

London, United Kingdom



Report made by

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General information of the city

- **Name of the city and country:** London, United Kingdom
- **Description:** A city flowing along the river Thames and its vivid green parks, London is a melting pot of cultures where British politeness and everyone speaking a second language will make you feel at home while away. Its majestic palaces, eclectic neighborhoods and back alleys full of history make it a story to remember.

Transportation accessibility

- Around 40% of London's underground/tube and overground stations are wheelchair accessible.
- Actually, the accessibility map is a bit complex for visitors, as some stations are completely step free, some have a step between the train and the platform (and require a ramp to board that you need to request to any of the staff at the station) and some are only accessible for transfers between lines (and sometimes not all transfers).
- The good news is that at each station, near the elevators, there are small information panels at wheelchair height with a list of stations that are of each type directly

connected to your current station. Also, you can download the **TfL Go app** (Transport for London) on your phone, check the wheelchair option and the app will calculate an accessible route. The app includes buses, the underground, the light railway (DLR) and the trams.

- Here is a **map with a legend of all accessible stations** (underground, light train, trains, trams, etc.), plus accessible river services. You can find more maps and information at the **TfL accessibility website**.
- People with disabilities that may need help can ask staff at stations (for underground and overground trains) and they will guide them to the platform and help them board if needs be. Staff will also be waiting at the destination to help users get off and guide them to the exit, if needs be.
- A 100% of the Elizabeth line, which works as an underground line in the city center and as a train line in the outskirts, is also wheelchair accessible. So, if you want to experience the London underground, the Elizabeth line is a safe bet.
- A 100% of London buses are wheelchair accessible. Also, wheelchair and mobility scooter users, plus a companion, board for free.
- A 100% of London trams and light railway (DLR) stations are also wheelchair accessible, although most of these lines don't go near the city center and the most touristic areas.
- Most piers for the Thames Clippers, run by Uber boats, that go along the river Thames are wheelchair accessible, except for three (Cadogan, London Bridge City and Wandsworth Riverside Quarter). Here's all **accessibility information on Thames Clippers**. These boats are a great alternative for sightseeing.
- You can use all transportation in London paying with a contactless credit or debit card on your smartphone without buying tickets. You can also buy tickets or top-up cards, such as Oyster, on most train or underground stations.
- Buses, trams, trains and the underground have both visual and audio announcements for next stops.
- As for incoming train or bus announcements, visual countdowns are present at most stations and stops. Audio announcements are given on trains, although not on bus stops. However, you can **check for realtime bus arrivals online**.
- Induction loops are also present at many information points, platforms, taxis (black cabs) and buses. Look out for the T-loop symbol.
- Tactile pavement is also present on most platforms and sometimes near stairs, although some stations are missing it, so be careful if you are relying on it.
- For more information on accessibility, you can check **TfL Plan an accessible journey page** and the **sight or hearing loss information page**.

- All London taxis (black cabs) are wheelchair accessible. A manual ramp is deployed by the driver to board the cab from a wide side door. The ramp is a bit steep, so manual wheelchair users may need push assistance. Also, although cab ceilings are high, taller wheelchair users may have to use a van-sized cab with higher ceilings.
- **Score: 4.5/5.** Even though underground accessibility is a bit complex to navigate for visiting wheelchair or mobility scooter users, as only around 40% of stations are step free and some of them still require a ramp to board (just ask staff in place for it), the rest of the transportation system is top notch accessibility wise. 100% of the bus network is accessible, plus free for wheelchair users and a companion, 100% of the trams, DLR light trains, the Elizabeth line and most of the river services are accessible too. Hearing loops are also common in the transportation system. Tactile pavement is still not completely widespread, but blind riders can ask staff to guide them through stations. All this would give transportation in London a 4 out of 5, but the icing on the cake is that all London taxis (black cabs) are wheelchair accessible too!

