



An Expat's Guide

Moving to London for tech

Pleased to meet you

We're Orange Quarter. We help companies hire the builders behind the future of tech and AI.

Our team operates across New York, London, Amsterdam and Berlin, partnering closely with early-stage companies building new products, teams and platforms from Seed through to Series C. London continues to be one of the world's most influential tech ecosystems—both for the companies shaping the next generation of technology and for the talent building it.

Over the years, we've supported Product, Engineering and AI leaders relocating to London to join high-growth businesses across fintech, AI, marketplaces and platform-led companies. Many of us have made the move ourselves, navigating UK visas, housing constraints, cost-of-living pressures and the practical realities of settling into one of the most competitive and fast-moving cities globally.

If you're considering a role in London—or planning a move to the UK to join an early-stage tech company—this guide is designed to help you understand what to expect, what to plan for, and how to set yourself up for a successful transition into London life and work.

5 reasons we love living and working in London

A global tech hub

London is one of the world's leading tech cities, with deep early-stage and scale-up ecosystems across fintech, AI, developer tooling and marketplaces.

Unmatched career density

Few cities offer the same concentration of startups, scale-ups, investors and global tech companies in one place.

International by default

London is one of the most diverse cities in the world, making it easy for international talent to integrate professionally and socially.

Strong earning potential

While the cost of living is high, London offers some of the most competitive salaries in Europe, particularly for senior tech and product roles.

Culture, connectivity and lifestyle

From food and culture to global travel connections, London offers a lifestyle few cities can rival.

Working

Before relocating to London, it's important to understand how the UK tech market operates and what this means for your career.

London remains one of the most influential tech ecosystems globally, particularly for early-stage and scaling companies. Across fintech, AI, developer tooling, marketplaces and platform businesses, the city attracts founders and operators building products with global reach from day one.

For international candidates, London offers depth and opportunity — but it is also a competitive market. Understanding how hiring works, where roles are advertised, and how international sponsorship fits into the process is key to a successful move.

In this section, we outline how to approach your job search, how hiring typically works in London, and what to expect when relocating to the UK for a tech role.

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Finding Work

London's tech market is fast-moving and highly competitive. While there is a high volume of roles available, the most impactful early-stage positions are often filled through targeted outreach rather than open applications.

Job boards and platforms such as LinkedIn are useful for understanding the market, but senior and specialist roles — particularly within Seed-Series C companies — are frequently filled through headhunting and referrals.

Getting started

Be clear on company stage

London's ecosystem spans everything from very early-stage startups to global scale-ups. Knowing what stage you want to join will help focus your search.

Optimise your LinkedIn profile

LinkedIn plays a central role in UK hiring. Clear articulation of ownership, scope and impact is essential, especially for international candidates.

Activate your network early

Referrals carry significant weight in London. Let recruiters, former colleagues and founders know you're open to opportunities.

Work with specialist recruiters

Recruiters embedded in London's early-stage tech scene understand which companies sponsor visas, how fast hiring moves, and where your profile will resonate.

Secure a role before relocating

Most international candidates secure a job before moving. This is particularly important in the UK, where employer sponsorship is required for most non-UK nationals.

Choosing the right recruiter

London is one of the most competitive tech hiring markets globally, which makes choosing the right recruiter especially important — particularly if you're relocating from outside the UK.

Early-stage companies in London often rely on headhunting rather than inbound applications for key Product, Engineering and AI roles. This means that many of the most interesting opportunities are never publicly advertised.

Work with a specialist

A strong recruiter will specialise in your function and understand London's early-stage ecosystem. This includes knowing which companies:

- Hire internationally
- Are licensed to sponsor visas
- Are building new teams rather than maintaining mature ones

Local market knowledge matters in London, where hiring expectations, compensation and pace can vary significantly between startups and scale-ups.

Expect transparency

Hiring in London moves quickly. A good recruiter will be transparent about:

- Role expectations and interview processes
- Salary ranges and equity structures
- Visa sponsorship requirements and timelines

They should also be direct about where your profile fits in the market and which opportunities are realistic.

Do your due diligence

Ask recruiters about their experience placing international candidates in the UK, the types of companies they partner with, and how they support candidates through offer, visa sponsorship and relocation stages. A recruiter's track record with sponsored hires is particularly important in London, where timelines, documentation and employer readiness can vary significantly.

Choosing the right recruiter won't just help you secure a role—it can make the difference between a stressful relocation and a well-managed transition into life in London.

See what our candidates say about us on [Google Reviews](#)

Or better yet, [contact us!](#)

Londonerlin Salaries

Salaries in London's tech market vary widely depending on role, seniority and company stage. Early-stage startups often offer lower base salaries combined with equity, while later-stage scale-ups and well-funded growth companies typically provide higher fixed compensation alongside more structured benefits.

