immediately leave the scene and seek safe shelter indoors. Anticipate heightened security nationwide, especially in **London**, and allow for additional travel time through all transport hubs, including airports and train stations.

Islamist Terrorism: Islamist-inspired or directed terrorism is a persistent threat in the country's major urban areas, particularly in **London**. The largest threat comes from home-grown terrorists. At-risk individuals are monitored closely by security services. Beyond these individuals, approximately 900 British nationals have journeyed to Syria, Libya, Iraq and other countries to join terrorist groups, including IS, and there is a significant risk that when these individuals return to the country with extensive knowledge of both explosives and military tactics they will continue to attempt to carry out attacks. Approximately half of these surviving militants have since returned to the UK. Both British and foreign nationals suspected of travelling to or from Syria and Iraq have been detained on terror charges at airports nationwide, including at **Heathrow (LHR/EGLL)**, **Stansted (STN/EGSS)** and **Gatwick (LWG/EGKK)** airports in **London** and **Manchester Airport (MAN/EGCC)**. Likely targets include public transport infrastructure, particularly the **London Underground**, airports, tourist sites such as **Trafalgar Square** and the **Palace of Westminster** in **London**, nightclubs, restaurants, entertainment venues and energy infrastructure.

British security forces have prevented several major Islamist attacks in recent years but the growth of lone-wolf threats from self-styled extremists has strained the police and intelligence services' capabilities. The most serious organised Islamist terror attack in the country to date took place on 7 July 2005, when three Pakistani-British citizens and a Jamaican national detonated their explosives-laden suicide vests in quick succession on three **London Underground** tube trains on the **Piccadilly** and **Circle**

lines and board a bus near **Tavistock Square**, killing 52 people and injuring dozens of others.

The difficulty in disrupting plots organised by smaller cells or single attacks since then increases the likelihood that these attacks are to continue to be emulated by radicalised individuals in the near-term. At present, the risk of self-radicalised Islamist sympathisers carrying out attacks on soft targets and security officers is higher than that of other threats to the country. The attackers' threat comes primarily from their intent, in that they are determined to kill as many people as possible with 'low-tech' means - knives, handguns and vehicles-as-battering-rams - rather than relying on more complicated technology.

Some attackers are capable of more technically complicated attacks on soft targets, as demonstrated by the deadly suicide bombing on **Manchester Arena** on 22 May 2017, when 22 people were killed by a 22-year-old British national of Libyan descent after he detonated a homemade bomb as concert-goers were leaving an event. Police, suspecting that the subject was part of a larger network in the country as well as Libya and Syria, made multiple arrests in **Manchester** following the bombing and temporarily deployed 1,000 soldiers to protect government buildings and transport hubs. Despite the attacker's trips to Libya, where IS has a presence, police concluded that the attacker operated alone and built the crude explosive device himself locally. Despite two Islamist terrorist attacks at the end of 2021, the UK lowered its threat level for a terrorist attack from "severe" to "substantial," meaning that a terror attack in the UK is likely.

Dissident Irish Republican Terrorism: Between 1969 and 2005, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Provisional IRA and Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) waged a terrorism campaign against British security forces, public officials and suspected collaborators, mainly in **Northern Ireland** and **England**. Occasional setbacks to the systemic peace that followed the Good Friday Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1998 have not heralded a return to large-scale violence. In 2012, the Real Irish Republican Army (Real IRA) merged with a number of smaller groups and vowed to intensify a campaign of violence against the continued British presence in **Northern Ireland**. The Real IRA is believed to include several hundred members, including some former Provisional IRA militants disenchanted with the peace process.

Recent years have seen an increase in dissident republican attacks in **Northern Ireland**, however. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) indicated the dissident threat level against police, military and prison officers is "severe", with targeted attacks

highly likely, and MI5 officials have reported that dissident republican factions remain capable of carrying out one-off attacks in the rest of the UK. Security forces typically thwart three to four plots for every attack that is carried out, while many more hoaxes trigger security alerts and prompt localised disruptions to travel. In recent years, weapons caches were seized by security forces, including in **County Monaghan**, close to the border with **Rosslea** in **County Fermanagh** and in **Larne, County Antrim**. On 19 January 2019, a car bomb believed to have been planted by militants of the New IRA exploded outside a courthouse in **Derry**. The New IRA also claimed responsibility for the murder of a journalist, Lyra McKee, who was shot dead during a riot in the **Creggan area** of **Derry** on 18 April 2019; the New IRA later apologised for the shooting, claiming it was an accident. The New IRA vowed to continue its armed campaign in a new-year statement at the beginning of 2023.

Dissident republicans' concern for domestic public opinion means that they are likely to maintain low-profile tactics due to the high political cost of returning to mass casualty attacks, such as the **Omagh, County Tyrone**, car bombing on 15 August 1998 in which 29 people were killed. The last successful republican dissident attack on the British mainland took place in August 2001, when a splinter group exploded a car bomb near a shopping centre in **West London**, injuring 11 people, though militants have mailed parcel bombs to government officers in **England**. Though many of these attacks involve small arms or pipe bombs, dissident republicans continue to procure rocket launchers, assault rifles and plastic explosives.

Far-right terrorism: While it remains likely that far-right movements will continue focusing on holding demonstrations across the UK in the near-term, terrorist attacks by the extreme right remain possible. Xenophobic sentiment has increased markedly in the country due to the European-wide migration crisis and there has been a surge of isolationist, anti-foreigner sentiment since Brexit began in 2016. On 30 October 2022, two people were injured following a far-right petrol bomb attack on a **Border Force** migrant processing centre in **Dover**; the far-right-inspired suspect later committed suicide. On 19 June 2017, a man from Wales carried out a vehicle ramming attack on the **Muslim Welfare House** in **Finsbury Park, London**, killing one civilian and injuring 10 others. Before this, the most serious recent far-right terror attack took place on 22 June 2016 in **Birstall, West Yorkshire**, when a 52-year-old man fatally shot and stabbed Labour MP Jo Cox outside of a library, citing her support for the EU as the reason for the murder. Possible targets by far-right groups plotting attacks continue to include Muslim and Jewish houses of worship and associated cultural infrastructure. Centres housing or providing resources to refugees and migrants may

also be targeted. Exercise general caution near all such sites and avoid all far-right gatherings due to the likelihood they may spiral into violence.

Recent incidents

05 December 2023 - 11 January 2024

- **Medium risk:** British Airways continues to cancel flights between United Kingdom's London and Israel's Tel Aviv through 10 January - Update

British Airways website indicated that flights were cancelled between London's Heathrow Airport (LHR/EGLL) in the United Kingdom and Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV/LLBG) in Israel through 10 January amid the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip.

