London Airports

Closest Airports to London by Travel Time

Distance of course doesn't tell the whole story. You will probably be more interested in how long it actually takes to get from each London airport to London.

For this, I will use the fastest travel time in each case. Obviously, London is quite big so travel times will vary depending on your destination. In addition, slower options will also be available which may cost less, see each airport entry for more details.

- Heathrow Airport – 15 minutes by Heathrow Express train to London Paddington
- London City Airport – ~20 minutes to most destinations in London
- Gatwick Airport – 30 minutes by Gatwick Express to London Victoria
- Luton Airport – 35 minutes by train + shuttle bus to London St. Pancras
- London Stansted – 47 minutes by Stansted Express train to London Liverpool Street
- Southend Airport – 55 minutes by train to London Liverpool Street

As you can see, journey times vary quite a lot. The closest airports to London by travel time are Heathrow Airport and London City Airport, although this will depend on where you want to be in the city.

How to Get from Heathrow Airport to London

London Heathrow is London’s busiest airport, handling half of London’s passengers. It’s situated 14 miles west of the centre of London, and has a variety of options for getting into the city. These are as follows.

1. London Underground (aka Tube) from Heathrow Airport

Our favourite way of getting from Heathrow Airport to central London is to take the Tube, London’s underground train system. It’s also one of the cheapest options. The Piccadilly Line runs from three locations in Heathrow Airport, and services all the major terminals.

The Tube runs right into central London, plus you can change onto the other lines and thus reach pretty much anywhere in London. There is a 24 hour service on Fridays and Saturdays from Terminals 1,2,3 & Terminal 5. During the week, trains begin departing from around 5.10am (5.50am on Sundays) with the last service at 11.45pm (11.30pm on Sundays).

**Cost:** A ticket costs £5.10 at peak times and £3.10 off-peak if using an Oyster or Contactless card, and £6 if you buy a single ticket in cash.

**Journey time:** Approximately 50 minutes to central London

**Tips:** Our suggestion would be to either buy a visitor Oyster card in advance, buy an Oyster card in person at the station, or to use your contactless card.

2. Bus from Heathrow Airport
The Heathrow Central Bus Station is found between Terminals 2 and 3. The buses operating from here primarily service areas of outer London rather than central London. You can of course get to central London by bus during the day, but it will require a number of changes and will take at least a couple of hours, so we would advise the the tube is going to be a better option if you want to take public transport.

However, if you arrive into London Heathrow late at night on a weekday, the Tube will not be running. You are not out of luck when it comes to public transport though – there is a night bus from London Heathrow to Trafalgar Square. The N9 departs from Terminal 5 and the Heathrow Central Bus Station (Terminals 2&3).

The N9 is a direct bus service that starts at around 23.35 (11:35PM). It’s by far the cheapest option for getting into central London for Heathrow.

**Cost:** A ticket costs £1.50. Journeys cannot be paid in cash, you must have a contactless card or an Oyster card.

**Journey time:** Just over an hour, depending on which stop you go to.

**Tips:** Again, our suggestion would be to either buy a visitor Oyster card in advance, buy an Oyster card in person at the station, or to use your contactless card. Read our advice on the best way to pay for public transport in London for more information on your options.

3. Coach from Heathrow Airport

There are a number of coach transfer services (see note on the difference between coaches and buses at the beginning of the post) from London Heathrow to central London. These can be more convenient than the Tube or the bus if you have a lot of luggage that you don’t want to struggle with loading on and off public transport.

Two of the main coach operators from Heathrow are National Express and Megabus. The main route for coach operators terminates at Victoria Coach Station. Coaches start at around 4.15am and run until around 10pm, although check timetables for your dates.

**Cost:** Tickets start at around £6 per person.

**Journey Time:** Varies, typically 45 minutes to 90 minutes, depending on the route and time of day.

**Tips:** Coach fares vary based on demand and when you book, so you should always book in advance to guarantee a spot and the lowest price.

4. Train from Heathrow Airport

There are two main train services to central London which operate from Heathrow Airport – Heathrow Express, and TfL Rail. The central train station can be found at terminals 1, 2 and 3, and the Heathrow Express also has stops at terminals 4 & 5.
The fastest train option, and also the fastest way to central London from Heathrow Airport, is
the Heathrow Express. This takes fifteen minutes to get to London Paddington from the
airport, and leaves every fifteen minutes from around 5am (6am on Sundays) until just
before midnight.

A generally cheaper (and slightly slower) option is the Transport for London (TfL) Rail
service. This takes 25 minutes, and stops at a number of stations on the way, before
terminating at London Paddington.

