

HARRY POTTER PLACES
UK Travel Supplementum

Internet Access
in the UK



www.HarryPotterPlaces.com

Harry Potter Places **Potterite UK Travel Supplementum** **Internet Access**

Begin your UK Internet Access Research by Reading Rick Steves' Internet Access Tips:

<http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/Internet.htm>

While *everything* Rick offers is helpful, pay particular attention to his tips about setting up a web-based Email account, Ethernet cables, Blogging, calling over the Internet, and Smartphone apps.

The Cheapest—yet, Quite Convenient—UK Internet Access: Lodging at Places that Offer FREE Wi-Fi

These days, almost all UK lodgings that have an Internet website offer **Free Wi-Fi Internet access** to their lodgers—even the small, Mom-&-Pop-run B&Bs. Oddly enough, only the most expensive UK hotels still charge a fee for Wi-Fi Internet access. The **UK Hilton Hotel** chain and the **Balmoral Hotel** in Edinburgh (*Harry Potter Places Book Five, Site #50*) are among the most egregious offenders. The Balmoral, for instance, charges £15 (\$24) for 24 hours of Wi-Fi Internet access, or £6 (\$10) for only 1 hour of usage.

When searching for lodgings, pay particular attention to whether or not they offer Free Wi-Fi. If they don't offer it, keep searching.

The Impervious Curse

When lodging with a host who offers Free Wi-Fi Internet access, don't be surprised if you have trouble getting a Wi-Fi signal while in your room. Many UK buildings are constructed with very thick stone or brick walls, especially the oldest and most Potterly-interesting accommodations. Unfortunately, thick walls tend to block cell phone and Wi-Fi signals, both from without and *within* the building.

The Impervious Curse can sometimes be countermanded simply by opening a window, especially for cell phone or mobile broadband signal access. To obtain a Free Wi-Fi signal however, you may have to use your laptop in the hotel or B&B's common areas, which usually are nearer to the host's Wi-Fi router. Although your privacy may be limited by such a situation, focus instead on the opportunity to **meet new people** afforded by frequenting the common areas of your lodgings!

And, please ... there's no sense in complaining about something that cannot be helped. If your host had the means to provide an unobstructed Wi-Fi signal within each and every room, you'd have a signal in your room.

Free Wi-Fi Hot Spots

It's not just coffee shops anymore! More and more UK restaurants and pubs have started offering Free Wi-Fi access to boost customer visits. In major cities such as London, Oxford, Gloucester, and Edinburgh, you'll have no problem finding a Free Wi-Fi hotspot.

Reid Bramblett offers a list of Free Wi-Fi finders you can use to search for hotspots in or near other UK cities:

http://www.reidsguides.com/t_cm/wifi.html

An Internet Free Wi-Fi finder we've used in the past is:

My Hotspots

<http://www.myhotspots.co.uk/>

Insert the postal code of your lodgings, or the Potter Place you'll be visiting each day, and this Wi-Fi finder will give you a list of nearby hotspots. The only drawback to this finder: it's not always clear which hotspots are free. Furthermore, those listed as Pay or Commercial hotspots may only charge the cost of a cuppa to gain Internet access.

Alternatively, use the store locators for UK businesses *known* to offer Free Wi-Fi access, inserting the postal code of your lodgings, or the Potter Place you'll be visiting each day.

UK McDonalds

http://www.mcdonalds.co.uk/ukhome/Restaurants/restaurant_locator.html

Located all over the UK, most McDonalds restaurants now offer Free Wi-Fi. Although you may have to register during your first visit (at no charge), once you've done that you can access the Internet as long as you want for the price of a single cup of coffee.

UK Starbucks

<http://starbucks.co.uk/store-locator>

A registered Starbucks Card is no longer needed to use a UK Starbucks' Wi-Fi signal—just the cost of a cuppa. Individual Wi-Fi sessions are limited to 2 hours, but you can *reconnect* as often as you wish each day.

Here's a thought! If J.K. Rowling were penniless and penning *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* **today**, might she have frequented one or more of Edinburgh's many McDonalds or Starbucks, rather than the **Elephant House (Site #51)** or **Nicolson's Restaurant (Site #54)**?

Welcome Break Motorway Service Stations

<http://www.welcomebreak.co.uk/wifi>

When driving in the UK, you'll find Free Wi-Fi Internet access at any of the **Welcome Break** locations frequently found along **Motorways**. (And they usually have good coffee!)

While not Free, the Most Convenient UK Internet Access: Laptop Mobile Broadband Internet Access

A **Mobile Broadband** service allows your laptop to wirelessly-access the Internet *anywhere* you go, via a portable wireless modem called a **USB modem stick** or a **Dongle**. (We kid you not.

That's what it's really called!)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_broadband

http://www.uswitch.com/broadband/guides/what_is_a_mobile_Dongle/

Because a portable wireless modem works just like a cell phone, if you already use a mobile broadband device to access the Internet through a US service provider, you can activate an International plan that will allow you to use *your* Dongle while in the UK. But, it will be *outrageously expensive* to do so! [See the **Texting and Data Files Sending/Receiving** section of the **Potterite UK Phones Supplementum**: <http://HarryPotterPlaces.com/tips/UKphones.pdf>]

Potterites who anticipate spending a lot of laptop time on the Internet while in the UK should consider purchasing a **UK Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) portable mobile broadband service**.

According to our research, the best UK mobile broadband service provider—offering the fastest download speed as well as the cheapest data usage fees—is **T-Mobile-UK's Pay-Per-Day program**.