30 November 2023 - 09 January 2024

- **Medium risk:** easyJet extends suspension of flights between Europe and Israel - Update

Updated reports indicated that ticket sales for easyJet flights to Tel Aviv (TLV/LLBG) in Israel from London Gatwick (LGW/EGKK) and Luton (LTN/EGGW), Manchester (MAN/EGCC) in the UK, Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG/LFPG) and Nice (NCE/LFMN) in France, Milan Malpensa (MXP/LIMC) in Italy, Geneva (GVA/LSGG) and Basel (BSL/LFSB) in Switzerland, Berlin (BER/EDDB) in Germany and Amsterdam (AMS/EHAM) in the Netherlands were suspended through at least 8 January 2024.

31 October 2023 - 01 December 2023

- **Medium risk:** easyJet extends suspension of Europe-Israel flights to 30 November - Update

easyJet extended flight suspension to Tel Aviv (TLV/LLBG) in Israel from London Gatwick (LGW/EGKK) and Luton (LTN/EGGW), Manchester (MAN/EGCC) in the UK, Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG/LFPG) and Nice (NCE/LFMN) in France, Milan Malpensa (MXP/LIMC) in Italy, Geneva (GVA/LSGG) and Basel (BSL/LFSB) in Switzerland, Berlin (BER/EDDB) in Germany and Amsterdam (AMS/EHAM) in the Netherlands until 30 November, due to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

27 October 2023 - 28 October 2023

● **Moderate risk:** easyJet suspends flights from Europe to Jordan due to insecurity

easyJet announced that flights to Aqaba Airport (AQJ/OJAQ) in Jordan from London Gatwick (LGW/EGKK) in the UK, Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG/LFPG) in France, Milan Malpensa (MXP/LIMC) in Italy, Geneva (GVA/LSGG) in Switzerland, Berlin Brandenburg (BER/EDDB) in Germany and Amsterdam Airport Schiphol (AMS/EHAM) were suspended until further notice, due the risk of regional conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Unrest : ● Moderate Risk

Strikes: The UK has a robust tradition of unionised workers staging industrial actions. Strikes are often announced with advance notice but can still cause major disruptions, particularly in the rail sector, where unions have in recent years organised multi-day walkouts to protest austerity measures. Even if a strike is cancelled, knock-on delays are likely. Rallies that accompany industrial actions rarely result in unrest or police intervention.

Protests: Protests occur regularly in urban centres, particularly **London, Edinburgh** and **Manchester**, over a wide range of issues and campaigns, including racism, poverty, police violence, healthcare and COVID-19 measures. Expatriate communities will frequently hold gatherings outside diplomatic offices in **London**. Roadblocking actions by environmental groups, including around energy and transport infrastructure, are also common, resulting in traffic delays as police clear the scene. Violent clashes are rare but do occur, with police officers on foot and horseback charging into crowds to disperse them.

Annual Protests: On 1 May (May Day), anti-globalisation groups often stage large protests in **London, Glasgow** and **Edinburgh**. Recent years have seen little trouble, however, there remains the possibility of unrest.

The annual **London** Quds Day protest is held on the final Friday of Ramadan to protest Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories. While the march is generally peaceful, several banned groups such as Hezbollah often join the procession, with the potential for clashes with pro-Israel counter-protesters.

Far-right Demonstrations: The state of the far-right in the UK has rapidly changed in recent years, with the most prominent groups - including the British National Party (BNP), United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and English Defence League (EDL) - struggling to remain popular. The groups' followers have splintered into smaller, more militant factions as these groups failed to win elections. Both Polish and Italian fascists have also been suspected of organising neo-Nazi movements in the UK. In June 2020, far-right groups organised counter-protests in response to the worldwide Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests. Some protestors clashed with and attacked police. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, far-right groups have gained new followers by loudly opposing public health measures and again openly clashing with police.

Sports-Related Riots: The UK has experienced football hooliganism extensively in

recent decades. Local matches are most likely to see violence between fans, but most fights are prearranged and do not affect regular supporters. The majority of incidents are small and there have not been large riots for several years. Consult local media for details of match fixtures in your area. If in the vicinity of large football matches, avoid crowds of supporters under the influence of alcohol. Football matches are well-policed and CCTV is omnipresent.

Sectarian Riots: Tens of thousands of Protestants march across cities in **Northern Ireland** in July and August every year to commemorate the 12 July 1690 victory of Protestant King William of Orange over his Catholic rival James II. The official holiday features parades in 18 cities and towns that frequently ignite communal rivalries, with extremists on both sides vandalising vulnerable homes, churches and community halls. To many Catholics, the marches are a provocative reminder of Protestant supremacy in **Northern Ireland**. Republican counter-protests have previously erupted in violent sectarian conflict. Parades in recent years have witnessed a resurgence of violence, with dozens injured in clashes between the two sides.

In April 2021, multiple incidents of overnight unrest occurred across **Northern Ireland**, including **West Belfast, Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Ballymena** and **Derry's Waterside**. Over 50 officers were injured and at least 10 people were detained during the violence. While the factors driving the uptick in violence remain unclear, the unrest follows discontent among unionist communities against the protocol that established a trade border between **Northern Ireland** and the rest of the UK as part of Brexit.

Travellers to Northern Ireland should anticipate heightened security and localised travel disruptions in the vicinity of march routes and plot route bypasses to avoid all protest sites due to the risk of violent clashes between rival protesters.

Recent incidents

18 December 2023 - 19 December 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Activists to rally in London

Activists plan to rally outside the Home Office (2 Marsham Street) in London from 17:30 local time/GMT, to condemn the proposed immigration deal between the United Kingdom and Rwandan governments.

17 December 2023 - 18 December 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Pro-Palestine demonstrations planned in London and Liverpool on 17 December - Update

Stop the War Coalition activists will rally in Brockwell Park in London from 13:30 local time/GMT and at Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool from 14:00 local time on 17 December, to call for an immediate permanent ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas War.

17 December 2023 - 18 December 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Amhara solidarity march planned in London on 17 December

Activists plan to march from 10 Downing Street to the United States Embassy (33 Nine Elms Lane) in London from 10:00 local time/GMT on 17 December, to denounce alleged ethnic violence against the Amhara community in Ethiopia.

17 December 2023 - 18 December 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Pro-Palestine demonstrations planned in Portsmouth and Brighton on 17 December - Update

Stop the War Coalition activists will rally in Victoria Park in Portsmouth from 13:30 local time/GMT and at Nova Peace Statue in Brighton from 14:00 local time on 17 December, to call for an immediate permanent ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas War.

Crime : ● Moderate Risk

Petty Crime: Petty crimes including shoplifting, pickpocketing, car theft, vandalism, and minor instances of public disorder vary across different regions and communities within the country.

Although London is a hotspot for petty crime, there is also a risk of similar crimes in other cities, particularly those with a high number of foreign tourists. ATM scams, credit card fraud, identity theft and other criminal schemes, such as people impersonating police officers and fining tourists for false minor offences, also occur. Criminals may work alone or in groups and often use various techniques to distract potential victims.

