



## **Flights**

With the number of flight destinations available from the UK, travellers have never had so much choice of where to visit.

However, when booking your flights there are a few golden rules that will help you make sure it's the right flight for you...



## Booking online

You may prefer to book flights through a travel agent, but it is always worth looking online, as you may be able to find a better deal. To help you save time, there are several flight comparison websites available, making it easier to view all your options in one place and compare the best deals. Most flight comparator websites also allow you to tailor your searches according to preferences, for example, you can usually select the specific airlines you want to see results for and can search for either direct or indirect results.

Sometimes you may find that the cheapest results are for indirect flights. While transfers are often very manageable, and sometimes compulsory if you are flying a very long way, they can add hours on to the time it takes to reach your destination and so it's worth considering whether the saving is actually worth the extra journey time.

## Beware of hidden costs

Be aware that some airlines' websites (generally budget airlines) do not include taxes and additional charges in the initial total you are quoted. These costs are often only added on once you continue to fill out your flight preferences and can significantly increase the overall price, so always double check to begin with.

The most common additional costs to watch out for are airport taxes; checked baggage; priority boarding; online check-in; oversized luggage (i.e. sports equipment, musical instruments, infant equipment); and administration fees (for use of debit/credit card). These costs should be clearly displayed as you go through the booking process, but it is worth keeping an eye on your total, as with the additional costs, you may find a different airline may be cheaper. However, some extra fees, such as credit card booking charges, are simply unavoidable, so make sure you factor them into your budget – most UK travel agencies and airlines charge 1-3% extra to pay by credit card.

## Best time to book

The earlier you book your flights, the more likely you are to get a cheaper price. Travel experts also suggest that the best time to book a flight online is a Monday or Tuesday, as airlines typically decrease fares early in the week and raise them again toward the end of the week. If your plans aren't set in stone then you may be able to pick up some cheap flights at the very last minute, but this is probably not worth risking if your destination and departure dates are fixed, as there are no guarantees. It's also worth keeping an eye out for airline sales, which take place throughout the year and can offer significant savings.

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## Check-in online

To reduce queuing times, checking-in online is the best option. If you are solely taking hand luggage then you can go straight to security on arrival at the airport, but with hold luggage you will need to check this in first, although you will already be checked-in as a passenger on the flight. However, different rules and regulations apply depending on the airline, so it's important to check before you travel as advance check-in times and procedures vary. Now with some low cost airlines, checking-in online is actually compulsory, but don't worry if you don't have internet access or a printer on the day of your flight as online check-in can often be carried out several days before your departure.

If you do check-in online, you will need to print off the voucher and take this with you, as this will act as your boarding card and if you lose this many airlines may charge you for a replacement.

## At the airport

Airlines recommend getting to the airport three hours before international flights and two hours before domestic flights. If you have checked-in online, then you may only be required to be there 40 minutes before your flight departure, but it is worth keeping in mind that you have to allow enough time to pass through security, so if you are travelling at a busy period it is advisable to allow a little extra time.

If you have a connecting flight, you should look for a minimum connection time of 120 minutes, as this should allow you plenty of time and cover any potential delays. Many people make the mistake of booking the connecting flight's departure too close to the arrival of the previous flight, but don't forget that you have to go through security again at the airport and may have to collect and re-check-in your baggage, plus you may find that your connecting flight departs from a different terminal to where you arrived.

## Avoid excess baggage

Baggage allowance ranges depending on the airline, but for most airlines, 20kg is the maximum weight for checked baggage and 10kg is the maximum for hold luggage – this must also be no bigger than 56cm x 45cm x 25cm, including wheels and handles. If your luggage is above the maximum then you will be charged and it depends on the airline itself as to whether this charge is a one off payment or is charged per kilo over the maximum allowance. Rates also vary depending on destination and are at the airlines discretion, so if you have any concerns always check with your specific airline.

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## Airport security

With Britain recently raising its terror alert to 'severe', airport security is as thorough as it has ever been. In addition to removing belts and watches, as well as all money and keys from your pockets, you may also be asked to remove your shoes and coat before passing through the scanner.

If you are carrying any liquids in your hand luggage, none of these must be in containers of more than 100ml, all of which must fit inside a transparent, re-sealable plastic bag that measures approximately 20cm x 20cm. Laptops and electrical items are allowed to be carried as hand luggage, but must be declared at security and scanned separately.

## On board

During your flight, it is advisable to drink plenty of water and get up regularly to stretch your legs. Performing simple leg exercises in your seat also helps to keep the circulation flowing and reduces the chances of deep vein thrombosis. Try to avoid drinking too much tea, coffee or alcohol as this may cause dehydration. A good tip to reducing the effects of jetlag is to change your watch to the time of your destination as soon as you get on the plane, as this will help you adjust to the new time zone quicker.

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