

HARRY POTTER PLACES
UK Travel Supplementum

Telephones
And the UK



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Harry Potter Places

Potterite UK Travel Supplementum

Telephones and the UK

Learning about the many differences between US/Canadian and UK phones, and deciding what kind of phone to use while Pottering in the UK, requires some research. To help with this task, *Harry Potter Places* authors and contributors have assembled a few of the best Internet resources available, followed by tips derived from our own UK experiences.

UK-Phone-Related Internet Resources

Tourist-Information-UK

<http://www.tourist-information-uk.com/guides/tourist-information-advice/telephones-mobile-phones/>

This excellent webpage contains simple explanations and directions for several phone-related issues, such as: dialing the UK from another country, dialing another country *from* the UK, and calling within the UK, money-saving tips, best times to make calls, SIM cards, and using Skype while in the UK.

Rick Steves' Phone Tips

As usual, Steves provides several webpages filled with helpful suggestions about phones and the UK.

Please Note: Some of Steves' European suggestions don't apply in the UK. Although he usually identifies non-UK-related info, read carefully.

International Calling Tips: UK and Europe

<http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/call-uk-europe.htm>

Public Phones, Hotel-Room Phones and Phone Cards

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

Mobile Phones and SIM Cards in Europe

<http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/cell-phone-europe.htm>

Travel Smarter with a Smartphone

<http://www.ricksteves.com/tms/article.cfm?id=289&extras=false>

About.com's Website

Below is a link to a well-written series of articles. We suggest that you work your way through all 8 pages—unless you already know what kind of phone you'll be using. In that case, you can use the links at the bottom of each page to skip around.

<http://golondon.about.com/od/planningyourtrip/ss/telephones.htm>

Extra Tips for Potterites

Because it won't always be convenient for you to access the Internet (as explained later, in our **Texting and Data Files Sending/Receiving** section), you might print and pack pages two and three of this Supplementum—or, load this entire PDF to your phone or iPad-like device.

Call a Number in the UK *from a Phone in the US or Canada*

- Dial **011** (the international access code for the US or Canada)
- Dial **44** (the country code for the UK)
- Dial the **UK number**—but, *skip the first zero (0)!*

For Instance: To reach the Harry Potter WB Studio Tour Call Centre at **08450 840 900** when calling from the US or Canada, dial **011 – 44 – 8450 – 840 – 900**. Do not dial the “0” seen before the **8450**.

Call a Number in the US or Canada *from a Phone in the UK*

- Dial **00** (the international access code for the UK or Europe)
- Dial **1** (the country code for the US or Canada)
- Dial the US/Canadian **area code** and **phone number**.

For Instance: To call the Wizarding World of Harry Potter's “Need Help Buying Tickets” number (**407 – 224 – 7840**) from anywhere in the UK, dial **00 – 1 – 407 – 224 – 7840**.

In other words, for US or Canadian Potterites to phone home to friends or family while *in* the UK, dial **00 – 1 – (area code) – (phone number)**.

Instructions for Calling Between any Other Countries and the UK Can be Found at:

<http://www.countrycallingcodes.com> or, <http://www.howtocallabroad.com>

Emergency Numbers in the UK

999 is the UK equivalent of 911 in the US or Canada.

If you encounter an emergency while Pottering in the UK—criminal, medical, or accident-related—**dial 999**. There's only one exception to this rule.

When calling for emergency help **while on a UK motorway**, it's best to use one of the **Emergency Call Boxes**: orange telephones with “SOS” printed on them, found at half-mile intervals. (There are **white and blue poles** placed every 100 yards that point in the direction of the nearest call box.) By using an Emergency Call Box, motorway center personnel will immediately know your location. You'll not have to try to identify where-in-the-UK you are!

Assistance Numbers in the UK

Dial 100 to reach a Telephone Operator. You may or may not be charged for this call, depending on what kind of phone you're using.

Directory Assistance (aka Directory Enquiries). The number you dial while in the UK to obtain assistance for finding a phone number *within* the UK varies according to the service provider of the phone you're using, and it isn't a free call. The number will start with **118**, followed by another three digits. The directory enquiries number for British Telecom (BT) phones is **118 118**.

Don't forget that you can use the Internet to find a UK telephone number—if you have a free Wi-Fi connection there's no charge. <http://www.192.com/> or, <http://www.bt.com/directoryenquiries/>

Dial 155 to reach International Operator Assistance. This number is free if calling from a payphone, but charges apply when using other phones.