Compared to other European cities, London consistently sits at the top end of the salary spectrum for tech, product and AI roles. While the cost of living—particularly housing—is high, many candidates find that compensation, career acceleration and long-term opportunity offset these costs.

Salary expectations are usually aligned early in the hiring process. A good recruiter will advise on realistic ranges for your background, benchmark offers against the current market, and support negotiations to secure the strongest overall package.

Right to work in the UK

Your ability to live and work in the UK... depends on your nationality and visa status. Understanding this early is critical, as it directly affects hiring timelines and employer eligibility.

If you're a UK or Irish citizen...

You have an automatic right to live and work in the UK. No visa or sponsorship is required.

If you're an EU citizen...

Since Brexit, EU citizens no longer have automatic work rights in the UK unless they hold Settled or Pre-Settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme. If you do not already hold this status, you will need a visa to work in the UK.

If you're coming from outside the UK...

Most non-UK nationals require a Skilled Worker visa, sponsored by a UK-licensed employer. The company must hold a sponsorship licence and meet salary and role eligibility thresholds. This is now the most common route for international tech professionals relocating to London.

Visa processing times, costs and documentation requirements vary, so joining a company with experience sponsoring international hires can significantly reduce friction.

Spouses and family members...

Partners and dependants are usually eligible to join you in the UK under dependant visa routes linked to the main applicant's visa. Requirements vary by visa type and nationality, so it's important to review eligibility, documentation and timing early in the process.

To apply for a UK work residence permit, you'll need:

For most non-UK candidates, the application process begins after securing a job offer and is sponsored by the hiring company. The most common route for tech professionals relocating to London is the Skilled Worker visa.

While requirements vary slightly by visa type and individual circumstances, you will usually need to provide:

- A valid passport
- A signed employment contract or Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) issued by a UK-licensed employer
- Proof that the role meets eligibility criteria for sponsorship (including skill level)
- Proof that the salary meets the minimum salary threshold for the visa route
- Evidence of relevant qualifications or professional experience (if required for the role)
- Proof of English language proficiency (if applicable)
- Proof of payment of the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)

Depending on your nationality and personal circumstances, you may also be required to:

- Provide a criminal record certificate
- Undergo a tuberculosis (TB) test at an approved clinic
- Submit certified translations of documents not issued in English

In most cases, your employer—and often your recruiter—will guide you through the process, confirm which documents are required, and coordinate timelines to ensure your start date aligns with visa approval.



Annual leave and work-life balance in the UK

The UK has clear statutory employment protections, though work-life balance expectations can vary by company, role and sector.

The statutory minimum annual leave entitlement is 28 days per year, based on a full-time role. This typically includes public (bank) holidays. Many tech companies offer additional leave on top of the statutory minimum, particularly at mid-to-senior levels.

Working hours are contractually defined, and while longer hours can be expected in certain high-growth or early-stage environments, most London tech companies now operate with flexible or hybrid working models. Remote work, flexible start times and output-focused performance measurement are common.

For many international candidates, London offers a balance between fast-paced career progression and increasing flexibility—particularly in tech, product and AI roles—making it an attractive place to build long-term career momentum.

Practicalities

You've decided that the UK is where you want to be. You've begun your job search—or secured a role—and now it's time to think about the practical side of relocating.

Moving to London involves a number of administrative and logistical steps, from securing the right visa and housing to setting up healthcare, banking and essential services. In this section, we cover the key things you'll need to organise to ensure a smooth transition into life and work in the UK's capital.



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Language

London is one of the most international cities in the world, and English is the working language across virtually all industries. International professionals can integrate quickly without language barriers, particularly in tech, product, engineering and AI roles.

That said, London's diversity means you'll hear dozens of languages spoken daily, and cultural awareness goes a long way. While there's no requirement to learn another language to live or work in the UK, openness to different cultures and communication styles is essential in such a globally connected city.

Weather

London has a temperate climate with mild but changeable weather throughout the year. Winters are generally cool rather than severe, with occasional cold snaps, while summers are warm and can include periods of high temperatures.

Rain is common year-round, though rarely extreme. Layers and a reliable rain jacket are essentials. Daylight hours vary significantly by season, with long summer evenings and noticeably shorter winter days—something worth factoring in if you're relocating from a sunnier climate.

Moving

How you relocate your belongings to London will depend on where you're moving from and how much you plan to bring. Most expats take one of the following approaches.

International removals company

Hiring an international removals company is the most hands-off option. These providers manage packing, shipping, customs clearance and delivery, which can be particularly helpful if you're relocating furniture or moving with family. This is usually the most expensive option, but also the least stressful.

Shipping container or air freight

Shipping via sea freight or air freight is common for international moves. Air freight is significantly faster but comes at a premium, while shipping containers are more cost-effective for larger volumes but take longer to arrive.

If choosing this route, confirm whether door-to-door delivery is included, as onward transport from port to property may be charged separately.