<http://www.t-mobile.co.uk/shop/mobile-broadband/daily-mobilebroadband-plus/usb-stick-615-black-payg/>

- The T-Mobile USB modem stick will cost you £9.99 (\$16).
- You'll have to load the service with a minimum of £10 (\$16) to start your PAYG plan.
- You'll be charged £2 (\$3) per day, or £7 (\$11) per week, or £15 (\$24) per month.

BTW: If you're into it, the T-Mobile PAYG mobile broadband stick is also available in **PINK!**

<http://www.t-mobile.co.uk/shop/mobile-broadband/daily-mobilebroadband-plus/usb-stick-615-pink-payg/>

Accio Mobile Broadband Accessories

We strongly suggest that Potterites who sign up for a UK mobile broadband service consider purchasing the following inexpensive accessories before leaving the US.

Buy an Expanded USB Port Device

Most laptops have only two USB ports. But, if you're like CD Miller and prefer using a **wireless mouse** when working on your laptop, two USB ports are not enough! Yes, two ports will accommodate a wireless mouse's nano-receiver *and* a mobile broadband's Dongle or stick. But, no other USB port will be available for inserting a **Flash drive** (Jump or Thumb drive), or the like. Additionally, most mobile broadband Dongles and sticks work best when plugged into *two* USB ports (see below).

Inexpensive **USB port expansion devices** are available at every Internet or Brick-&-Mortar computer equipment stores. However, beware of USB port expansion devices that are **shaped in a way that might block access to your laptop's second USB port**. Purchase a USB port expansion device that attaches to your laptop by a short **cable**, such as the **Belkin USB 1.1 4-Port Pocket Hub** (\$9.99).

http://www.belkin.com/IWCatProductPage.process?Product_Id=367655

Buy a USB Y-Cable to Connect the Mobile Broadband Dongle or Modem Stick to Your Laptop

Any mobile broadband Dongle or modem stick will operate when directly inserted into a single USB port. However, because these devices have no external power connection, they **draw power** from your laptop while simultaneously **using power** to connect to the Internet. If plugged into a single USB port, your Internet access speed is slowed. In fact, undercharged laptops may not have sufficient power to operate a Dongle or modem stick plugged into a single USB port.

With a USB Y-cable you can enjoy the fastest Internet connection available via your mobile broadband service subscription. When plugged into *two* USB ports, the Dongle or modem stick uses one port to draw power, and the second port to access the Internet.

Please Note: If both of the Y-ends are plugged into a USB expansion device, you'll still be double-drawing from **one port**. Instead, plug one of the Y-end connectors directly into a laptop USB port, and the other into one of the expansion device's USB ports. (It shouldn't matter which end is plugged directly into the laptop, but you may want to experiment.)

USB Y-Cable Examples, as Seen on Best Buy's Website

A 1 foot-long Y-cable cable is only \$6.93, but remember that you might need to hang your modem outside the window of a thick-walled room!

<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/Startech.com+-+1+ft+USB+Y+Cable+for+External+Hard+Drive+USB+A+to+mini+B+-+Black/4564133.p?id=1218483854621&skuId=4564133&st=USB%20Y%20cable&cp=1&lp=1>

A 3 foot-long Y-cable: \$8.40

http://www.bestbuy.com/site/searchpage.jsp?sessionId=BBE0D193D46FE097329D001802CC74B8.bbolsp-app01-26?_dyncharset=ISO-8859-1&_dynSessConf=-1068562529245216175&id=pcat17071&type=page&st=3+ft+USB+Y+Calble&sc=Global&cp=1&nrp=15&sp=&qp=&list=n&iht=y&usc=All+Categories&ks=960

A 6 foot-long Y-cable: \$8.90

http://www.bestbuy.com/site/searchpage.jsp?_dyncharset=ISO-8859-1&_dynSessConf=-1068562529245216175&id=pcat17071&type=page&st=6+ft+usb+y+cable&sc=Global&cp=1&nrp=15&sp=&qp=&list=n&iht=y&usc=All+Categories&ks=960

Considering the measly 50 cent difference between 3 and 6 foot-long cables, we suggest you get the 6 foot-long Y-cable. A wide rubber band or a Velcro cord-keeper can control excess length until you need it—such as when the table you're working at isn't immediately near a window!

Internet Blogging

As aptly stated by Rick Steves when listing a **Travel Journal** as a vital item to pack, "An empty book to be filled with the experiences of your trip will be your most treasured souvenir." By religiously recording at least a quickie account of each day's adventures, you create an accurate report that

will help you reclaim the experience long after your memory of it has begun to dim. In fact, every time you open your old Travel Journal you'll find yourself transported back in time, and will derive renewed enjoyment of the events you smartly recorded for posterity.

These days, however, Travel Journal *books* are rapidly being replaced with **blogs**. If you'll be Pottering in the UK with your laptop—especially if using a mobile broadband service to access the Internet anywhere you go—Blogging is the thing to do!

Potterites who already have a **Facebook** or **Twitter** account can use those sites to document each day's adventures. However, many Potterites prefer to create a Blogsite specifically dedicated to their Harry Potter trip. If this is your wish as well, be sure to setup your Potter Trip Blogsite *before* leaving home.

Return to Rick Steves Internet Access Tips and scroll down to the **Blogging** section. There you'll find the links he provides to the most popular (free) Blog sites.

<http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/Internet.htm>