Beware of your surroundings, do not leave your belongings unattended and exercise general personal safety for travel. Only carry what is needed, do not flash expensive valuables or large sums of money, and keep cash, identification and mobile phones in front pockets, or in a zipped or concealed pocket or pouch rather than in a bag. Secure belongings when using public transport or when frequenting markets and other crowded public areas; secure bags diagonally across the body against the chest, keep bags within sight and away from the street. Refrain from using mobile phones or laptops in congested public places; avoid putting bags containing valuables on the ground. Avoid walking in poorly lit and isolated areas. Stay in groups. Reject rides or drinks from strangers and never leave drinks unattended. Exercise extreme caution when purchasing and consuming alcohol in public venues. Do not accept pamphlets in the street or shopping centres; these could be impregnated with potent and disorienting drugs, which permeate the skin. If you start to feel unwell, tell staff or close friends and do not leave the venue alone or with strangers. Shout to attract attention, if needed.

Violent Crime: The rate of overall violent and sexual crime has increased slightly post-COVID-19. Violent crime, including knife-enabled crime, is especially high in **West Yorkshire, Cleveland, West Midlands, Greater Manchester** and **Metropolitan London**. Gun-related crime is rare but still occurs, typically between members of rival criminal gangs. Gang-related crime has become a significant problem, usually occurring on public housing estates where turf wars are fought.

Travellers have faced instances of sexual assault and robbery when utilising unlicensed taxis. In major cities, there are a limited number of women-only taxi

services available. Additionally, hate crimes have witnessed a surge since the Brexit referendum, with a notable increase in targeted incidents against individuals from religious and ethnic minority groups.

Commonsense measures are best kept to ensure against becoming the victim of a violent crime. Travellers are advised to remain vigilant at all times and exercise general personal safety for travel: avoid walking alone at night, do not venture down roads with poor lighting and few access points. Be careful when using taxis and public transport and plot route bypasses around rowdy crowds. Seek local advice for areas to avoid. If you are held-up by an armed robber do not become confrontational as any resistive behaviour may cause more violence by the attackers.

Kidnapping: The risk of kidnapping in the United Kingdom is Low. Although rates of kidnapping have been on the rise in recent years, this is mainly due to the high number of parental abductions. Kidnapping is usually limited to select individuals, often those with links to organised crime. Rare instances of express and tiger kidnappings have been recorded in **Northern Ireland**.

Travellers should remain aware of their surroundings and follow the latest advisories for their destination. Maintain communications and your itinerary with local contacts, authorities or embassy staff, especially in locations with a higher risk of kidnapping. Consider a local guide or security escort for the highest risk locations.

Recent incidents

28 November 2023 - 30 November 2023

● **Low risk: Police respond to incident in Newmarket, England - Closed**

Police officials announced that a murder investigation was launched after a body was found at a property on Exning Road in Newmarket, Suffolk, England, during morning hours local time on 28 November; two people were arrested in connection with the incident. Security cordons remain in place on Exning Road while enquiries take place.

09 September 2023 - 10 September 2023

- **Low risk:** London's Richmond Park cordoned off as manhunt enters third day - Closed

The Metropolitan Police announced that a fugitive terror suspect who escaped from the Wandsworth prison in London on 6 September was arrested in Chiswick during morning hours local time. All cordons were lifted in Richmond Park and additional security checks were discontinued at transport hubs.

08 September 2023 - 09 September 2023

- **Moderate risk:** London's Richmond Park cordoned off as manhunt enters third day - Update

Police searching for an escaped terror suspect have cordoned off Richmond Park in London during morning hours local time as the manhunt enters the third consecutive day. Local reports suggested that security measures, including enhanced searches at ports of entry such as the Port of Dover and the Eurotunnel, are expected to persist throughout the weekend if needed.

07 September 2023 - 08 September 2023

- **Moderate risk:** Authorities issue partial closure of M20 in England's Kent County as manhunt continues - Update

The M20 coastbound was closed in Kent, England, between junctions eight and nine, during morning hours local time, due to enhanced security checks implemented at the Port of Dover, as the manhunt for an escaped terror suspect continues for the second consecutive day. The inmate escaped from the Wandsworth prison in London on 6 September prompting a major police operation and increased security at various airports nationwide.

Law

The British legal system is based on common law and statute. The system provides a model for a number of countries worldwide. It is efficient, consistent and not corrupt. The UK has very well-established laws when it comes to foreign businesses, which aids good working relations with international investors. **England, Scotland, Wales** and **Northern Ireland** have separate court systems with small legal differences.

The House of Lords is the highest court in the land for criminal and civil cases in **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland**, and for all civil cases in Scots law. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, comprising the same members as the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords, is the highest court of appeal for several independent Commonwealth countries, British Overseas Territories (BOT) and British Crown Dependencies.

Corruption

Corruption: Visitors are highly unlikely to be affected by any form of corruption. It is extremely rare for corruption to affect domestic or international businesses operating in the UK. When tendering for contracts in the UK, businesses should adhere to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conventions to avoid prosecution by their home country.

Security Services

Security Services: The UK Police Service is divided and organised by region: England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Currently, there are 43 police forces spread over the UK, the largest being the London Metropolitan Police. UK police forces are generally transparent, accountable and reliable, efficiently handling emergencies with a response time of around ten minutes. While rural areas may experience longer response times, the police have a strong record of successful crime investigations.

Natural Risks : ● Low Risk

The United Kingdom (UK) is not typically associated with frequent or severe natural disasters, however, the country does experience some natural events that can be disruptive, including floods, storms snow and cold weather, and heatwaves. The country's infrastructure and excellent emergency response services are capable of significantly mitigating risks.

Flooding

A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry. It is normally triggered by an extended period of heavy rainfall and can be exacerbated by poor drainage systems in the affected area.

Flooding is a recurring issue in parts of the UK, particularly during heavy rainfall. Rivers can overflow, and low-lying areas are susceptible to flooding.

Many homes and businesses in **Scotland** are at risk of flooding, with coastal areas in the east particularly vulnerable. A national Floodline service operated by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is available to issue warnings via text. An alternative early warning text alert service issues targeted information to communities in multiple areas along the East Coast, from the **Borders** to **Angus**, providing at least three hours' notice of possible flooding near the firths of **Forth** and **Tay**.

If instructed of the possibility that flash-flooding may affect the area you are in, monitor local updates and move immediately to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks and storm drains. Though flash-flooding is commonly attributable to excess upstream precipitation, be aware that flooding can occur without typical warning signs of rain clouds or heavy rain. This is especially true near streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. If you happen across a flooded road in your car, turn around and drive in the opposite direction. When trapped on a flooded road, vacate your vehicle immediately and climb to higher ground.

Hurricanes/Typhoons/Tropical Cyclones

A cyclone/typhoon/hurricane is essentially a large mass of air that spirals around a low-pressure centre. It is an organised collection of thunderstorms embedded in a swirling mass of air. This mass of air is called a cyclone if it forms in the Indian or South Pacific oceans, a typhoon if formed in the West Pacific Ocean and a hurricane if formed in the East Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Cyclones/typhoons/hurricanes normally bring gale-force winds, heavy rainfall and high tides, with the potential of causing significant or destructive damage and widespread travel disruptions.

