

Frequently Asked Questions

https://www.aifscustomized.com/ncsac/london_fall/faqs.asp#

Transportation

Do I have to take the AIFS flight?

No. However, bear in mind that if you purchase the AIFS transportation package, the transatlantic flight will be provided with round-trip airport transfers. You will be met at the airport on arrival and taken to your accommodation. At the end of the program if you leave on the group flight on the group departure date, you will be picked up from your accommodation and taken to the airport.

Can I change my return flight once I am in London?

Maybe. For a fee and subject to airline approval and availability, you may try to change your return flight. You must contact the agent directly. Only date changes are allowed; there can be no changes to the routing, and there will be an agent and airline-imposed change fee that could be as high as \$350. If you have a connecting flight in the US, you must check whether you are able to change that, as some cannot be changed. Please note that once you receive your ticket, it is your property and therefore AIFS staff cannot make the changes for you.

Housing

Where will I live?

You will have the choice of living in a homestay with a British family or, for a supplement, a twin studio room in a student residence. The homestays are typically located in residential areas of London north or west of the AIFS Study Center and about a 50-60-minute commute. The Student Residence is located in Zone 2 of London and typically 30-45 minutes travel time to the AIFS Study Center. Please read the apartment and homestay information in the Document Library of the AIFS Student Portal with comments from previous students to help you make your choice.

How many roommates will I have?

If you choose to live in a homestay, you will typically be in a twin room with one other person. In the student residences you will share a double with one other student.

Can I choose my own roommates?

Yes. You each must request one another and select the same housing option, either on the online AIFS application or by emailing AIFS at studentinfo@aifs.co.uk.

If I choose a homestay, what will my family be like?

All the homestay families are different; they will not necessarily be a traditional family with a mom, dad and 2 kids. They are just as likely to be an older couple or a single person. All of the families are very experienced at hosting international students and have been carefully chosen and assessed. A small gift for your host family is usually much appreciated.

Can I move into my accommodations before the program starts if I am arriving in London early?

AIFS cannot provide you with accommodation before the start of the program. However, we can provide you with a list of accommodation options for the local area, so please contact AIFS in advance for advice if you believe you will be arriving early.

What are the meal arrangements?

Meals are not provided at the student residence, but there are fully equipped kitchens, and you will be able to cook your own meals.

In the homestays, breakfast will be provided daily by your host family. It is possible to accommodate those who are vegetarian or who have particular allergies, although we advise you to notify AIFS of this as soon as possible. Homestay families cannot provide for exceptional dietary needs that will incur extra expense. If, for example, you require certain organic or gluten-free foods, these are much more expensive in the UK, and you will be responsible for purchasing them yourself.

Culture

What activities will be included?

There will be an academic and cultural program of subsidized events arranged by AIFS during your time in London. The events will be announced in the Pre-Departure Orientation, approximately 4 weeks before your departure and again via email, about 10 days prior to departure and will include guided day trips to places such as Oxford, Stonehenge and Brighton, theater visits, walking tours and sporting events. AIFS will also provide details of events occurring in London which you might like to join.

Money

How much money will I need?

This very much depends on individual tastes. However, AIFS recommends that students budget \$700-\$1000 per month for day-to-day needs. This would allow for some activities and excursions but not extensive overseas travel or expensive purchases.

How can I get money in London?

Bring a debit/ATM card. Make sure that your card is associated with the CIRRUS or STAR system so you can withdraw cash in UK £ from local ATM machines. You can ask your bank for a list of overseas banks that will accept your card. Do not take their word that it will be accepted everywhere – this is often not the case. Also, double-check their charges for withdrawing cash abroad.

Have a second way to access cash and make purchases in case your card is lost or stolen. Before departure, please make sure you get PIN numbers for credit cards (Visa and MasterCard, preferably not American Express as this is not accepted in as many places in the UK and Europe). If you do not already have a credit card, we suggest you get one before you leave.

Another option is to obtain a Visa or Mastercard Money Card (a pre-paid debit card) with you in case your card becomes demagnetized or is lost. Accessing your money with a combination of all three options mentioned above is the best way.

If you run short of money, or in the unfortunate event you have your wallet stolen, AIFS on-site staff can give you details of how to have money wired to you in an emergency situation from friends and family.

Communication

Will I have access to Wi-Fi?

