

9. Leisure in the UK

Sports

There are lots of activities, events and excursions at Kings for you to enjoy after lessons. The Activities Organiser at each college is there to make sure you have lots to keep your days busy and fun-filled with your fellow students.

Amateur football is popular and many towns and cities have a Sunday League for local teams. There are a wide choice of other sports to take part in, such as tennis, squash, swimming and exercising in the gym. In every Kings city location there is a Leisure Centre. These are often much cheaper than gyms or health clubs. You can ask us when you arrive at college about opportunities to take part in sports.

Many Britons also enjoy watching sports. The main spectator sports are football and rugby in the winter months and cricket in the summer. If you enjoy watching sports, you can join others in front of a television at home or in a pub which shows 'live' sports on big screens. Although football is the biggest spectator sport in Britain, rugby and cricket have many fans right across the English-speaking world.

Watching television

In Britain there are 5 terrestrial channels which everyone can receive, but many people also have cable or satellite TV. There are also additional digital channels. Most channels are commercial. That is, they receive money for showing advertisements or commercials during breaks in the programmes.

The BBC channels, on the other hand, do not show commercials. The BBC receives money from the government to make programmes. That is why everyone has to pay a TV licence fee each year. This pays for 8 interactive TV channels, 10 radio networks, over 50 local TV and radio services and the website www.bbc.co.uk.

If you buy a TV in Britain, you will have to buy a TV licence, which is £145.50 for colour and £49.00

for black and white. From April 2011 the prices will be £148.50 and £50. If you decide to buy a TV set, the shop assistant will ask for your name and address so that the TV Licensing Authority can check you have a licence. Even if you are staying with a host family, you need to buy a licence if you buy your own TV or watch TV on your laptop.

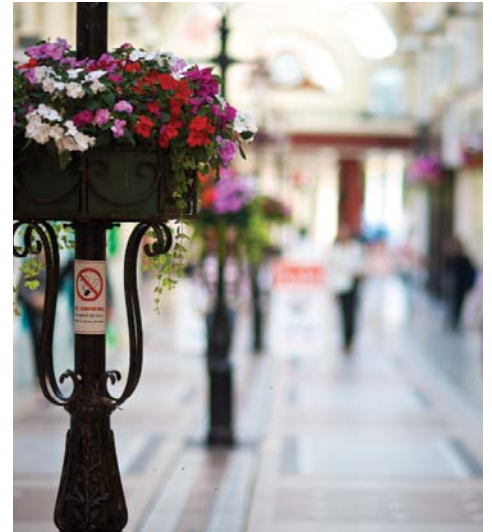
Shopping

In Britain, most inner-city or town-centre shops are open seven days a week, but large stores can only open for 6 hours on a Sunday. Most open from 10.30 am to 4.30pm or 11 am to 5pm. Some supermarkets in bigger towns are open 24 hours, but most smaller shops close at 5.30pm. This is probably much earlier than in your country, but remember that shops usually open at 9am and do not close for lunch. In summer and before Christmas, some shopping centres will have 'late night' opening until 8 or 9pm.

You may also be surprised by customer service in Britain. It is not usual for someone to say 'hello' to you when you walk into a shop. In all shops you will need to queue up to pay. Most shops in Britain do not ask you to hand in shopping bags before you walk around. However, do not put anything in your bag or your pockets that you have not paid for. The security staff will think you are 'shoplifting', which means trying to steal. Use a shopping basket or trolley provided by the store.

Shopping online

More and more Britons shop online. You can find low prices and good deals with fast delivery services. Remember that when you buy something online you have the right to send it back for any reason within 7 days of receiving it. If you do send anything back, inform the suppliers by email or phone and keep the postal receipt. If you have any problems with shopping online, ask the staff at college or your host family for advice.



Study tip

Make notes on how British people spend their leisure time. Ask yourself these questions:

- How much time do British people spend watching TV?
- What are the most popular types of programmes?
- Do the people you know spend more time playing than watching sport?
- How do British shopping habits compare with those in your country?
- How important is the pub to social life in Britain?

Restaurants, the cinema and theatre

All the cities in which our colleges are based have a wide selection of restaurants. The most common ones are Chinese, Indian and Italian. Some people eat out regularly, and others only do this on special occasions, such as birthdays or wedding anniversaries.

Cinemas might seem expensive in Britain, but you can often save money if you go before 5pm Monday to Friday, or if you have a student card. Some people prefer to rent a DVD or video, as this is much cheaper.

Sometimes you can sit anywhere, but in other cinemas you may be asked to choose a seat when you buy your ticket. There are smaller cinemas that show independent or foreign films, as well as large cinemas showing blockbusters.

Going to the theatre to see concerts, comedians or plays is also a popular pastime with some people. It is not usual to dress up in special clothes, although some people might do this.

Going to the pub

British pubs are an important and fun part of life and culture in the UK. You are allowed to drink alcohol in pubs in Britain if you are 18 or over. Of course, whatever your age, it is a bad idea to drink too much alcohol - especially if you here to study hard!

Pubs may be different from bars in your country. In particular you will notice:

- Both men and women drink in pubs.
- Most pubs do not have waiters to bring drinks to you. You must go to the bar to order your drinks and you pay for them as soon as you receive them. You do not need to leave a tip.
- You do not have to drink alcohol. Pubs offer soft drinks such as cola, lemonade, orange juice and water. Some pubs also serve tea and coffee.
- You should always have a drink in front of you. It is not OK for only one or two people from a big group of friends to have a drink. If you take all night to drink one drink, the staff in the pub may ask you to leave!
- Smoking is not permitted in pubs. Both smokers and pub owners can face a fine if people smoke there. If you want to smoke, you'll have to go outside.

Pub culture is very important to British life and there are many pubs to choose from. In town and city centres, you will find pubs that show 'live' sport on TV and play music CDs or have a jukebox. Many also have 'live' music, karaoke or quizzes. Some also have games you can play, such as darts and pool. You can also find pubs that serve excellent food and are perhaps more about eating than drinking. These are often called "gastropubs".

Local pubs (pubs outside city and town centres) are often good places to make friends, as the same people go there night after night. Bigger towns and most cities also have gay-friendly pubs. Many pubs have areas for quietly eating and drinking with friends, and other areas for watching sports, playing pub games and listening to music. Therefore you should be able to find a pub, or part of one, that you like!