The UK can experience storms, particularly during the autumn and winter months. Storms may bring strong winds, heavy rainfall and coastal erosion, and trigger major disruptions to air, rail and maritime travel across the country. The UK's Met Office provides storm warnings and weather advisories to help people prepare.

Follow local radio or television broadcasts for information and evacuation instructions. If not under an area with mandatory evacuation orders, remain indoors. Locate and secure important documentation, including passports, photo identification, travel permits and any indispensable personal effects. Be advised that the calm 'eye' is deceptive and should by no means be interpreted as a sign that the storm has passed. The second winds are likely to be worse and may destroy trees and buildings damaged in the first pass. If caught in a region hit by a cyclone/typhoon/hurricane, remain indoors until the storm passes. If there is a need to move to an evacuation centre, evacuate in a calm manner and ensure you carry important personal identification. Avoid all low-lying coastal areas due to storm surges. Confirm the viability of overland travel routes due to the risk of flooding. Air and sea travel are also likely to be impacted. Anticipate disruptions to power, communications and other essential services.

Windstorms

Windstorms are generally categorised as storms with wind speeds strong enough to cause at least light damage to trees and buildings. Windstorms typically do not bring heavy rainfall.

Seasonal windstorms are a regular occurrence and, depending on the strength of the wind, can result in disruptions to air and rail travel.

Because meteorologists can commonly predict the likely onset of a storm, the most effective way to mitigate physical risk is to monitor local weather updates and consider deferring travel in the event of a storm alert. Anticipate possible disruptions to overland travel caused by downed trees and power lines during and following strong gusts of wind. Confirm the viability of overland travel routes before departure.

Avalanches

Avalanches can range from a small shifting of loose snow to the displacement of enormous slabs of snow. Avalanches typically occur on slopes greater than 27 degrees and are commonly associated with heavy snowfall and strong winds. The risk of avalanches increases during new snowfall, wind-deposited snow and after earth tremors. Avalanches can also occur as a result of excessive use of a slope by skiers, snowmobilers and snowboarders.

While the UK is not known for frequent or significant avalanche activity, avalanches can occur in certain mountainous regions, particularly in Scotland. The Scottish Highlands, which include mountain ranges such as the Cairngorms and the Scottish Munros, are more prone to avalanches during winter months when specific snow and weather conditions align.

Assess avalanche risk information before departure for mountainous regions by consulting the Scottish Avalanche Information Centre's website:
<http://www.sais.gov.uk/>.

If you are planning to travel over snowy mountainous terrain, there are several preparatory steps that should be taken. Be sure to carry an avalanche transceiver, snow probe, shovel, first aid kit and mobile phone for use in the event of an emergency. Ensure every member of the party is carrying a map with the same route marked on it. Have this route checked locally for avalanche risk information before setting off for the day. Should you find yourself caught in an avalanche, use your arms to create an air pocket in front of your face.

Recent incidents

21 December 2023 - 22 December 2023

● **Moderate risk: Storm Pia triggers power outages in England - Update**

Local reports indicated that over 40,000 customers were affected by power outages in parts of England, with Midlands and West Yorkshire among the worst-affected areas, due to strong winds from Storm Pia. Electricity was restored to some 28,000 customers as of evening hours local time.

21 December 2023 - 22 December 2023

● **Moderate risk: Storm Pia triggers flight disruptions at Manchester Airport - Update**

Local sources indicated that dozens of flights were delayed at Manchester Airport (MAN/EGCC) in North West England as of afternoon hours local time, due to strong winds from Storm Pia. A yellow warning was issued for high winds.

21 December 2023 - 22 December 2023

● **Medium risk: Storm Pia disrupts rail travel across England and Scotland - Update**

TransPennine Express services are disrupted between Edinburgh and York and Carlisle and Edinburgh, as of morning hours local time, due to reduced speed amid adverse weather conditions caused by Storm Pia. Rail officials are urging customers to not travel between Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, Carlisle and Edinburgh until at least 15:00 local time/GMT. In addition, P&O Freight Ferries between Cairnryan in Scotland and Larne in Northern Ireland have also been cancelled until 16:00.

21 December 2023 - 22 December 2023

● **Medium risk: Winter weather triggers rail cancellations in England and Scotland on 21 December**

ScotRail indicated that Inverness-Aberdeen, Inverness-Wick, Inverness-Kyle of Lochalsh, Inverness-Dingwall, Inverness-Elgin, Glasgow-Oban and Glasgow-Mallaig trains will not run on 21 December, due to winter weather. London North Eastern Railway (LNER) trains to Edinburgh, Newcastle and Aberdeen are expected to operate with delays due to speed restrictions but trains to Inverness will not run.

Health and Medical: ● Low Risk

Overview

Health services meet international standards across the country. High-quality prescription drugs are widely available and infectious diseases present little to no risk to travellers.

Before you travel

Consult your doctor or a healthcare provider who specialises in travel medicine at least six weeks before your departure. If you have a medical condition, you should also share your travel plans with your doctor.

Outbreaks and Other Diseases

Malaria

There is no risk of malaria transmission.

Yellow Fever

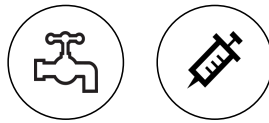
There is no risk of Yellow Fever infection.

Vaccinations, Medicines and Documentation

Note: Requirements and recommendations for vaccines and other medicines as well as Yellow Fever vaccine are based on guidelines from the United States Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Yellow Book 2024. All other entry requirements are based on Riskline research.

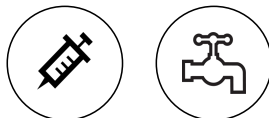
Routine vaccines



Make sure you are up-to-date on all routine vaccines before every trip. Some of these vaccines include

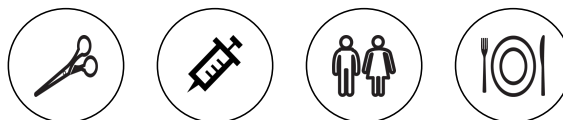
- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis
- Flu (influenza)
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)
- Polio
- Shingles

COVID-19



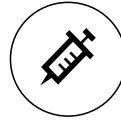
All eligible travellers should be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

Hepatitis A



Consider hepatitis A vaccination for most travellers. It is recommended for travellers who will be doing higher risk activities, such as visiting smaller cities, villages, or rural areas where a traveller might get infected through food or water. It is recommended for travellers who plan on eating street food.

Hepatitis B



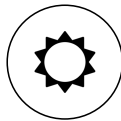
Recommended for unvaccinated travellers younger than 60 years old traveling to the United Kingdom. Unvaccinated travellers 60 years and older may get vaccinated before traveling to the United Kingdom.