You will have access to the computer labs at the AIFS Student Center, which is WIFI-enabled. Basic Internet access is provided in both housing options however wireless Internet access is not as prevalent in the UK as it is in the U.S. and download speeds can be much slower.

How can people contact me when I am in London?

You should have your mail sent to the AIFS Study Center at:

Your Name
AIFS Study Center
2 Elvaston Place
London SW75QH

Please be sure to give your friends and family the program start and end dates so that they do not mail things to you which will arrive after the program has ended.

Can I buy a cell phone?

You will be able to purchase a pay-as-you-go cell phone once in London, which you top up with credit as and when necessary. AIFS will give you information about buying a phone when you arrive. Most homestay families will let you use their phone to receive incoming calls, but do not assume this will be the case; always ask permission first. There are no telephones in the student residence.

Students with open cell phones can purchase local SIM cards or digital eSIM cards.

General

Do I need a passport?

You will need a valid passport to travel abroad. If you have a passport that will expire during your program or within four months after the end of your program, renew it now. You will not be able to board your flight without a valid passport in hand.

If you are applying for your first passport, go to www.travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_830.html.

If you need to renew your passport, go to www.travel.state.gov/passport/renew/renew_833.html.

To obtain a passport you will need:

- Passport Application Form DS-11
- Proof of Citizenship
- Current Identification and Photocopy
- Application Fee
- Two Passport Photos

The automated appointment number for all passport agencies is (877) 487-2778. For general passport information, you may dial the Federal Information Center at (800) 688-9889, or visit their website at www.travel.state.gov.

Do I need a visa?

Students will be provided with a letter by AIFS which you may need to show at UK immigration on arrival – this confirms that you are enrolled in one of our programs and that you are not enrolling in a U.K. university during your stay. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please talk to the nearest British embassy or consulate for entry requirements in case you do need to arrange a visa. Do not forget to obtain visas for other countries you may wish to visit. It is not possible to do this once you are in the UK.

What should I take with me?

Not too much. Every year students find that they bring clothing that they never wear or toiletries that they could have easily bought in London.

If you take prescription medication you should bring enough to last you the duration of the program. Pack it in your carry-on bag and make sure it is stored in the original container and carry a copy of the printed prescription.

The weather can be unpredictable so bring warm clothes. It is best to bring clothes that you can layer to be appropriate for all kinds of weather. You should also bring a waterproof coat. You will do a lot more walking than you are used to, so bring comfortable shoes.

Bring a towel or two.

Remember to leave space in your suitcase for souvenirs you will buy.

What happens if I get ill abroad?

Your host family or AIFS staff will make a doctor's appointment for you if you are ill while abroad.

All students are covered by the [CISI medical insurance policy](#). Be prepared to pay for doctor visits for minor injury or illnesses such as a sore throat or a sinus infection. Present your proof of insurance to your medical provider at the time of service. If the overseas doctor is willing to bill CISI directly CISI is willing and able to pay them directly for covered medical expenses. Foreign providers can contact your assistance team (Team Assist/On Call International (877) 714-8179 or (603) 952-2660) to verify eligibility and/or benefits 24/7/365. If the health care provider prefers to have you pay for any medical services, medicines, or equipment out-of-pocket at the time of your visit, hold onto all documents, bills and receipts, and submit them along with a claim form to CISI for reimbursement of eligible expenses.

Will my hairdryer/iron work in London?

In theory, yes. However, you will need to bring the correct outlet adapter and voltage converter, and even then, past experience has shown US electrical items to work for a short while before failing. The voltage in Europe is greater and the outlets are also different, so you need to be 100% sure before plugging things in. A basic hair dryer can be purchased in London for approximately \$25, and you can share the cost with your roommate.

Electrical sockets are different in Europe, so you will need an adapter plug to fit in the appliance.

Can I buy textbooks and course-related materials in London?

You can buy paper and other materials in London. London has many large bookstores, but unless your professor has asked them to order your books specifically, they may not have the exact edition your professors require. Please check with your professors regarding any books / reading materials they might require you to purchase in advance.

What sports facilities are available?

London does not have as many sports facilities as you may be used to back at college in the US. However, Imperial College London, of which you are a member, has a well-stocked health suite with treadmills, cross trainers and bikes as well as a weight room, steam room, sauna and climbing wall. They also have a sports hall, dance studio, fitness classes and squash courts. AIFS students may join the gym whilst in London for a reduced student fee.

If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to contact AIFS at studentinfo@aifs.co.uk.