Streets accessibility

- Most streets in the city center are either flat or with a mild incline.
- Sidewalks tend to be well maintained and are easy to roll, except in some specific areas, although they can get crowded near the city center.
- One of said areas is Soho, where some sidewalks are really narrow.
- There is tactile pavement and curb cuts (most of them zero-level) on all crossings.
- There are pedestrian only streets in Mayfair, Soho and near Coven Garden, among other areas, as well as walkways in some sections along the Thames, such as the South Bank near Blackfriars station.
- There is uneven cobblestone in some streets around older tourist attractions, such as, the Tower of London or Covent Garden, and in some streets of Soho neighborhood.
- On most crossings with traffic lights, you need to press a button in order for the light to turn green. Furthermore, time to cross is really short and may be an issue for people with mobility impairments.
- In London, instead of audio signals, traffic lights have rotating cones under the button box that you need to press for the light to turn green. These cones with tactile ridges, after the button is pressed, will start to rotate once the light turns green.
- Parks in London usually have either paved or compact dirt paths that are wheelchair accessible.
- Accessible toilets are not uncommon. You can find them on many bigger stations, newer restaurants and shopping areas. Here is a [site with information on finding accessible toilets](#).

- **Score: 4/5.** Despite some occasional cobblestone, streets in London are mostly accessible, as sidewalks are well maintained and there is tactile pavement and curb cuts on all crossings. Also, instead of audio signals, traffic lights have rotating cones under the button box that spin once the light turns green for people with visual impairments. The only drawbacks are that said button always needs to be pushed for most traffic lights to turn green, which may be difficult for some wheelchair users, and, in general, the short time given to cross.

Restaurants & shops

- Around 50% of entrances of restaurants and shops are wheelchair accessible.
 - Of the non-accessible places, about half of them only have a single step to access. The rest have two or more steps.
 - Even if at first a place seems inaccessible, many have side entrances that are accessible (around the corner, a few meters to the side with an access ramp, etc.).
 - Unfortunately, some of the oldest and most traditional shops have steps to access.
 - Restaurants with terraces are also common in squares, on wider sidewalks or on street corners.
 - Food courts are also popular in some areas, such as Kingly Court in Soho or Covent Garden market, although they can get packed and there is not a lot of space to move around.
 - As there are so many options, even if some are inaccessible, you will surely find a place to eat.
 - Accessible toilets in restaurants are a hit or miss. Again, here is a [site with information on finding accessible toilets](#).
- **Score: 3/5.** Around 50% of entrances are wheelchair accessible, which is not bad, although the oldest and most traditional shops tend to have steps to access. As for restaurants, even if sometimes main entrances have steps, look out for side entrances, as there are many that are accessible.

Hotels & accommodation

- London is one of the cities in Europe with more wheelchair accessible rooms available.
- Here is a [**list of some of the accessible hotels in the city**](#). Unfortunately, implementation of accessible bathrooms varies a lot. For information on roll-in showers, it's better to directly contact the hotel.
- Hotels in central London are expensive. For a budget option, Youth Hostel Association (YHA) hostels are usually wheelchair accessible. Here is the [**site of accessible YHA hostels**](#) in England & Wales (some of them are located in Central London).

- As for other options, such as AirBnB apartments, accessibility is not as good, as many houses and older buildings in London have many steps. Double check with the host before booking.
- **Score: 4/5.** There are many wheelchair accessible hotels in the city. High hotel prices, in general, are the only issue. For a budget option, hostels from the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) tend to be either wheelchair accessible or have some accessibility features.

Tourist attractions accessibility

- All main tourist attractions in London are partially or fully wheelchair accessible.
- Many of the most famous are outdoor tourist attractions, such as The Big Ben, Trafalgar square or Piccadilly Circus. All the streets surrounding these attractions are accessible.
- Other touristic areas include neighborhoods, such as Soho, Mayfair, Notting Hill or Covent Garden. You can find steep streets or average inclines in Notting Hill, as well as, cobblestone streets around Covent Garden market and the occasional cobblestone street and narrow sidewalks in Soho. Aside from that, streets and sidewalks are wheelchair friendly ([see the Streets section](#) for more information).
- Parks and gardens in London, such as Hyde Park, St James' Park or Regent's Park, are all wheelchair friendly with plenty of paved paths, compact dirt paths and smooth cycling lanes to stroll.
- Westminster Abbey is accessible, although it has inaccessible areas for wheelchair users. There are also in place **accessibility features**, such as an audio described tour, hearing loop throughout the whole main building, etc. Also, admission is free for disabled visitors plus a companion.
- The London Eye is wheelchair accessible. It is recommended to book a wheelchair slot once you have a regular ticket, as only 3 wheelchairs are permitted on the same time-slot. A carer ticket is also available for free. Here is all **[London Eye's accessibility information](#)**.
- The Tower of London is partially wheelchair accessible, as it has inaccessible areas due to stairs, as well as plenty of rough cobblestone on the way. Ramps and lifts have been installed to make more areas accessible. A British Sign Language (BSL) visitor guide is available, but audio guide tours are not available for visitors with visual impairments. Here are more **[accessibility details of the Tower of London](#)**.
- Another popular tourist activity are London's famous musicals in the West End. All theaters have reserved seating for wheelchair users and many plays also offer audio described, BSL interpreted, captioned and relaxed performances. Here is **[accessibility information given by the ticketing company](#)**. The only problem is that accessible