Measles



Infants 6 to 11 months old traveling internationally should get 1 dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine before travel. This dose does not count as part of the routine childhood vaccination series.

Rabies



The United Kingdom is free of dog rabies. However, rabies may still be present in wildlife species, particularly bats. CDC recommends rabies vaccination before travel only for people working directly with wildlife. These people may include veterinarians, animal handlers, field biologists, or laboratory workers working with specimens from mammalian species.

Required documentation

Yellow Fever entry requirement (Source: USA CDC):

None

Other entry requirements:

None

Note: Documentation requirements are subject to change. Consult your destination embassy or consulate prior to departure for confirmation.

While you are there

Emergency Numbers

Medical	999; 112	
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Emergency services

Emergency services provided are of high quality and reliable. Both land and air ambulance services are widely available, but response times are likely to be slower in more rural areas. Emergency medical staff are highly trained and ambulances are well stocked with necessary supplies.

Evacuation

It is very unlikely medical evacuation would be required for injury or illness.

Routine care

The availability and quality of routine medical care is overall high. All healthcare professionals are highly trained to an international standard and access to multilingual professionals is readily available in the country's network of public healthcare centres; though wait times are likely to be long.

Medicine

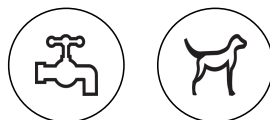
High-quality prescription drugs are widely available, and over-the-counter medicines are readily available in stand-alone pharmacies as well as at supermarkets and corner shops, but most prescriptions written for adult patients will require payment. While travellers are unlikely to experience any difficulties in entering the country with their own prescription medicine, all prescription drugs should be kept in their original container noting the patient's name.

Payment

British citizens, foreign nationals with work permits and most long-term legal residents in the country for at least one year are eligible for free public healthcare through the National Health Service (NHS). Travellers with a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) will receive the same emergency care as British nationals, free of charge; emergency care will not be refused to those lacking an EHIC. Some private health insurance may be transferable; travellers should consult their insurance companies before departure to confirm reciprocity. Fees for non-insured users are publicly listed at all clinics and doctors' offices.

Ailments

Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)



The H5N1 virus (avian influenza or bird flu) was reported in **Suffolk, England**, in 2007. However, there have been no further confirmed cases or cases of human infection.

Avian influenza is a class of viral infections, including H5N1 and H7N9, which can be transmitted through contact with wild or domesticated birds. Symptoms are flu-like, and include fever, muscle aches, coughing, as well pneumonia and – in severe cases – respiratory failure. Treatment includes a course of antivirals.

Hepatitis (A, B, C, D and E)



Outbreaks of hepatitis A occur infrequently in the United Kingdom, but the risk to visitors is very low. The overall hepatitis B carrier rate in the general population is estimated at less than one percent, and hepatitis C is also at less than one percent. Sporadic cases of hepatitis E are reported annually, but the risk to travellers is extremely low.

Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver. The three main variations (A, B and C) are caused by infections from parasites, bacteria or viruses, but are transmitted by different means.

Lyme disease



Lyme disease is reported frequently across forested and rural regions including **Exmoor, the New Forest, the South Downs, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Thetford Forest, the Lake District, the Yorkshire Moors** and **the Scottish Highlands**.

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by ticks and is most prevalent in rural areas. Early symptoms include fever, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue headaches and a 'bullseye' shaped rash around the tick bite; later symptoms include arthritis, facial paralysis, memory loss, swollen joints, increased rashes and headaches and heart palpitations. In most cases Lyme disease can be treated with a course of antibiotics; a small number of cases may develop into Post-treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome (PTLDS), which may persist for a number of months.

Measles



Since 2009, several thousand cases of measles have been reported nationwide,

especially in **England** and **Wales**, in a recurrence of the disease possibly triggered by a decrease in immunisations.

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection transmitted via coughing and sneezing from infected persons. Cold-like symptoms as well as fever are initially presented before a skin rash develops three to five days later. The measles vaccine is effective at preventing the disease. There is no treatment once infected beyond rehydration and bed rest.

Swine Flu variant (H1N1)



Swine flu variant (H1N1v) is a viral infection transmitted via close physical contact with infected pigs, by close physical contact with an infected person or via the coughing and sneezing of infected persons. Symptoms include fever, coughing, irritated eyes, vomiting, nausea, diarrhoea and lack of appetite. While there is no cure for swine flu, infected persons may receive a course of antivirals and antibiotics to alleviate severe symptoms.

Tick-borne Encephalitis (TBE)



Only two probable human cases were ever reported (in 2019 and 2020). Both cases were likely infected in the focal area in **New Forest /Hampshire**, and infected ticks were also identified in nearby areas. TBE virus-infected ticks were also identified in **Thetford Forest, East Anglia**. United Kingdom health authorities do not have recommendations for vaccination of the local population.

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral infection usually transmitted through the bite of an infected tick. Typically the disease occurs in two stages. The first is a mild-flu like illness. The second is a potentially serious infection of the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). TBE can at times be fatal in up to 20 percent of cases. Long-term neurological complications are common. Individuals are at increased risk

if they visit areas where TBE is known to occur particularly in woodland or grassland. Travellers may reduce the risk of infection by avoiding risk areas and taking bite prevention measures.

Recent incidents

20 December 2023 - 24 December 2023

- **Moderate risk: Junior doctors to strike in England on 20-23 December**

Junior doctors represented by the British Medical Association (BMA) will strike in England from 07:00 local time/GMT on 20 December until the same time on 23 December, amid an ongoing dispute over salaries.

27 November 2023 - 28 November 2023

- **Moderate risk: Human case of swine flu reported in North Yorkshire, England**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) indicated that the country's first human case of swine flu was recorded in North Yorkshire, England, in recent days. The patient has recovered, and there is no immediate evidence that the virus has spread to anyone else; an investigation remains underway.

02 October 2023 - 06 October 2023

- **Moderate risk: Strike to disrupt services at Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust hospitals on 2-5 October**

The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust announced that a strike will disrupt health services at Barnet Hospital in North London, Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield and the Royal Free Hospital in the London Borough of Camden, on 2-5 October.

02 October 2023 - 05 October 2023

● **Moderate risk:** NHS consultants, junior doctors to strike in England on 2-4 October

National Health Service (NHS) consultants and junior doctors represented by the British Medical Association (BMA) will strike in England on 2-4 October, over pay and working conditions. Emergency services will be guaranteed during the strike.

Covid-19: ● Moderate Risk



Summary

The government has periodically imposed lockdowns and tightened restrictions in response to rising infection rates. While a mass vaccination campaign has significantly reduced the number of deaths, the country has seen periodic sharp upticks in COVID-19 cases driven by the spread of virus variants. Authorities lifted all entry restrictions in March 2022.

What is the current nationwide Policy?: None

Policy starts: 07 January 2022

Policy ends: indef

Policy explanation:

Restrictions have gradually been relaxed across the UK.

