

Ten ways for American visitors to get the best out of Britain

Living as I do in a tourist resort I often see people of all nationalities attempting to understand the English and their ways. I have compiled these suggestions to try to make life easier for American visitors.

1. Britain isn't America, or even a sub state of America. We don't use dollars and cents but Pounds and Pennies. Remember this and don't confuse the two.
2. American citizenship does not carry any clout here; the best way to get a waiter to spit in your soup is to remind him or her in your loudest voice that you are an American Citizen. We see many nationalities, of which you are just one.
3. It is the custom in Britain to converse quietly in restaurants. Raised voices are frowned upon, as is the clicking of fingers to attract the waiter's attention. That's our famous British reserve, I suppose.
4. Comparing Britain to America is not useful. Our mountains are small, our cars are small, our towns are very old and laid out illogically. Accept it. Do not say things like "Call that a mountain? I got mole hills in my back yard bigger than that!"
5. Stuff costs more here. The buying power of a Pound is a little less than a Dollar, but you will need nearly two Dollars to buy one Pound. The tourist hot spots like London, Stratford on Avon and Edinburgh are expensive places to eat and drink. Move away from these and you will save money. Also please remember that, although it is a small country, it takes longer than a week to see it all. I've been here nearly fifty years and I still haven't seen it all.
6. While we are on the subject, Edinburgh is pronounced "Edinbrr" not "Eddingboro" Birmingham is pronounced "Birmingham", not "Birming-HAM" Listen to the locals if you aren't sure. When referring to cities and towns you do not need to include the county or country name. We speak of "Paris" not "Paris France", most people know which country Paris is in. Also remember that many of the people you will encounter in hotels and restaurants aren't British. These days they seem to be staffed by Poles, Australians, Romanians, Asians, South Africans and Chinese, many of whom speak even worse English than you do.
7. The cars are small because road fuel costs five times more than it does in the US. The ones we drive are perfectly adequate for our needs. We buy fuel in litres but drive in miles. It's daft, it's illogical, it's the British way, accept it. When paying for fuel don't be surprised that the garage accepts credit cards, we've had them here for a long time now. We drive on the left, we always have done, always will do. We manage to adapt to driving on the right when we go abroad, we expect you to do the same, without a

- lot of complaints. If you had chosen to drive on the correct side in the first place you wouldn't have a problem with it.
8. Try to get away from the tourist honey pots and see the real Britain. There's a lot here outside of London, most of the best places aren't even known to the locals, so do your research before you come.
 9. When we have to wait we do so in an orderly fashion and call it queuing. You call it "standing in line" There are a lot of other words that we use differently; what you call a fanny or a butt is a bum or an arse (not ass) In English the fanny is found only on women and is 180 degrees away from the bum or arse. A fanny pack is called a bum bag here. Be careful! There are many words that you use and we don't, you say galoshes, we say Wellington boots. You say gas, we say petrol. You say faucet, we say tap.
 10. Don't compare the UK with the US. Learn to enjoy the difference. When you follow road signs don't be surprised when they simply disappear. You can follow the signs to a town for a hundred miles, get within thirty miles and the town will not be mentioned on any more signs. When you arrive at the airport spend £5 on a road atlas. This will give you hours of harmless entertainment back home as you look up the silly sounding place names.