

London First-Timer Planning Checklist

A luxury-polished, no-stress guide to planning your first London trip

Updated December 03, 2025

Use this checklist to plan a beautifully paced London trip—without missing the details that make the experience feel seamless. If you'd like a bespoke itinerary (hotels, routing, transportation, tickets, day trips, and reservations), Bravo Elite Travel Group can design it for you.

Your Trip Snapshot	
Dates:	_____
Budget range:	_____
Travel style:	<input type="checkbox"/> Classic <input type="checkbox"/> Modern <input type="checkbox"/> Foodie <input type="checkbox"/> Theatre <input type="checkbox"/> History <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed pace <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Must-do list (top 3):	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
Hotel priorities:	<input type="checkbox"/> Walkable <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet <input type="checkbox"/> Iconic views <input type="checkbox"/> Luxury amenities <input type="checkbox"/> Family-friendly <input type="checkbox"/> Boutique

Planning Timeline (so you don't scramble)

- Confirm passport validity and name matches your airline ticket.
- Choose your travel dates and ideal trip length (4–5 nights, 6–8 nights, or 9–12 nights).
- Book flights (earlier is better for nonstop options, premium cabins, and preferred dates).
- Pick a London 'base' neighborhood (walkability + vibe matter more than you think).
- Reserve hotel(s) and airport transfers.
- Book any 'must-have' items early: theatre, popular museums, special dining, day tours.
- Map your days by area (West End / Westminster / South Bank / City / Notting Hill, etc.).
- Confirm transportation plan: contactless/Oyster, rail tickets for day trips, private car when needed.

Flights + Arrival (smooth landing)

- Decide your airport(s): Heathrow (LHR) is most common; Gatwick (LGW) also popular.
- Plan transport from airport to hotel: private transfer, Heathrow Express, Elizabeth line, or taxi.
- Pack essentials in carry-on: meds, chargers, one outfit, and any valuables.
- If arriving early, arrange early check-in or plan a 'first-day' route that doesn't require a nap.

Where to Stay (choose the right London 'feel')

- Prioritize walkability: stay where you'll spend your evenings (it changes the whole trip).

- Decide your vibe: classic/central, elegant & quiet, trendy & food-forward, or charming village feel.
- Confirm room needs: lift/elevator, AC, bed size, connecting rooms, accessible rooms, view/quiet room.
- Ask about included perks: breakfast, upgrades, early check-in/late check-out, welcome amenities.

Getting Around (like a confident Londoner)

- Plan to use contactless tap-in/tap-out (or an Oyster card) for the Tube and buses.
- Save key stations near your hotel and top sights.
- Use walking for short hops—London is best experienced on foot.
- Consider black cabs for convenience (especially evenings or with luggage).
- For day trips, decide: DIY rail + self-guided, small group tour, or private driver/guide.

Must Book in Advance (avoid sold-out sadness)

- West End theatre for your top show(s).
- High-demand museums/exhibitions with timed entry (when applicable).
- Afternoon tea (iconic hotels fill up on weekends/holidays).
- Special dining experiences (especially Friday/Saturday).
- Popular day trips (Windsor / Bath & Stonehenge / Oxford & Cotswolds / Harry Potter Studio Tour).

The ‘Perfect Pacing’ Formula

Think in rhythms: one anchor activity per day + one flexible “wander window.” Group sights by neighborhood to minimize backtracking. Leave at least one night unplanned for spontaneity.

Money + Connectivity

- Confirm your card has no foreign transaction fees; bring a backup card.
- Bring a small amount of cash for small purchases—cards are widely used.
- Plan mobile data: international roaming, eSIM, or local SIM (for navigation and tickets).
- Know tipping norms: often smaller than the U.S.; many places add service.

Packing (London-smart)

- Comfortable walking shoes (broken in).
- A polished outer layer (trench/coat) + compact umbrella.
- UK power adapter (Type G).
- Layers for changeable weather.
- A small crossbody or secure day bag.

Safety + Ease

- Keep valuables zipped/close in crowded areas; watch for pickpockets.
- Screenshot/print key confirmations (hotel, transfers, theatre tickets).
- Share your itinerary with a trusted contact.
- Consider travel insurance for trip protection and medical coverage abroad.

Want this done for you?

I design London, UK & Ireland itineraries that feel seamless and beautifully paced—and I also plan European river

Contact: Jennifer Batson • Bravo Elite Travel Group

Website: bravoelitetravelgroup.com