**Cost:** Heathrow Express tickets are £22 off-peak and £25 peak if booked on the day of
travel. You can also use your Oyster card or contactless card on Heathrow Express, and the
prices are the same as the off-peak and peak fare.

If you book in advance, prices start as low as £5.50. TfL Rail tickets are £10.20 peak and
£10.10 off peak, and Oyster cards are accepted. There are a number of websites for booking
UK train tickets online.

We recommend The Trainline for train bookings, or Rail Europe from outside the UK. The
latter also let you book tickets for destinations all across Europe, and so are a handy one
stop shop for all your ticket needs.

**Journey Time:** 15 minutes for Heathrow Express (+ a few minutes from Terminals 4&5), 30
minutes with TfL Rail, both terminate at London Paddington train station.

**Tips:** The Heathrow Express can be a fast and economical option if you book well in
advance. Otherwise it’s only ten minutes slower by TfL Rail. You can buy your tickets in
advance and then collect them at the station from ticket machines to make your life easier.

5. Taxi from Heathrow Airport

A ride in a London black cab is a quintessential part of any trip to London, and this is
certainly an easy way to get from the airport and straight to your hotel. This is a great option
if you have a lot of luggage, or you are a group of more than two people as it can work our
fairly cost effectively.

There are a number of black taxi ranks at Heathrow and minicab services operating from
London Heathrow. These can be booked on the day from the official taxi desks, or you can
compare prices and book in advance. These will be fixed price trips, which can offer peace
of mind.

Uber is another option for an on-demand taxi service, and if you’ve not used them before
you can save on your first ride.

**Cost:** Black cabs are metered, so fares vary depending on factors including traffic and time
of day. Expect to pay in the region of £45 – £70. Minicabs will also vary, but you can book in
advance for a fixed fare, which will likely start in the region of £45. Uber is usually slightly
cheaper than a standard taxi, but will vary depending on distance.

**Journey time:** Will vary according to traffic, time of day, and your destination in London.
Likely 45 – 90 minutes, door to door.


**Tips:** Always use either a black cab from an official stand, or a reputable minicab booked through an online service or at an official airport desk. Do not use unauthorised drivers who solicit your attention at the airport. We recommend Minicabit for comparing prices and getting a good deal on advance bookings.

6. Airport Transfer from Heathrow Airport

If all of the above sounds like too much effort, worry not. You can book a direct airport transfer from Heathrow Airport to your central London destination.

There are a few different options depending on your budget.

**Cost:** Current cost of a direct airport transfer starts at around £20 per person for a share option and rises, depending on service.

**Journey time:** Will vary according to traffic, time of day, and your destination in London. Likely 45 – 90 minutes, door to door.

**Tips:** This is definitely one of the most hassle free way of getting to central London from Heathrow Airport but is also likely to be a more expensive option.

### How to Get from Gatwick Airport to London

Gatwick is London’s second busiest airport, and can be found 33 miles south of the city centre. Unlike Heathrow, it is not connected to the Tube network; however, there are still multiple options for getting to London from Gatwick airport.

1. Coach from Gatwick Airport

There are a number of coach services that offer transfers from Gatwick airport to central London. The most popular options are the National Express service and the easyBus service, which operate from both the north and south terminals at Gatwick Airport.

Both services terminate at London Victoria and services run through the night, so you should usually be able to find a coach at any time of night.

**Cost:** easyBus tickets are available from £2 one-way. National Express tickets are available from £6 one way (£5 + £1 booking fee) if you book 30 days in advance. Flexible tickets that let you get the next available National Express service are £10.

**Journey time:** It takes around 90 minutes from London Gatwick to London Victoria

**Tips:** Depending on the ticket you buy, you may be committed to travelling only on the bus you specify. So do leave yourself plenty of time to get through customs and immigration and to collect your luggage. Tickets are cheaper the further in advance you book.

2. Train from Gatwick Airport
Gatwick has one major train station with a number of routes running into central London. The fastest option is the Gatwick Express, which takes 30 minutes to travel non-stop to London Victoria. Trains run every day from 5am to 00.30am, with departures every fifteen minutes.

Two other train operators also run trains from Gatwick – Thameslink and Southern. These are slightly slower and cheaper, but also service different stops.

You can buy tickets at the station or online for all of these services. In addition, all these services accept Oyster cards or contactless cards for payment. For Gatwick Express it is usually cheaper to book online than to use Oyster. For Thameslink and southern services, the Oyster card will usually be the cheapest option.

We recommend The Trainline for train bookings, or Rail Europe from outside the UK. The latter also let you book tickets for destinations all across Europe, and so are a handy one stop shop for all your ticket needs.

