Saving Money while Touring London â?? 10-Day Itinerary and Expenses

Description

So we headed to London for our babymoon to spend some time together before our little one arrives, and hereâ??s our itinerary.



It wasnâ??t particularly â??budgetâ?• this time, because it is quite hard to be fully on a budget when youâ??re pregnant and in an expensive city like London (at time of writing and travelling, the exchange rate was 1.8x of ours), although we did opt for a budget flight and stayed in an Airbnb room to save on costs. Nonetheless, quite a few of you have requested for my itinerary and expenses, so hereâ??s what went on while we were in London!

Overall spending breakdown (in SGD) per person:

Flights	$891.00
Accommodation	$500
Attractions	$138
Tours	$301
Musicals (3)	$246
Travel Insurance	$39.20
Transport	$154.50
F&B	$340
Shopping	$235
TOTAL	$2,844.70



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Flight tickets

We took a 14-hour flight on Norwegian Air, which Iâ??ve previously shared as a budget carrier where you can get a return ticket to London for $400 if youâ??re lucky enough to be travelling during off-peak period.

I believe our travel dates coincided with the summer school holidays, so our tickets were twice the price of what I had expected, and we ended up paying $891 per person which included 2 meals, 20kg of check-in luggage, and taxes.

We travelled economy, where the seats were fairly comfortable and we had enough legroom, despite not having paid extra for exit row seats. Toilets were also clean and sanitary. However, the service and food was sorely lacking â?? the meals we had were extremely small in portion sizes, didnâ??t taste fantastic at all *(Iâ??m not fussy and rarely dislike airline food, so this was a first for me)*, and they were also extremely stingy with water. When we asked for water, our request was declined and we were asked to purchase bottled water from the snack bar instead. And nope, I didnâ??t get extra water even though I was pregnant, so I wonder if the crew knows how thirsty pregnant mothers can get sometimes because we really need liquids for our amniotic fluid.

If youâ??re travelling with Norwegian Air in the future, I highly recommend that you purchase snacks and drinks at the airport before boarding. For our flight from Singapore, we filled up a 500ml bottle and it was barely enough for the both of us (we got a total of 4 cups from the crew throughout the entire flight, which was terrible for me particularly because I was extremely thirsty, being pregnant and all).

Oh, and another tip for the return flight that I learnt from my friend â?? just note that Gatwick Airport isnâ??t as tourist-friendly as Singapore in the sense that they donâ??t have free water coolers for you to fill up your empty bottles at the waiting area, so itâ??ll be best if you topped up your water at the shopping area before you go to your gates, or buy bottled water for your flight. We bought 2 x 750ml bottles and it was just about right for the 14-hour journey for both of us. You might also want to get a snack and a meal before boarding, get them from the WHSmith or Boots shop before you search for your flight gates as wellâ?¦or youâ??d be like us, with no choice but to get them from the more expensive shops located at our gate waiting area because we didnâ??t have enough time to run to the shops all the way back just to save those few pounds.



Accommodation

Hotels were extremely expensive in London, and hostels werenâ??t any better because we needed a private room for the both of us and the prices were almost comparable to that of a budget hotel.

As such, we turned to Airbnb after our friend who lives in London recommended it, and the price was almost half of what we would have had to pay for a 3-star hotel.

To save on transport costs, we **looked for accommodation within Zone 1 and Zone 2 in London**, as thereâ??s a maximum cap on the Oyster travel card if you travel within these two zones (more on this under Transport).



Transport & Wi-Fi

Norwegian Air takes you to Gatwick Airport instead of Heathrow, so to get to central London, you need to take the train. You can choose from either the Gatwick Express (Â£22) or the normal Southern train, which is so much cheaper (cost varies depending on your location) and almost equally as fast.

Navigation was settled through a **mobile app, Citymapper,** which our local friends told us to download. This was the best transport app for London as it is even updated with bus route changes and train delays (and there are PLENTY in London).

