

# Just the business in London

Hot tips for cheaper airport transfers, accommodation, internet and telephone calls, writes **Susanne Verdonk**

**T**RAVELLING to London on business can be an expensive mission, especially if you don't know your way around. Now, with a small chunk of insider's information and some clever planning, you can limit the costs of your business trip.

**Airport transfers:** If your mind is not set on public transport, you can either hire a shared airport shuttle bus or opt for executive vehicles. The shared airport transfer system is relatively low cost and allows you to take shared (and shared cost) rides directly to your hotel or apartment for £19 (R220) to £25 upwards.

Should an executive sedan or an executive people carrier be more up your street, these can be booked from executive transfer companies such as Senator Cars for £45 upwards. They take you directly – and comfortably – to your address in London.

**Accommodation:** Hotel rates in London are usually high for upmarket hotels, and business partners will often ask where you are staying and assess your professional status and value based on which hotel you are staying in.

To save a huge amount of money, and avoid categorisation, it's best to stay in a serviced apartment that you can book through London Serviced Apartments or Aparthotel, or book directly at a serviced apartment company such as Astons Apartments. The costs are much lower than hotels (from £60 per night upwards).

You'll save money on living expenses, too, as instead of fast food or eating out, you can buy your essentials from supermarkets like Tesco or Waitrose and indulge yourself in your own kitchen.

**Internet:** Most flats come with in-house internet, which is a must for saving on data roaming fees. If



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You can buy pay-as-you-go phones with SIM cards from Tesco shops or Vodafone outlets.



this is not in your portfolio, buy a pay-as-you-go internet USB stick (dongle) from Vodafone for £25 (500 megabytes). They are ready to use, and will save you significantly on

using your home USB stick or on often alarming hotel rates for wi-fi connectivity (or any other places that charge debilitating rates for access).

**Telephone calls:** Buy a local pay-as-you-go SIM card from Tesco (£10 plus £30 credit) and put this in your unlocked cellphone (make sure it is "unlocked" before you

travel). Alternatively, purchase a pay-as-you-go phone with SIM from Tesco or Vodafone (from £20).

Place a message on your home cellphone giving your temporary UK number and your dates that you are abroad (don't forget to give the international code 0044/ +44 plus your own number (minus the first zero for your UK cellphone number, for example +44 784 5753 127). Then set your home cellphone not to take messages – as you'll still be charged international roaming rates by your home provider on messages left or SMSes received.

Furthermore, also use a low cost telephony provider such as Webtel.mobi to make calls or send SMSes to your home, office or other international destinations at very low rates. It can be used from a PC or a web-enabled cellphone for cellphone calls or SMSes and landline calls. A landline call from the UK to SA will only cost six euro cents per minute.

If you need to hold conference calls while in London, sign up free with a service such as Powwownow. It immediately allows you and the other participants to use their conference calls facility without paying (except for the calls).

**UK phone number:** Setting up a UK company or presence usually calls for acquiring a local telephone number. If the expenses of doing so put you off, approach UKnumber4U. This company provides free UK numbers that also forward calls to your own phone numbers worldwide at no cost to you.

How does that work?

They make their revenue from the charges of people calling the number that they assign to you. The set up is done online, and your UK telephone number – which forwards to your own number – is issued to you immediately.



The Olympic Stadium and Orbit Tower at sunset in Stratford, London.

PICTURE: RUTERS

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**Travel and meetings:** Taking the Tube in the rush-hour period (from 7am to 8.30am and from 4pm to 5.30pm) is a nightmare. You'll come out sweaty and crumpled. If getting to your meeting by Tube, try to set the meeting time from 9.30am onwards to allow you to travel after rush hour and get there in time. Similarly, try to finish your meetings in time to catch the tube home before the onset of rush hour.