Policy source: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Last update: 08 November 2023



Infection

Infection Level: Medium

Infection rate: 20.14 cases per 100k in the last 14 days

As of date: 03 November 2023

Hotspots: -



International Travel

International Flights

Is there a ban on international commercial flights? No

Through what date? indef

Flight Ban Explanation:

Most available long-haul flights are operating at London Heathrow Airport (LHR/EGLL).

Aeroflot and all other Russian carriers are banned from landing in or overflying the country, in line with the sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Virgin Atlantic airline has suspended flights between Heathrow Airport (LHR/EGLL) in London and Pakistan's Allama Iqbal International Airport (LHE/OPLA) which serves Lahore, Punjab province, effective 1 May. Since 9 July, flights between Heathrow Airport and the Pakistan Islamabad International Airport (ISB/OPIS), which serves the Islamabad-Rawalpindi Metropolitan Area, have also been suspended.

Last Update: 08 December 2023

Entry and Borders

Is there a ban on entry for any travellers? No

Through what date? indef

Travellers from where are banned?

Land border: Open

Maritime border: Open

Entry Rules Explanation:

There is currently no ban on entry into the United Kingdom from any country.

Authorities lifted entry requirements for travellers from China on 4 April.

Entry Rules: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Exemptions: -

Last Update:

Testing

Do travellers need to take a COVID-19 test No

When?

Is it mandatory or optional?

Test Type:

Minimum age requirement:

Pre-travel test validity, in hours:

After arrival test days:

Testing Explanation:

Testing Rules: -

Last Update: 08 December 2023

Health and Travel Documentations

Do arriving travellers need any health and/or travel documentation? No

Documentation Explanation:

Last Update: 08 November 2023

Tracing App

Do travellers need to use a contact tracing app after arriving? No

Tracing App Explanation:

There is no mandatory national contact tracing app at this time.

Last Update: 08 November 2023

Quarantine on Arrival

Who needs to quarantine on arrival None

Travellers from where need to quarantine?

How many days is quarantine?

Is it self-quarantine or operated by the government?

Quarantine Explanation:

There is no requirement for international arrivals to quarantine. Unvaccinated travellers who test positive after arrival will be required to follow public health advice but are not required to isolate.

Quarantine Rules: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>

Quarantine mandate list: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories>

Last Update: 2023-12-08

Exit

Is there a ban on exit for any travellers? No

Are there special requirements to exit? No

Exit Requirements Explanation:

While there is no ban on travel abroad, travellers must use private test providers. Testing through the National Health Service (NHS) is not permitted.

Exit Requirements (URL): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
Last Update: 08 December 2023

Vaccination

Percent vaccinated with at least one dose: 79.983 as of 11 Sep 2022

Percent fully vaccinated: 75.19 as of 11 Sep 2022

Is vaccination mandatory for entry? No

Fully vaccinated are exempt from: -

Minimum age for vaccine requirements for travel:

Exemptions for vaccine requirements for travel:

"Fully vaccinated" is defined by the destination as:

Accepted vaccines, validity and special age restrictions:

Is mixing of vaccine doses authorised? Yes

Are specific combinations of mixed doses required? No

"Boosted" is defined by the destination as:

Accepted boosters:

"Recently recovered" is defined by the destination as:

Recovery status is valid from days until after .

Vaccination certificates accepted:

Vaccination certificates accepted in the following languages:

Recent recovery document required:

Recent recovery document accepted in the following languages:

Explanation:

Arrivals are no longer subject to entry restrictions, regardless they are fully vaccinated or not.

Sources:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-an-other-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Last change to vaccination policy:

11 February 2022

Last Update:

08 December 2023

Other International Travel Restrictions

Exit Requirements Explanation:

Last Update:



Domestic Situation

Areas on Lockdown

Last Update:

Areas under Curfew

Last Update:

Domestic Travel

Domestic Travel Explanation:

Covid domestic travel policies and advice for:

- [England](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

Last Update: 08 December 2023

Other Domestic Restrictions

Last Update:

Resources

Government COVID Site: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

There are no recent incidents

Local Travel : ● Low Risk

Travel Safety

Air Travel: Many airports offer domestic and international connections in the United Kingdom (UK). Primary hubs include **Heathrow (LHR/EGLL)**, **Gatwick (LGW/EGKK)**, **Stansted (STN/EGSS)**, **Luton (LTN/EGGW)**, **Southend (SEN/EGMC)** and **London City (LCY/EGLC)** airports serving **Greater London**. **London Heathrow** is one of the world's busiest airports; delays are common and many passengers complain of lost luggage.

Other major airports include **Manchester (MAN/EGCC)**, **Liverpool (LPL/EGGP)**, **Bristol (BRS/EGGD)** and **Birmingham (BHX/EGBB)** in **England**, **Edinburgh (EDI/EGPH)** and **Glasgow International (GLA/EGPF)** in **Scotland**, **Cardiff (CWL/EGFF)** in **Wales** and **Belfast International (BFS/EGAA)**, **George Best Belfast City (BHD/EGAC)** and **City of Derry (LDY/EGAE)** in **Northern Ireland**. Flights from the British mainland also operate to the **British Crown Dependencies** in **Guernsey (GCI/EGJB)**, **Isle of Man (IOM/EGNS)**, **Jersey (JER/EGJJ)** and **Alderney (ACI/EGJA)**.

Passengers boarding any international flight outside of Europe should arrive three hours before departure to allow enough time for security checks. Arrive at least two hours early for European flights and 90 minutes ahead of domestic flights. There have been several foiled terror attacks on transatlantic services since the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States. Security is rigid and efficient.

There are several transport options available at all major airports in the UK, including taxis, buses, coach buses, airport shuttles and trains.

Heathrow Airport is situated about 24km (15 miles) west of **Central London**, accessible by road or public transportation. Non-stop Heathrow Express trains run every 15 minutes between the airport and **London Paddington Station**. Cheaper Heathrow Connect trains run every 30 minutes and make multiple stops on the 25-minute trip to **London Paddington Station**. London Underground trains on the Heathrow branch of the Piccadilly Line as well as on the Elizabeth Line also make several stops at the airport, including **Heathrow Terminals 2 & 3**, **Heathrow Terminal 4** and **Heathrow Terminal 5**. A journey on the tube from the city centre can take up to an hour. National Express and other operators run bus services from **Heathrow** to more than 500 destinations. An extensive network connects **Heathrow** to destinations in **West London** and the **Thames Valley**.

Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains run from **London City Airport** to **Central London** every 8-15 minutes and travellers can expect the journey to take approximately 20 minutes.

Stansted Express trains run from **Stansted Airport** to **Liverpool Street Station** every 15 minutes with a travel time of approximately 50 minutes.

Gatwick Express trains run from **Gatwick Airport** to **London Victoria Station** every 15 minutes with a travel time of approximately 30 minutes.

Luton Airport Parkway Station provides connections to Thameslink and East Midlands Railway services to and from **London St Pancras Station** and travellers can expect the journey to take approximately 20 minutes.