As mentioned earlier, thereâ??s a daily travel cap of Â£7 on your Oyster card if youâ??re travelling between Zone 1 and 2, which is why we decided to stay in Zone 2 for our accommodation. However, the buses are generally cheaper at just Â£1.50 flat if you change within the hour, so if youâ??re able to **plan out your route entirely via buses**, I would highly encourage that you do so (the bus routes are extensive in London so it shouldnâ??t be a problem at all, and travel times are comparable to that of the tube). Otherwise, the tube is the next most affordable (Â£2.90) whereas the train costs the most (Â£3.40). We made the mistake of relying 100% on CityMapper for our trips and took lots of train-bus or tube-bus journeys, which cost us quite a hefty sum totalled up and we easily hit the Â£7 Oyster cap every single day until we realised otherwise! On the second-last day (when we were wiser about the buses), our Oyster card expenses only came to Â£3. Dang.

Now, also note that unlike Singapore, the trains and tubes are entirely different and have different fares for each! We made the mistake of going to Platform 3 for the *train* when Citymapper actually meant Platform 3 for the *tube,* and this mistake cost us a hefty Â£2.40 just to tap out of the train station and into the tube station, which was just a level downstairs, by the way. Donâ??t be like us!

For local calls and Wi-Fi, we signed up with EE at the airport which gave us 10.5 GB and 100 minutes of calls, valid for 30 days, for just (Â£20). There were a few other telco providers, but this was the best value-for-money option we found.

Attractions / Musicals

I did some rough calculations before we flew off and realised that entrance tickets to many of Londonâ??s attractions were quite pricey, and the best way to save was to get a London Pass, which gave us access to plenty of attractions and cruises to choose from.

As we were there for 8 days (10 days if you include the 2 days we spent flying), I opted for the 6-day London Pass, which I later regretted because there were so many out-of-town options and free museums to go to at hardly any extra cost! We ended up only using 4 days on our card due to our other trips and musicals, which was a slight waste of money.

I therefore recommend that anyone visiting London to **get the 3-day London Pass** instead, which should be sufficient to visit most of the key places! Hereâ??s what we did:

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Day 1	
Big Bus Tour	Â£34
City Cruises	Â£18.50
Day 2	
Tower of London	Â£24.80
Tower Bridge Exhibition	Â£9.80
HMS Belfast	Â£15.45
Namco Funscape	Â£3
View from the Shard	Â£30.95
Day 3	
Churchill War Rooms	Â£21
Westminster Abbey	Â£22
Kensington Palace	Â£17
Day 4	
Kew Gardens	Â£15
TOTAL	
TICKETS COST	Â£211.50
LONDON PASS	Â£130.90
TOTAL SAVINGS	Â£80.60

If you can, try to take one of the open-top bus tours on the first day of your pass so you get familiarised with the city, which will make it easier for you to navigate during the rest of your trip. We chose Big Bus Tours instead of Golden Tours as we preferred the route there, and took both the blue and red route.



The other attractions I would love to have visited on the London Pass (but which we did not have time for) are:
â?? Shakespeare Globe Theatre (while youâ??re there, buy a Â£5 ticket for a live Shakespeare play in the yard!)
â?? St. Paul Cathedral
â?? Winsor Castle
â?? Chislehurst Caves
â?? Winbledon Tour Experience

If youâ??re a Potterhead like me, youâ??ll probably want to sign up for the **Harry Potter Studio & Museum Tour** as well. It is a little pricey (we paid Â£89 per person) but includes the 2-hour bus ride to and fro, as well as entrance tickets. It isnâ??t really worth buying any of the merchandise in the store though unless youâ??re keen on the wands, as we found lots of Harry Potter stuff for much cheaper inâ?¦Primark! No kidding! Thatâ??s why I bought most of my Harry Potter souvenirs and clothes in the end.