If the meetings aren't being held at your business partner's office, hire a serviced office or boardroom from companies such as Flexioffices or Regus. They go by the hour or the day. Holding meetings in a hotel lobby or a coffee lounge is appropriate, too, but decide on a hotel that is presentable yet affordable, or the cost of refreshments relished during your meeting (which you're expected to pay for if you've called the meeting) may be high. A good choice for reasonably priced upmarket hotels is the Thistle Hotel Group, which has hotels throughout London, including near the City.

**Business breakfasts and lunches:** By all means, invite people to business lunches at expensive London venues, but do so without exhausting your credit card. Careful planning is the key. If the meeting is not too senior or formal, the All Bar One chain will do breakfast or lunch meetings stylishly well. When you need an impressive restaurant, however, for that one all-or-nothing deal, find venues through Top Table. Check their "50 percent off" offers, impress your client(s) and save significant amounts of money.

**Fetching and sending documents or business material:** London is large and travelling around can cost heaps of

valuable time and money. Therefore, it is sometimes more economical to simply fetch or drop off a document or parcel. Use one of the motorcycle and cycle couriers such as My Hermes that provide a same-day-service for only £3.30.

**Printing, loading USB sticks or burning DVDs:** Often the development of business discussions demands printing up documents, or loading business material on to USB sticks or DVDs. Prices for these services vary outrageously and can be enormous. If you need basic documents printed, a quick and low-cost solution is Prontaprint, located all over London. However, if your printing has more specific needs, or if you require large print runs or professional binding, Book Binders of London does an excellent bargain.

To quickly load multiple USB sticks with presentations, corporate videos or other expansive business material, use The USB Company. They will load your material on to one of their USB sticks at a cost lower than buying discounted blank USB sticks. Similarly, for DVD burning of high quality, rapid service and low cost, try the Peak White company. Although they're located just outside of London, with their cost-included fetch-and-delivery service, they will still be cheaper than most other similar providers in London.

**UK business address:** Not having a UK address or postal address proves problematic for many people on business in the UK. Avoid this struggle by using the company Mail Boxes Etc. Their mail box provides you with an instant UK address, and they accept post as well as courier shipments for you. Depending on your instructions, they will forward all mail or parcels to you globally, and you can call or e-mail them at any time to check on your mail.



Pedestrians pass a Barclays Plc bank branch in London.

**Company information:** Business travellers who come to London to open UK or offshore companies are faced with exorbitant fees. A way around these fees – which often gets you a quicker and better service – is dealing directly with the Fiduciary Services Companies. These are mainly located on the Isle of Man (like Aston International) or the Channel Islands of Guernsey and Jersey (like Hansard Limited). Coming into London and then flying on to see them is often more economical than working through an intermediary law or accounting firm. Besides, direct flights to the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands from mainland UK are easily booked online. In many cases one can even have them open a company or perform other professional services without travelling out to see them.

**Solve multiple issues at once – join a club:** An alternative to networking at multiple venues is to find one that incorporates a lot of them in one place. Therefore, why not join The Royal Over-Seas League? This is a club located just off St James's Street, in one of the most prestigious areas of London (close to The Ritz Hotel, Le Caprice, Piccadilly, and so on). Exclusive membership is open to men and women from Commonwealth countries, with an extremely attractive membership fee to match.

Non-UK members even get a discount on their membership fee. The club can be used for a multiple array of value-for-money activities.

The bar and outdoor restaurant (set in a private garden adjoining Green Park) are the perfect choice for business lunches and costs are excellent. For more formal dinners there is a high-class restaurant, also reasonably priced.

There are also fully equipped presentation and meeting rooms available at some of the lowest costs in London; this is on top of internet facilities and reading rooms for quiet relaxation.

Finally, members qualify for reciprocal visiting privileges at other clubs worldwide; SA members, for instance, are welcomed at the Rand Club and Kelvin Grove.



From Heathrow, you can take a shared airport shuttle bus.