**Cost:** Gatwick Express single tickets are £19.90 in person at the station, but can sometimes be bought online for a reduced fee. Check the [Gatwick Express website](https://www.gatwickexpress.co.uk) for prices, as well as the [Visit Britain Shop](https://www.visitbritainshop.com). Tickets for Thameslink and Southern start at around £8.10 for a single using an Oyster or contactless card.

**Journey time:** Varies depending on destination, but will be between 30 and 60 minutes for most trips.

**Tips:** Booking in advance and checking for offers will usually save you money on the Gatwick Express. On Thameslink or Southern, an Oyster card or contactless will usually offer the cheapest prices. You can either buy a [visitor Oyster card](https://tfl.gov.uk/using-the-tube/how-to-pay/using-your-oyster-card/visiting-london) in advance, buy an Oyster card in person at the station, or use your contactless card.

3. Taxi from Gatwick Airport

Gatwick is outside the range of London black taxis, however you can arrange a taxi in advance or at the taxi kiosks in both terminals.

Uber is another option for an on-demand taxi service, and if you’ve not used them before you can save on your first ride.

**Cost:** A taxi through the recommended Gatwick taxi company to central London will cost from £60. Minicabit prices start from around £55.

**Journey time:** This will vary depending on traffic, time of day and destination, but will generally be 60 – 90 minutes.

**Tips:** A taxi or minicab for four or five people usually makes reasonable economic sense, plus it will take you directly to your destination.

4. Airport Transfer from Gatwick Airport
As with Heathrow, you can also book a direct airport transfer from Heathrow Airport to your central London destination.

This will be a more expensive option, but is certainly going to be hassle free.

**Cost:** Current cost of a direct airport transfer starts at around £100 for a group of three

**Journey time:** Will vary according to traffic, time of day, and your destination in London. Likely 45 – 90 minutes, door to door.

**Tips:** This is definitely one of the most hassle free way of getting to central London from Gatwick Airport but is also likely to be a more expensive option.

How to Get from Stansted Airport to London

If you’re flying with a low-cost carrier within Europe, chances are that you will arrive at London Stansted. This is London’s third biggest airport, and is found 40 miles north of London.

1. Train from Stansted Airport

There are two main train options for journeying from Stansted airport to central London. The first is the **Stansted Express**, a high speed train service which takes 45 minutes to London Liverpool Street and runs approximately every fifteen minutes from 4.10am until 23.25. This service is operated by Greater Anglia, and goes via Tottenham Hale, where you can change for trains to Stratford.

Note that Stansted Airport is outside of the Oyster card system, so even if you have an Oyster card you will still need to purchase a train ticket.

**Journey time:** 47 minutes to London Liverpool Street

**Cost:** A standard Stansted Express ticket costs £18.10, however, you can save by booking in advance, with tickets available for £7.

2. Coach from Stansted Airport

There are three major coach operators servicing Stansted airport, with services available 24 hours a day. The operators are **National Express**, **Terravision** and **easyBus**. Services run to London Victoria, with stops along the way including Liverpool Street and Stratford.

**Cost:** easyBus has tickets starting at £2 if booked in advance. National Express has tickets at £6 (£5 +£1 booking fee). Terravision has buses for £9 to London Liverpool Street and £10 to London Victoria.

**Journey time:** varies depending on route, time of day and destination, but generally 50 – 90 minutes.
**Tips:** Definitely book in advance to get the best price.

3. Taxi from Stansted Airport

There are no taxi ranks at Stansted Airport, so the only option is to book a car, either in advance through a minicab booking service like minicabit, or on arrival at the taxi kiosk in the terminal. Rates will be set in advance.

**Cost:** Prices will vary depending on destination, but the cost will likely be £70 – £100 plus.

**Journey time:** It’s around a 1 hour drive from Stansted to central London

**Tips:** Skip the queues and get the best prices by booking online, we recommend minicabit.

How to Get from Luton Airport to London

Another popular airport for low-cost airlines (easyJet are headquartered here), London Luton airport is 29 miles north west of London. There are a number of options for getting from Luton Airport to central London.

1. Train from Luton Airport

Two companies operate trains between London Luton and central London – Thameslink and East Midlands Trains.

The primary port of call for these trains is London St. Pancras International, which gives you access to the Tube network, as well as buses and taxis at St. Pancras. Trains run throughout the night, although there are no trains between 1am and 3am.

The train station is called Luton Airport Parkway. However, you will want to get a ticket to “Luton Airport”, as then the 10 minute shuttle from the train station to the airport is included in the fare. From Luton Airport Parkway there is a cash-only fee payable for the shuttle transfer, which is £2.10 at time of writing.

Luton Airport is outside the Oyster card zone so you must purchase a ticket prior to travel even if you have an Oyster card.