Southend Airport Station is accessible from **London Liverpool Street** and **Southern Victoria Stations** via the Shenfield-Southend Line, with the journey lasting approximately 55 minutes.

Airspace: Most available long-haul flights are operating at London Heathrow Airport (LHR/EGLL).

Aeroflot and all other Russian carriers are banned from landing in or overflying the country, in line with the sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Virgin Atlantic airline has suspended flights between Heathrow Airport (LHR/EGLL) in London and Pakistan's Allama Iqbal International Airport (LHE/OPLA) which serves Lahore, Punjab province, effective 1 May. Since 9 July, flights between Heathrow Airport and the Pakistan Islamabad International Airport (ISB/OPIS), which serves the Islamabad-Rawalpindi Metropolitan Area, have also been suspended.

Borders and Entry: There is currently no ban on entry into the United Kingdom from any country.

Authorities lifted entry requirements for travellers from China on 4 April.

Exit: While there is no ban on travel abroad, travellers must use private test providers. Testing through the National Health Service (NHS) is not permitted.

Road Travel: Road networks in the United Kingdom (UK) are among the safest in Europe and drivers are generally competent and cautious. Motorways connecting major cities are denoted by an 'M' followed by numbers. 'A' class roads also connect major cities but are of a lower standard. 'B' class roads serve rural areas and towns,

and may occasionally be poorly maintained. Roads in rural areas can be very narrow and winding. Inexperienced drivers should avoid travelling by night on poorly lit thoroughfares, particularly in bad weather.

A valid foreign driver's licence may be used in the UK by motorists over the age of 16. Speed cameras monitor the network of motorways and 'A' class roads; travelling faster than 10 percent over the speed limit may result in a fine.

The use of a horn in the UK is typically a sign of aggression and is best avoided unless warranted. The most congested city in the UK is **Belfast** while **London** is a close second. Both cities are among the most congested in the world and **Manchester** and **Edinburgh** are also highly congested, mostly during the evening traffic peak. When possible, avoid the following roads at peak hours to avoid delays:

Between 07:00 and 08:30 local time

- M6 Southbound J9;**
- A406 Anticlockwise Hanger Lane Gyratory;**
- A5081 Park Way, Manchester**
- Jamaica Road, Southwark, London**
- M6 Southbound J25 Bryn Link Road, Wigan;**
- M4 Eastbound J2 Brentford;**
- A13 Westbound Dagenham, London;**
- M6 Southbound J10 Wolverhampton East;**
- M25 Anticlockwise J19 Watford East.**

Between 17:00 and 18:00 local time

- M6 Southbound J9 Wednesbury;**
- M8 Eastbound;**
- M4 Eastbound J1 Chiswick;**
- M6 Southbound J10 Wolverhampton East;**
- M25 Anticlockwise;**
- A5081 Park Way, Manchester**

-Jamaica Road, Southwark, London

Rail Travel: Rail travel in the United Kingdom (UK) is a popular and efficient mode of transportation, providing access to various cities, towns and scenic landscapes. The rail network is safe and extensive for travel within and between cities. Although trains are sometimes delayed, they are generally safe and maintained to a high standard, including night trains. NI Railways works in cooperation with Irish Rail to provide a reliable service between Dublin and **Belfast**. High-speed Eurostar trains connect **London** to Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam via the Channel Tunnel.

Public Transport: The United Kingdom (UK) has an extensive and well-connected public transportation system, including trains, buses and the London Underground. It's a convenient way to explore cities and regions.

Ferries and Boats: Several ferry crossings at multiple ports connect the UK to Ireland, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Scandinavia. Vessels are generally well maintained and safe, though unpredictable weather patterns may periodically disrupt schedules. Confirm itineraries before departure and allow for additional travel time.

Buses: Multiple bus routes provide comprehensive intra-city service. The busiest routes will have buses departing every 10 minutes between 09:00 and 18:00 local time. Various intercity bus companies offer cheap travel around the UK. International bus routes operated by private firms connect the UK to many cities in mainland Europe via the Channel Tunnel or ferry transport. There are also bus connections through private companies to **Northern Ireland** and the Republic of Ireland. Bus trips to the European mainland can be slow compared to rail. Petty theft is also common on long-distance buses, often when passengers fall asleep.

Metro: London and **Glasgow** both operate extensive and efficient underground rail networks, referred to as the 'underground' or the 'tube' in **London** and the 'subway' in **Glasgow**. Minor delays are common, particularly during the morning and evening rush hours. Always keep your bags close and your valuables on your person. Security at train stations is tight and visitors are urged to remain vigilant at all times. Unclaimed baggage alerts are common and will trigger an evacuation by police until the threat can be stood down.

Taxis: Taxis are generally safe and well maintained. Traditional 'black' cabs seat five passengers, private hire taxis can seat four and minibuses seat up to 15. During rush hour, taxis are eligible to use bus lanes, allowing them to bypass traffic congestion.

Never hail a mini-cab or unlicensed taxi on the street, as drivers have been known to rob or sexually assault passengers. However, licensed non-'black' mini-cabs can be booked in advance by phone and are less expensive than 'black' cabs. **London** also has several taxi services designated just for women, the “pink-taxis”. Several ride-hailing companies also operate in major cities, including Uber, Bolt and Addison Lee.

Movement Control Orders

Stay clear of Ministry of Defence (MoD) bases. All closed territories will be clearly signposted. Other areas to avoid include **Sandside Bay**, where nuclear residue has previously been detected from the nearby **Dounreay Power Plant**.

Recent incidents

22 December 2023 - 23 December 2023

- **Medium risk:** Strike prompts cancellation of all Translink services in Northern Ireland and cross-border services to Ireland on 22 December - Update

Translink officials announced that all rail and bus services will be cancelled in Northern Ireland on 22 December due to a strike by several trade unions. Cross-border rail services will also be severely affected, with a limited Enterprise service operating between Dublin and Dundalk only.

22 December 2023 - 23 December 2023

- **Medium risk:** Translink bus and rail workers to strike across Northern Ireland on 22 December

Local media reported that unionised public transport workers employed by Translink plan to stage further strikes across Northern Ireland on 22 December, amid an ongoing dispute over pay. The strike is expected to impact bus and rail services.

21 December 2023 - 22 December 2023

- **Low risk:** French workers' strike at Eurotunnel halts cross-Channel rail traffic - Closed

Updated reports indicated that Eurotunnel workers called off their wildcat strike that disrupted cross-Channel rail operations during evening hours local time. Eurostar earlier cancelled all trains to and from London for the rest of the day.

21 December 2023 - 22 December 2023

- **Moderate risk:** Electrical fault disrupts trains between Milton Keynes and London

National Rail indicated that multiple Avanti West Coast and London Northwestern Railway (LNER) trains between Milton Keynes Central and London Euston/East Croydon were cancelled, with delays of up to two hours, as of evening hours local time, due to a since-repaired electrical fault near Hemel Hempstead. Chiltern Railways, CrossCountry, London Overground and Great Western Railway were cross-honouring tickets while alternate bus service was also provided.