## USEFUL INFO

### Airport transfers

[www.citytransfersuk.com](http://www.citytransfersuk.com)  
[www.senator-cars.com](http://www.senator-cars.com)

### Accommodation

[www.londonservicedapartments.co.uk](http://www.londonservicedapartments.co.uk)  
[www.apartotels.com](http://www.apartotels.com)  
[www.astons-apartments.com](http://www.astons-apartments.com)

### Internet

<http://www.vodafone.co.uk/personal/mobile-internet/on-your-pc-or-mac/internet-dongles/index.htm>

### Telephone calls

[www.webtel.mobi/pc](http://www.webtel.mobi/pc) (from a PC, also the info site)

[www.webtel.mobi](http://www.webtel.mobi) (from cellphones)  
[www.powwownow.co.uk](http://www.powwownow.co.uk) (conference calling)  
<http://phone-shop.tesco.com/tesco-mobile> (local SIM)

[www.vodafone.co.uk/personal/price-plans/pay-as-you-go/index.htm](http://www.vodafone.co.uk/personal/price-plans/pay-as-you-go/index.htm) (local SIM)

### UK phone number

[www.uknumber4u.com](http://www.uknumber4u.com)

### Travel and meetings

[www.flexioffices.co.uk](http://www.flexioffices.co.uk)

[www.regus.co.uk](http://www.regus.co.uk)

[www.thistle.com](http://www.thistle.com)

### Business breakfasts and lunches

[www.allbarone.co.uk](http://www.allbarone.co.uk)

[www.toptable.com](http://www.toptable.com)

### Fetching and sending documents or business material

[www.myhermes1.co.uk](http://www.myhermes1.co.uk)

### Printing, loading USB sticks or burning DVDs

[www.bookbindersoflondon.com](http://www.bookbindersoflondon.com)

[www.prontaprint.com](http://www.prontaprint.com)

[www.usbcompany.co.uk](http://www.usbcompany.co.uk)

[www.peakwhite.com](http://www.peakwhite.com)

### UK business addresses

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

### Company formation and specialised services

[www.aston.co.im](http://www.aston.co.im)

[www.hansardtrust.com](http://www.hansardtrust.com)

## WILD FRONTIERS

THE TRAVEL SPECIALISTS

[reservations@wildfrontiers.com](mailto:reservations@wildfrontiers.com)

Tel: 087 941 3892 or 072 927 7529

Fax: 086 689 6759

Durban Office Tel: (031) 572 3840

[www.wildfrontiers.com](http://www.wildfrontiers.com)



### 01 Wildebeest Migration Safari

Enjoy the sight of thousands of wildebeest migrating over the Serengeti plains. 7 day land only package from R15 685 pps. (Based on 4 persons travelling). \*Option to upgrade to lodge safari. Add return airfare ex JNB from R5 600 (Incl. Tax). Valid 01 Feb 2012 – 20 Dec 2012.

### 02 Kilimanjaro

Set a personal goal this year to summit Africa's highest peak! 7 day land only package from R10 520 pps. Add return airfare ex JNB from R5 600 (Incl. Tax). Valid 01 Feb 2012 – 20 Dec 2012.

### 03 Botswana - Okavango River Boat Safari

The Okavango Boat Safari is a more relaxed safari with more time spent exploring the Delta and its wildlife. 8 day land only package from R12 850 pps. (Based on 4 persons travelling). Add return airfare ex JNB from R4 615 (Incl. Tax). Valid 01 Feb – 31 Mar 2012.

### 04 Malindi Beach Holiday Kenya

Relax on the white sandy beach of Mombasa at Coconut Village Resort. 8 day land only package from R6 060 pps. Add return airfare ex JNB from R4 690 (Incl. Tax). Valid 16 Apr – 30 Jun 2012.

Botswana, China, Egypt, Himalayas, Inca Trail, Kenya, Morocco, Namibia, Polar Cruises, Tanzania, Kilimanjaro Marathon, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Zanzibar

Terms & conditions apply. We can assist with airfare to/from the tour destination. Prices subject to change without notice. E&OE