For musicals, we caught three â?? **Aladdin, Matilda and Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.** If youâ??re looking for last-minute cheap tickets, the best way would be to queue up outside the respective theatre(s) in the morning to snag some crazy deals at Â£15 or so per ticket! We had a full itinerary and werenâ??t willing to make a trip just to queue (not as easy when youâ??re pregnant), so we opted for cheap last-minute tickets online via this website instead. If we had more time in London, we wanted to catch Book of Mormon and the Lion King, but I guess that will have to wait for another time.

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Food and other expenses

Food in London is generally quite expensive if youâ??re eating out, but a cheap trick is to get them at fast food restaurants like McDonalds, KFC or Leons, or even cold meals at the grocery stores like Marks & Spencer, Co-Op, Tesco, Waitrose, etc.

If you eat one cheap (grocery / fast food) meal and one restaurant meal a day, that should help to keep your food budget lean.

Psssst, donâ??t underestimate the cold meals at the groceries stores â?? I loved the pastas, fruit smoothies and sandwiches we got from there! If youâ??re looking for a cheap and quick coffee fix, I also highly recommend the Â£1 coffees from Marks & Spencer, which we felt tasted wayyyyy better than that of Costa Coffee at just 1/3 the price.

Tap water in London is treated and drinkable, so you can also save by asking for tap water on ice at restaurants instead of purchasing a drink.

Day trips out of central London

We did a few day trips out of London and loved them so much that I would highly recommend you to consider the same!



1. Lavender Fields at Mayfields
We used the CityMapper app and got there via public transport, although the journey was a little long at 2-hours each. Entrance tickets are cheap at just Â£2 to enter the lavender farm and walk around, have a picnic, take lots of photos, breathe in the scent of the lavender flowers, etc!


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2. Richmond Park
Did you know that you can spot wild deers in London at this park? We didnâ??t know, until our local friend told us! Although the deers are always roaming around this huge 2000-acre park so some tourists have unfortunately gone and never got to see them, we went on a hot summer day and figured that the deer would be near a water source, so we entered via Roehampton Gate, turned right and walked for 10 minutes as we followed the water stream to eventually reach a lake, and thatâ??s where we found all the deers!

Although the signs said to stay away from the deers, we saw some locals bring them food and successfully managed to pet them. We didnâ??t know this tip beforehand so we had to settle for admiring them from a distance. But you didnâ??t hear this tip from me, because the signs say to stay 50 metres away from the wild deer! ð???



3. The City of Bath and Stonehenge

We did this through a Â£90 tour with Golden Tours (tip: London Pass holders get 15% off tour bookings!) and it made for a fantastic and relaxing day out. Lunch (or more like a snack box) and a bottle of water was also provided for the long ride, which was quite comfortable. I absolutely adored the City of Bath, and you can even go on a Jane Austen walking tour if time permits. Donâ??t forget to also grab high tea at the famous Sally Lunn eatery while youâ??re there! As for Stonehengeâ?¦letâ??s just say it is a place I would definitely visit once in a lifetime but never go back again because thereâ??s hardly anything to see other than justâ?¦stones.



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Other budget tips

Now, if you donâ??t intend to get a London Pass (trust me, itâ??s worth the tremendous savings! Iâ??m usually skeptical of tourist passes like these but Iâ??m convinced about the London Pass, having done my calculations and experienced it for myself), there are still other ways to enjoy London without having to fork out too much for attractions. Here are some tips:

â?? Instead of The Shard, book a slot at the Sky Garden here to get a fantastic view of London, for free!
â?? Go on free walking tours such as this or this (best to tip after youâ??re done though)
â?? Visit the museums and galleries, almost all of which are free! We loved the Natural History Museum most of all.
â?? Visit other free tourist landmarks like Borough Market, Leadenhall, Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, Piccadilly Circus, Camden Market, etc.
â?? Walk around Londonâ??s fabulous city parks like Hyde Park or Green Park



I hope all the above budget tips and itineraries help you to plan your own vacation to London!

P.S. Just donâ??t ask me where we stayed in London as we need to protect our hostâ??s identity. Thanks! All other questions are welcomed.

With love,
Budget Babe



Category

1. Family

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