

# Public Transport in London

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As has been mentioned in publicity for the WG5 meeting, public transport in London is ludicrously expensive. At the time of writing a single journey paid in cash on the underground/tube in the central area costs £4.70. Participants at the WG5 meeting will find it very advantageous to buy an 'Oyster Card'. This is a prepayment card which gives substantial discounts for travel on buses, underground/tube, London overground, Docklands Light Railway (DLR) and trams avoiding the hassle of buying tickets for each journey. In fact you can't use cash on buses, only Oyster cards, travel cards\* or contactless payment cards\*\*.

Apart from possible journeys to or from Heathrow Airport, or to tourist attractions such as Kew Gardens, most travel is likely to be within London transport zones 1 and 2 (see zone map at Transport for London (TFL)'s website [www.tfl.gov.uk/maps/track](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/maps/track)). The TFL website is very useful for planning journeys, maps, prices and up-to-date London travel information.

The comparative fares (at the time of writing) are:

	<b>Cash</b>	<b>Oyster (pay-as-you-go)</b>
single tube journey in zone 1	£4.70	£2.20
single tube journey in zones 1 & 2	£4.70	£2.80 (between 07:00 and 19:00)
	£4.70	£2.20 (other times)
single bus journey	n/a	£1.45 (Oyster fare capped at £4.40)
tube Heathrow to central London	£5.70	£5.00 (between 07:00 and 19:00)
		£3.00 (other times)

The same Oyster card is good for single or multiple journeys. The system records all journeys and caps daily spending\*.

You can buy an Oyster card online before you arrive. To buy online you will need to purchase a 'Visitor Oyster Card'. Go to TFL's website [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk) and click on the link 'Visiting London' at the bottom of the page on the right. You will pay a £3 non-refundable deposit, the cost of postage and a pre-paid amount depending on how many journeys you think you will make - they have guidelines. You can then top it up at any of the tube stations (on a machine or at the ticket office). The card will be sent to you by mail, so leave sufficient time for this.

If you don't manage to buy your Oyster card online you can buy one at a London underground ticket office. There is the choice of 'registering' the card which involves filling in a form, or having a simple, anonymous card. The former allows you to check your journey history on the web, to top-up your credit online and to pursue a lost or stolen card; in the latter case, any top-up must be done at a tube station. In either event, when you leave London you can trade in the card at a ticket office and receive a refund of the £3 deposit and of any unused funds on the card. Alternatively, the card may be reused on a subsequent visit without any time limit.

Points to watch when using an Oyster Card:

- on the underground, overground, DLR and trams, it is essential to touch the card on the reader at the entrance and exit on each journey; the system works by debiting your account by £4 at each entrance and crediting the account by £4 less the cost of the journey on exit. If the system detects only an entrance or exit you will be charged £4. On buses, touch the card once only, on entrance.
- when touching the card on a reader, the message 'seek assistance' will sometimes flash up in red. Provided that the gates have opened, this can safely be ignored.
- when the online top-up facility is used, it is necessary to specify the underground station at which the credit will be taken up; if that station is not used within eight days of the top-up web transaction, the transaction is cancelled and no cost is incurred.

\* Travel cards and Oyster card capping. Paper one-day travel cards which permit unlimited travel on buses and the underground can be purchased from ticket offices but if you use a pay-as-you-go Oyster card your journeys for the day will be capped at the same price as the travel card.

\*\* Contactless payment cards ( issued in the UK). These can now be used to travel on tube/underground, tram, DLR, London Overground and most National Rail services in London, as well as on buses. Check the TFL website for details [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

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