Destination Hotspots

Cities, Towns, Villages: **London** remains the most high-risk location in the UK for terrorist attacks, but there have been terrorist-related arrests in almost all British cities. Anti-terror operations have previously targeted “sleeper cells” in **Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester** and **Sheffield**. Monitor government alerts and develop robust contingency plans. There are a number of domestic extremist groups motivated by issues including, for example, animal rights and student tuition fees, that pose a threat to civil order as opposed to security. Track local media to avoid planned demonstrations.

Belfast and **Derry (Londonderry)** in Northern Ireland are best avoided during marching season, which peaks from 4 to 12 July annually, when both cities become hotspots for sectarian street violence. Cars with Republic of Ireland or UK licence plates may be at greater risk and should never be parked in town centres during this time.

Safety

Emergency Numbers

Child help-line	116111; 0800 1111	
Medical	999; 112	
Police	999; 112	
Fire	999; 112	

Beaches and Public Areas: The United Kingdom (UK) has thousands of miles of coastline and hundreds of beaches. Water quality is generally good and the most popular beaches will have a cleanliness rating indicated by a flag located at the busiest point on the beach. Remain wary of strong rip tides or currents.

Corruption: Visitors are highly unlikely to be affected by any form of corruption. It is extremely rare for corruption to affect domestic or international businesses operating in the UK. When tendering for contracts in the UK, businesses should adhere to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conventions to avoid prosecution by their home country.

Drugs and Alcohol: In the UK, it is illegal to buy cigarettes or alcohol under the age of 18. These laws are strictly enforced and significant penalties exist for shops or bars flouting them. It is also illegal to smoke inside public buildings, including pubs, clubs and restaurants. The UK drink driving limit is 0.8 milligrams of alcohol per millilitre of blood. This is enforced strictly and if caught over the limit, it could lead to court proceedings, unlimited fines and six months imprisonment.

The UK operates a strict drug policy. Drugs are divided into three classes (A, B, C) depending upon their degree of harmfulness and/or danger to society and the individual; the higher the class of drug (class A), the larger the punishment if caught misusing or possessing it. Sentences are harsh, especially for drug dealers. The maximum sentence for suppliers of class A drugs can be up to life imprisonment and seven years for possession. Fines may also be given to first offenders.

Freedom of Expression: Political activism and freedom of speech is common practice in the UK, protests or lobbying occurs quite often. Individuals in the UK have a right to

express their views in a peaceful and contained manner, however, expressing extremely violent views to harm others and violent protest will not be tolerated and will be dealt with by the local authorities, which can lead to incarceration or deportation.

Security Services: The UK Police Service is divided and organised by region: England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Currently, there are 43 police forces spread over the UK, the largest being the London Metropolitan Police. UK police forces are generally transparent, accountable and reliable, efficiently handling emergencies with a response time of around ten minutes. While rural areas may experience longer response times, the police have a strong record of successful crime investigations.

Culture

Religious Sensitivities: Apart from sectarian tensions in **Scotland's West Coast**, mainly in **the Glasgow area**, and **Northern Ireland**, there are few cultural and religious norms and sensitivities that visitors need to be aware of in the UK. Police and human rights groups have recorded an increase in apparent hate crimes nationwide following the Brexit referendum, with people of South Asian, African and Eastern European descent most often singled out. This usually manifests in the form of verbal harassment late at night on public transport or in the vicinity of clubs and bars but can escalate into violent confrontations, particularly where heavy alcohol consumption is involved. Tensions have also increased between law enforcement and predominantly Muslim communities in major urban areas, such as **London** and **Birmingham**, concerning counter-terror operations.

Political Sensitivities: Avoid offending when discussing the status of **Northern Ireland** or **Scotland** within the union of the UK. Issues of national identity are more pertinent than religious identity. The Brexit debate over leaving the EU is also particularly heated, and alongside issues such as immigration, integration of minority communities and terrorism, is not a suitable conversation topic to broach with strangers in public settings.

Specific Traveller Advice

Female Travellers

Local Customs and Laws: There are no local customs or laws that a female traveller should take into consideration in the United Kingdom. Familiarise yourself with your destination prior to travel, and be respectful and mindful of any possible cultural sensitivities, which may include dress, behaviour and topics of discussions.

Safety: There are minimal safety concerns female travellers should take into consideration in the United Kingdom. Sexual assault and rape do occur; however, visitors to the country are not likely to face an additional risk as most perpetrators of assault are known to their victim. While isolated incidents of street harassment and assault are reported in large cities, it is not a widespread or rampant concern. Police and emergency services maintain a high degree of professionalism and female travellers will not encounter any problems dealing with first responders or reporting crimes to local authorities. Exercise personal safety awareness if walking alone at night. Stick to main, well-lit streets and avoid walking through desolate areas or unfamiliar neighbourhoods. Refrain from wearing headphones while walking in the evening.

Health and Wellness: Women have access to a full range of gynaecological and reproductive health services, medicines and products in the United Kingdom. Available services include specialised clinics, prescription contraceptives, emergency contraceptives and a full variety of feminine hygiene products. Emergency contraceptives are sold behind the counter at pharmacies and can be purchased from a pharmacist without a prescription. Abortions are available under most circumstances in much of the UK.

LGBT+

Homosexuality is legal in the United Kingdom. There are many legal protections for LGBT+ persons in the country. Same-sex marriage is legal in all of the UK, including **Northern Ireland** since 13 January 2020. LGBT+ activity and persons are widely socially accepted, with the exception of smaller villages in rural areas and in Catholic areas of **Northern Ireland**. LGBT+ travellers are unlikely to face any difficulties or legal issues for travel. Exercise general safety precautions.

Technology & Communication Risk

Travellers are likely to face risks related to information and communication technology

(ICT) in the United Kingdom.

Internet access and social media have no restrictions. While there are laws prohibiting hate speech, which includes the expression of racial, ethnic, or religious intolerance, this is unlikely to affect travellers.

There are no concerns related to device searches or sensitive technology. Device searches and inspections at the border are unlikely. There are no restrictions in relation to bringing or operating sensitive equipment, which may include photo cameras, satellite phones, drones, and other GPS systems, in the country, however, drone users are required to comply with local laws.

State or criminal penetration of private data is likely. Authorities implement pervasive state surveillance of ICT networks in the country.

Travellers should exercise basic ICT safety precautions. However, travellers should note that ICT laws and practices are subject to change on short notice, and travellers are recommended to confirm the legality/appropriateness of their specific ICT needs prior to departure.

The country is known for its surveillance of telephone and electronic communications and travellers should assume that communication is monitored all the time. Online activities may be monitored. Cyber criminal groups may be present in the country. Exercise discretion in deciding to bring sensitive data into the country.

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