

Questions and Answers

- Q I don't play the organ – should I go on the tour? What will I do while others are playing the organs?
- A You should definitely go on the tour! Non-players are welcome – normally about one-third of participants are non-players. Above all, you will enjoy listening to these instruments in their wonderful acoustical settings. The organs we visit are in architecturally wonderful (not to mention historical) places. We are usually able to explore most areas of the building and grounds. We are often in the middle of town so you may also explore shops and local points of interest while we are enjoying the organ.
- Q Are photos allowed in churches and cathedrals?
- A Normally photos are permitted. Some places charge a small fee for the privilege. Occasionally we will be in places where photos are NOT permitted – we ask you to respect the building's policy because we want to be welcome there again. However, it is rare that we are denied taking photos of the organ, console, and players.
- Q How do I get from the London airports to the hotel? Does the hotel have its own shuttle?
- A Since the city is so large, and the airports a good distance apart, most London hotels do not have shuttles. However, it is easy to get from both Heathrow and Gatwick airports. SKYSHUTTLE runs a shuttle service from Heathrow to hotels in central London, and can be booked in advance from the US at www.skyshuttle.co.uk. From Gatwick, the best way is to take the express train (departs every fifteen minutes) to Victoria Station. Then it is a short taxi ride, or Underground, to the hotel. Of course, the least expensive way from Heathrow is to use the Underground. The Piccadilly Line goes directly from Heathrow to the Gloucester Road tube stop which is just around the corner from the hotel. As time for the tour draws closer, we gather information about everyone's arrival. If there are three or four arriving at the same airport about the same time, we will notify each of you, and using a taxi becomes practical. More information comes out for each tour in Update Letters.
- Q Should I get English pounds before I get to England?
- A Most of us do not do this because you can get money from ATMs in both airports and the exchange rate is much better. When you use your ATM card, you have to say how many pounds you want, but it will show up on your statement in dollars. There may be a small fee just like there is here for using a credit card. You can also purchase train and underground (tube) tickets with a major credit card (for extra days – all transportation during the tour is included in the tour cost). In fact, you can pay for most things using either an ATM or credit card. Be aware that many foreign credit cards have built in "chips" while most American cards do not. Some places may not accept your card unless it has a chip. You can check with your card provider about chips and cost for using it in England.

Q How much cash will I need?

A About the only things you will need will be transportation to and from the airport and most lunches. Lunch costs vary but aren't too much different from lunch in a city center here. Most of us will be satisfied with a sandwich and something to drink, since the English breakfasts are very large and satisfying.

Q I used to use traveler's checks – should I get some?

A Traveler's checks are an inconvenience now. Some places won't even cash them so you end up trying to find an American Express office. We suggest having an ATM card and at least one credit card such as a Visa or MasterCard. There is a bank with an outdoor ATM facility within 2 blocks of our London hotel, for example, and we locate other banks in each city.

Q What if I become ill?

A As a guest, you are entitled to the same healthcare as a British citizen. If you are on prescription medications, you should carry enough for the entire tour plus list of your prescriptions. The list should include name, strength, and dosages at all times. Over the counter things are available everywhere.

Q Can I use my cell phone or telephone credit card?

A In many cases you cannot use an American cell phone in Europe. To be sure, you should check with your cell phone provider. Credit cards and prepaid calling cards can be used from pay phones. You can call from the hotels but it will be more expensive. There is a cell phone on the coach for emergencies. You can purchase a "disposable" phone in England which comes with pre-paid minutes, and additional minutes can be added. The phone can be used on future travels. And some American phones can had a chip added that makes them useable.

Q Is Internet access available?

A Almost every hotel now has Internet access in the rooms (using your own computer). And most now have free wireless access, sometimes just in the lobby. Free Internet access and computer use is available at local libraries – just remember that libraries often have limited hours. Most libraries require your passport for access. And if you do not carry a computer, Internet cafes are popular and are often within easy walking distance (half a block from the Holiday Inn in London). There you can access the Internet for a small fee. You might even share a session with someone else on the tour.

Q Do I have to stay with the group all the time? Can I take a side-trip?

A You do not have to stay with the group; however you have paid for your hotel and meals, so will want to be with us at those times for sure. On past tours, some people have taken short side trips such as to Bath from Salisbury (very easy to do).

Q Can I skip the planned activities for an entire day and just hang around the hotel?

A Yes, in those places where we will be spending more than one night.

Q Is it possible to add extra nights either before or after the tour at the Holiday Inn in London?

A Yes – if you make arrangements in advance, we can obtain the same rate as during the tour.

Q Should I keep my passport with me at all times?

A Yes – and keep a photo copy in a separate place.