seating needs to be booked by phone or using an [online contact form](#), instead of the regular online platform. Nevertheless, the response time is really short. Here is the [general contact page for any accessibility inquiries](#).

- Finally, museums in London also offer accessibility features in various degrees. You can check it on their respective websites. For instance, [accessibility at the British Museum](#) is top notch and caters to all disability profiles, including information on temperature and lighting, quieter times and areas, audio descriptive guides, touch tours, etc. Unfortunately, some
- **Score: 4.5/5.** Information on accessibility is easy to find online and is one of the best in the world. Among the main tourist attractions, most are fully wheelchair accessible, except for Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London that have some inaccessible areas. A special mention to park's accessibility, which is top notch, and also to hearing loops, audio descriptive guides and other features for people with hearing and visual impairments being quite widespread. The only issue is that to get wheelchair seating or disability tickets for musicals in the West End and for some museums, you need to contact by phone or through a specific online form, which can be quite inconvenient.

Getting there

- London has five airports. The main ones are Heathrow (LHR) and Gatwick (LGW), both serving national and international flights. Luton Airport (LTN), a bit further from the city, is served mainly by low-cost companies, such as Ryanair, and then there is the London City Airport, for smaller planes, and London Stansted Airport (STN), also further away and for low cost airlines.
- All airports have wheelchair accessible train connections to the city center. Accessible taxis (black cabs) are also available without prior reservation, although fares are quite steep, specially from Gatwick, Luton or Stansted.
- From Heathrow airport you can take the Heathrow Express that takes around 20 minutes to Paddington station. Although it is fully accessible, depending on the platform that it gets to, a platform may be needed to get off. Just in case, tell station staff at Heathrow airport (either at Terminal 2&3, Terminal 4 or Terminal 5 stops) that you may need a ramp.
- From Heathrow airport you can also take the Elizabeth line to Paddington (35 minutes) or other central stations in London, such as Liverpool street. It is fully accessible, although some stations may also require a ramp to get off (ask staff at the boarding station).
- Finally, from Heathrow, there is also the tube (check accessibility of the destination, as not all stations are accessible - for more information see the [Transportation section](#)).
- From Gatwick airport you can take the Gatwick Express to Victoria station (30 minutes). National Rail and Thameslink company trains also travel to Victoria station (60 minutes).

All are wheelchair accessible, although a ramp is needed to board and get off (ask staff at the stations, no advanced reservation is needed).

- From Luton airport, there is the Luton Express or the Thameslink train from Luton Airport Parkway (plus the DART shuttle) to St Pancras International (32-40 minutes in total). Both these stations are wheelchair accessible.
 - From Stansted, there is the Stansted Express to Liverpool Street station (around 50 minutes). The train is wheelchair accessible, but may need a ramp to board and get off (ask staff at the station).
 - You can also get to London from some European cities (e.g. Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam, etc.) by train. You will arrive at St Pancras International station located in the city center. In order to book for assistance, you should do so from the train operator company (Eurostar) when buying the tickets.
 - St Pancras International, Paddington, Liverpool Street or Victoria station are all served by underground lines (see the [Transportation section](#) for accessibility maps and information), as well as several bus lines to get to other areas in the city center.
- **Score: 5/5.** From all London airports to the city center there are fast wheelchair accessible train connections. Some destinations may require a ramp to get off, so ask station staff at the airports and they will help you on the go. You can also take accessible taxis (black cabs) without prior reservation, although fares can get quite expensive.

Overall accessibility score

- **Score:** 25/30. Overall **4.2/5 stars**.
- **Summary:** Currently, London is one of the most accessible cities in the world with all its scores being above average and some of them nearly perfect. There has been a clear effort by the city to take into account people with different kinds of disabilities, specially in transportation, streets and tourist attractions access.