**Cost:** Train fares start at around £13 one way for an off-peak journey.

**Journey time:** 10 minute shuttle ride, then around 25 minutes to St. Pancras

**Tips:** As with all train journeys, the best prices usually come when booking in advance.

2. Coach from Luton Airport

There are three coach operators with service between Luton airport and central London. They are National Express, easyBus, and Green Line.
Services operate through the night to a variety of destinations in London including to Finchley Road, Baker Street, Marble Arch, and Victoria.

**Cost:** easyBus has tickets starting at £2 if booked in advance. National Express has tickets at £6 (£5 +£1 booking fee). Green Line tickets start at £11.

**Journey Time:** Depends on time of day and destination, but typically 60 – 90 minutes. Note the Green Line is the slowest service and is not direct.

**Tips:** Book in advance to get the best price.

3. Taxi from Luton Airport

As Luton airport is outside the London black taxi area, only pre-booked vehicles are available. You can book a taxi either in advance before arrival with Addison Lee, or on site when you arrive at the Addison Lee desk.

You can also use minicabit to compare prices for minicabs.

**Cost:** Around £100 with Addison Lee, depending on destination. Minicabit prices start around £65.

**Journey time:** Approximately an hour into central London by car

**Tips:** Pre-booking with a private minicab firm will usually be the cheaper option.

**How to Get from London City Airport to London**

London City Airport is the closest airport to London. It is in fact inside the city, in London’s docklands. It is only capable of handling smaller aircraft due to its location, however a lot of UK and European flights do come here, and it is popular with business travellers. Being so central, it’s easy to get to the rest of London.

1. DLR from London City Airport

The DLR, or Docklands Light Railway, is an automated light metro system which serves the docklands area of London. It connects to both rail and Tube stops in London, and is the easiest way to get to London from London City Airport.

Services run from around 5.30am until midnight.

**Cost:** It’s currently £3.30 with an Oyster card or contactless card to travel from the London City Airport DLR station to Zone 1 in London, which is where most travellers will be heading.

**Journey time:** Depends on where you are going in London, most journeys will likely be between 15 minutes and an hour.
**Tips:** Definitely use an Oyster card or contactless payment card for this journey. You can either buy a [Visitor Oyster card](#) in advance, buy an Oyster card in person at the station, or use your contactless card.

2. Bus from London City Airport

Two London bus routes service London City Airport – the 473 and 474. Neither of these go directly to central London, so you will have to change buses depending on your destination. The bus is definitely the cheapest option, but might not be the most convenient from London City Airport depending on your destination.

**Cost:** A ticket costs £1.50. Journeys cannot be paid in cash, you must have a contactless card or an Oyster card.

**Journey time:** will depend entirely on your destination, time of day and traffic.

**Tips:** Our suggestion would be to either buy a [Visitor Oyster card](#) in advance, buy an Oyster card in person at the station, or to use your contactless card.

3. Taxi from London City Airport

There is a black cab rank outside London City Airport, where you can catch a black cab anywhere inside London which will be on a metered fare. You can also prebook a minicab with [minicabit](#).

**Cost:** Prices will vary depending on destination, but expect to pay £35 – £45 to get to central London with a black cab, and roughly the same with a minicab.

**Journey time:** Depends on time of day and destination, but 20 – 40 minutes in most cases.

**Tips:** Prebooking a service will give peace of mind at busier times of day, but there are usually plenty of black cabs available in London.

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**How to Get from London Southend Airport to London**

Located 40 miles east of London, [Southend airport](#) is the least busy of London’s six major airport. However, the airport has undergone expansions, and is used by a number of airlines which service primarily European destinations. It has fewer transport options than the other airports.

1. Train from London Southend Airport

Up to eight trains an hour operated by [Greater Anglia](#) connect London Southend airport with London’s Liverpool Street station, and the train station is on site at the airport, so easy to find. Trains run from 4.05am until 11pm.

**Cost:** Prices start at £12.10 to Stratford, and £15.10 to London Liverpool Street.
Journey time: 45 minutes to Stratford, 55 minutes to London Liverpool Street

Tips: None really, the train is an easy way to get from Southend airport to central London, and our recommended option.

2. Taxi from London Southend Airport

Being outside London's black taxi area means you’ll need to book a private hire car or minicab. The official taxi firm for Luton Airport is Addison Lee. You can also pre-book a minicab with minicabit.

Cost: Approximately £100 into central London. It is also possible to split the taxi with other people for a fixed fare of £100 to London Liverpool Street. Minicabit prices start from around £62 into central London.

Journey time: Depends on time of day and destination, but likely 60 – 110 minutes.

Tips: We’d suggest the train if possible. For a group booking, a taxi might be cheaper if booked in advance.