*** Program Your UK Phone's Address Book with All of Your Country's UK Embassy and Consulate Telephone Numbers and Location Information**

No matter what kind of phone you end up using, be sure to program its address book with your country's UK Embassy and Consulate information. Additionally, **bookmark the Internet addresses** for your Embassies and Consulates in every web-accessing device that you Potter with.

US Potterites

The US Embassy in London is located at 24 Grosvenor Square, W1.

Business and 24-Hour Emergency Telephone: 020/7499-9000

From within the UK, dial **020-7499-9000**

From the United States, dial **011-44-20-7499-9000**

Open Monday through Friday, from 8:30am to 5:30pm.

<http://london.usembassy.gov/>

The US Passport and Visa Citizenship Unit in London is located at

55-56 Upper Brook Street, London, W1.

Telephone: (same as above), ext. 2563 or 2564

Open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 to 11:30am, and from 2 to 4pm.

http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/index.html

The US Consulate in Edinburgh is located at 3 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BW.

Telephone: 0131/556-8315

From within the UK, dial 0131-556-8315

From the United States, dial 011-44-131-556-8315

(There is no 24-Hour Emergency phone number for the Edinburgh US Consulate.

Use the London Embassy's number.)

Open Monday through Friday from 1 to 5:30pm.

<http://edinburgh.usconsulate.gov/>

Canadian Potterites

Visit the link below to obtain phone numbers and addresses for the

Canadian Embassies in London and Edinburgh.

<http://canada.embassyhomepage.com/>

Potterites from Other Countries

Consult your government's website to find the phone numbers and addresses for your Embassies and Consulates in the UK.

Cell Phones—aka Mobile Phones—and the UK

Parseltongue Pointer: Mobile phone = “MO-bile” — *not* “mo-bull.”

UK natives will know what you mean if you say, “cell phone.” But, *when in Rome!*

Many US **cell phones** use a **CDMA** network and are not compatible with the **GSM** (*Global System for Mobile Communication*) or **Three** networks used by **mobile phones** in the UK.

AT&T and T-Mobile phones *do* use GSM and ought to be functional in the UK. Specialized Verizon or Sprint phones also should work in the UK.

However, if your **home phone service provider** *doesn't have* UK coverage, and isn't able to offer you a **UK roaming phone service plan**, it will cost you *beaucoup bucks* to use your UK-compatible phone while on holiday. Your unsupported US phone will roam to a UK phone service host and you'll be *double-charged* for each call: your home service provider's fees, plus the UK host's service charges. Every time you make a call, the UK host operator will send their billing information to your home service provider. Those costs will show up on your next US phone service bill.

Please Note: You'll also be double-charged for *receiving* calls when using a UK-compatible phone in areas where your home service provider doesn't have coverage. In fact, you may be charged for incoming calls even when you don't answer them—even if your phone is turned OFF when they're sent!

*** Do not use a UK-compatible US phone while in Great Britain unless your home service provider has UK coverage *and* you've activated an international service plan.**

From Most-to-Least Convenient, Here are Your UK Mobile Phone Options:

- Take your own phone—if it will work in the UK, *and* you've activated a UK phone coverage plan during your trip.
- Rent a UK phone from your home service provider. (If your provider doesn't have UK coverage, it likely won't offer UK rental phones.)
- Buy a cheap UK Pay-As-You-Go phone.
- Rent a UK phone from a phone rental company.

We Recommend Using Your Own Phone or Renting a UK Phone from Your Home Service Provider

Using your own phone (with UK-coverage-activated by your home service provider) is more convenient because you keep your regular phone number and contact lists. Furthermore, friends and family simply dial your number as they normally would to reach you.

If your own phone won't work in the UK, renting one from your home service is more convenient because your regular phone number and contact lists usually can be transferred to the rental phone. Thus, friends and family simply dial your number as they normally would.

Step One: Peruse Your Home Service Provider's Website

Check to see if your phone's model is capable of working in the UK.

Read about the international phone coverage programs offered by your provider.

If your phone *won't* work in the UK, what rental options are offered by your home service provider?

Step Two: Call Your Home Service Provider

Whether activating an international phone program, or renting an international phone, it's safer and wiser to do so with the assistance of a **live person** who can advise you of special deals.

Tips for Potterites who are Verizon Customers

No, we are not Verizon stock-holders. But, because we're Verizon customers, that's the company we're familiar with.

Several of Verizon's phones are compatible with the UK's GSM or Three networks, and Verizon has coverage throughout all of the United Kingdom. Verizon offers a variety of Global Service plans that can be activated for your phone during your holiday, including a special program for short term UK trips (less than 21 days). Once a program is activated, because Verizon *is* your roaming host in the UK, you'll not suffer any additional roaming host fees.

If your phone isn't GSM or Three network compatible, Verizon will loan you a UK phone—free of charge! All you'll need to pay is a single shipping fee of \$19.99. Your Verizon UK phone will arrive with a pre-paid return shipping label. Your regular phone number, voice mail number, and contact lists can easily be transferred to this phone. Additionally, whether using your own phone with an activated Global Service plan or a Verizon-loaned UK phone, your phone will automatically add the + sign and country code when calling a US number from your contact list.

Verizon also offers something called a **Global Value** program. For a fee of \$4.99 per month, the Verizon UK roaming cost drops from the standard rate of \$1.29 per minute to 99 cents per minute. **This fee can be prorated for short term trips.** If you'll be traveling in the UK for only 10 days, for instance, your Global Value program fee will be only \$1.66. **This discounted rate program will save you money no matter how long you'll be traveling—buy it!**

Please Note: The Global Value fee prorated option info was not found on the Verizon website in January of 2012. We learned about it during a phone conversation with one of Verizon's Global Activation Specialists. This is a perfect example of why you should **call your service provider** when ready to activate an international phone program or rent an international phone.

Tips for AT&T Potterites

In addition to exploring AT&T's website, visit the link below: a Traveling-to-England forum response that has several suggestions for using apps like Skype and Text4Free, including a link to a company that rents MiFi phones for the UK.

<http://forums.att.com/t5/International-Service/Travelling-to-England-am-I-covered/td-p/2633137>

Texting and Data Files Sending/Receiving

While *receiving* text messages usually isn't that costly, it is strangely expensive to *send* them from your UK-activated phone. [See the **How to Contact Me** section still to come.]

When using a US service provider to send or receive **Data Files** while in the UK, connecting to the **Internet** in *any* way—via a Global-activated Smart Phone, Mobile Broadband Internet device, or the like—is **outrageously expensive**. Opening an Email with a medium-sized attachment, for instance, takes about 1 MB of data usage. Based on an international roaming data rate of 2 cents per KB, the cost to receive this single Email would be **over \$20!**

Verizon suggests:

“Turn off Data, Data Roaming and Background Data options on your device. All devices will automatically search for updates. If that happens while you’re out of the country, you’ll incur international data roaming charges. So, be sure to turn off ALL data services. Some devices allow you to turn data off only when in a roaming state; consult your device manual for instructions.”

Alternately, see the **About.com How to Avoid Data Roaming Charges** article:

<http://mobileoffice.about.com/od/businesstravelersadvice/ht/avoid-data-roaming-charges.htm>

“Put your phone in Airplane Mode if you just want Wi-Fi access. Airplane Mode turns off the cellular and data radio, but on most devices you can leave Wi-Fi on. So, if you’ll have wireless Internet access (e.g., in your hotel or perhaps a free Wi-Fi hotspot like a coffee shop), you can still go online with your device and avoid the data roaming charges.”

See the **Potterite UK Internet Access Travel Supplementum** to learn about other less expensive alternatives for using the Internet during your UK holiday.

<http://HarryPotterPlaces.com/tips/UKinternetAccess.pdf>

Buy a Cheap UK Phone

If you anticipate making a lot of calls *within* the UK during your holiday, this may be the thing to do, even though you’ll have to populate your contact list anew. Additionally, some cheap UK phones offer international rates (for calling home) that are half the cost of US service provider roaming charges.

Loads of cheap UK phones are available for online purchase—some starting as low as £4.90 (\$7.50) for a *refurbished Pay-As-You-Go* phone.

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

BTW: Pay-As-You-Go (**PAYG**) phones are what most UK visitors use in order to avoid having to pay large service deposits when purchasing a phone. In fact, if you don’t have a credit record in the UK, you may not be eligible for anything *but* a PAYG phone account.

If you get a PAYG UK phone, ask how to program it so that funds from your **US** bank account or credit card can be used to reload your account *before* you buy it! You’ll not have to periodically stop at a UK stand to add more minutes.

Read **About.com’s Pay-As-You-Go** article:

<http://golondon.about.com/od/planningyourtrip/a/cellphones.htm>

The One Stop Phone Shop link above is only one of several online companies that offer cheap UK phones. **Google “Buy a cheap UK cell phone”**—or the like. Shop around. Call the seller and learn more about what you’re buying before you purchase a cheap UK phone.

Please Note: If buying online from a UK-based company, it likely will be cheaper to have the phone mailed to your **first UK place of lodging** rather than having it sent to the US. Contact your host and let them know that a package will be arriving ahead of you.

Please Also Note: You can wait until reaching the UK and buy a cheap phone at a phone store or kiosk, but there's no guarantee that you'll find one as cheap as those found online.

Lastly: It will typically cost friends and family far more than they expect to call your UK-purchased mobile phone—something we'll address in the **How to Contact Me** section.

Rent a Phone to Take to the UK

Renting a UK phone from a US rental company is more expensive than any of the previous options. But, you'll have the phone before you leave on holiday, thus you can notify friends and family of your UK phone number, and populate your contact list, while still at home. **Google “Rent a US phone to take to the UK”—or the like.** Shop around. Call the company and learn more about what you're renting before you book the phone.

CD Miller cautions:

“When I rented a UK mobile phone from a US company in 2008 (**Vodafone**, now defunct), I went with the least expensive plan—one that limited the phone call minutes included in my base rental fee to **50**, or something like that. **I thought this was plenty of minutes because I had no intention of making phone calls while in the UK.** I rented a UK mobile phone only to have one in case of emergency.

Surprise, I got lonely! I ended up making several calls to the US while Pottering around the UK, and went way over the minutes included in my phone rental's base fee. That act was *Très Expensive!* I strongly suggest that you purchase at least *twice* the number of base fee minutes when you can do so cheaply: when initially renting the phone.”

Hotel Phones in the UK

Check the charges! Before using a hotel phone to make *any* kind call, find out what calls are free. Do not assume that all charges are described on the phone or in the room's brochure. Call the hotel operator and ask specific questions.

- Can I call locally for free? If so, is there a daily limit for free local calls?
- Can I dial a toll-free number (such as an international phone card number) for free?

NEVER use a hotel phone to place long-distance or international calls. Rick Steves describes the extra long-distance or international fees charged by hotels as being “**an almost-criminal rip-off.**”

Happily, you'll not be charged for receiving calls at your hotel. Especially if your phone plan charges the recipient (you) as well as the dialer for each phone call—or if you're using a cheap mobile phone purchased in the UK—having friends and family call you **at the hotel** is far cheaper for everyone.

Include all of your hotel phone numbers on the itinerary you give to everyone, then notify folks by Email when you're in for the night. [Itinerary sharing info is found in the **Pre-Trip Potter Preparation Supplementum.**]

<http://HarryPotterPlaces.com/tips/PreTripPrep.pdf>

How to Contact Me

Be sure to warn family and friends about the expenses and limitations associated with the phone you're using, and provide alternatives for contacting you.

Examples:

- I'm charged only 5 cents to receive a text message, but it costs me 50 cents to send one. Please don't worry when I don't reply to a non-emergency text message. I'll Email you as soon as I get to a place where free Wi-Fi is available.
- Calling my cheap UK cell phone will cost you more than calling a UK land line. Call my hotel and leave a message instead. I'll Email you when I'm in for the night.
- My UK phone plan charges me for incoming calls, even if I don't answer them—even if my phone is off! **Please only call my cell phone in an emergency.**
- Please do not send me any Emails with attachments. Data roaming charges are very, very expensive for me while I'm in the UK. Text Message me if you have something to send. I'll Email you when I have a free Wi-Fi connection and you can send me the attachment then.

Additional options for Internet communication are provided in the **Potterite UK Internet Access Travel Supplementum**.

<http://HarryPotterPlaces.com/tips/UKinternetAccess.pdf>

Payphones in the UK

Oddly enough, UK payphones can seem tricky to US and Canadian Potterites.

For instance, you can't just plunk in the equivalent of a couple quarters and expect to enjoy a local call that lasts as long as you wish to chat. Whether calling locally, long-distance, or internationally, you are **charged per minute** for each pay phone call you make—*after* paying a connection charge that varies depending on the payphone's service provider. Also, UK payphones will return **unused small denomination coins**, but **do not give change** if you've inserted large denomination coins.

If you have credit remaining at the end of any UK payphone call, however, do not hang up! Push the "**follow-on call**" button and then dial your next call. The credit from the previous call will be forwarded to your next call.

For more info, read About.com's **Payphones in London** article:

http://golondon.about.com/od/planningyourtrip/ss/telephones_3.htm

While on that page, click on the link to "**Find out the costs to use a BT payphone.**"

Be sure to perform all possible phone-related research long before your UK holiday so that you have time to obtain your phone. After you've embarked on holiday, relax! If you encounter something confusing, you're sure to find **helpful natives** nearby who will be happy to assist you.