Travelling light

Many professionals relocating to London—especially for tech roles—choose to bring only essentials and rent furnished accommodation initially. This can reduce costs, simplify the move and provide flexibility while you get to know the city.

Finding a rental

London's rental market is highly competitive, particularly in central and well-connected neighbourhoods. Demand consistently exceeds supply, and desirable properties often receive multiple applications within days—or even hours—of being listed.

Rents in London are high compared to most European cities, with prices varying significantly by borough, transport links and property type. Many newcomers choose to live in shared accommodation when they first arrive, especially if relocating alone. This can help manage costs and provide flexibility while you explore different areas.

Most rental contracts (Assured Shorthold Tenancies) are issued for 12 months, with a break clause sometimes included at six months. It's important to choose a location you'd be comfortable living in for at least a year.

Tips when searching for a place to live

- Choose a neighbourhood based on commute, lifestyle and budget
- Start your search as early as possible
- Prepare key documents in advance (ID, proof of income, references)
- Ask colleagues, recruiters or friends for local recommendations
- Be cautious of scams and never transfer money without a signed contract

Landlords typically request:

- A security deposit, capped by law at five weeks' rent
- The first month's rent in advance
- Proof of income or savings
- References and right-to-rent checks

Property rental websites to check out

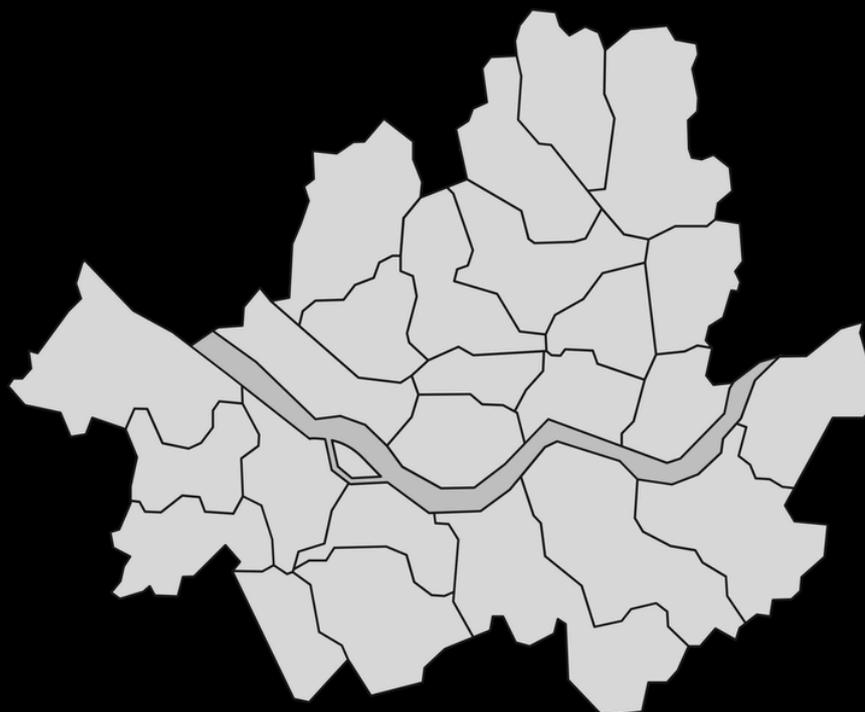
- Rightmove – One of the UK's largest and most widely used property platforms
- Zoopla – Popular for rentals across all London boroughs
- SpareRoom – Ideal for flatshares and room rentals
- OpenRent – Direct listings from landlords, often with fewer fees

If you're searching from abroad, many agents offer virtual viewings. However, some expats prefer to secure short-term accommodation first and then attend viewings in person once they arrive, as competition can be intense.

Where to live in the city?

London is made up of a wide collection of neighbourhoods, each with its own character, pace and community. The city is extremely well connected by public transport, so living outside the very centre doesn't necessarily mean a long or difficult commute.

Where you choose to live will often come down to a balance between budget, commute, lifestyle and space. Some popular areas to consider when house hunting include Shoreditch, Hackney, Islington and Greenwich. Read a bit about each below.



a. Shoreditch

One of London's best-known tech and creative hubs. Shoreditch is central, energetic and packed with startups, cafés, bars and co-working spaces. It's lively and well connected, though typically more expensive and busier than surrounding areas.

b. Hackney

Young, diverse and fast-changing. Hackney is known for its markets, green spaces, cafés and strong cultural scene. Popular with creatives and tech professionals looking for character and slightly better value than more central districts.

c. Islington

Upmarket yet relaxed, Islington is popular with professionals and families. Expect tree-lined streets, independent cafés, restaurants and good schools, with excellent transport links into central London.

d. Camden

Often associated with music and alternative culture, Camden offers a lively atmosphere, strong nightlife and a central location. It attracts renters looking for character, creativity and proximity to the city centre.

e. Richmond

A more traditional and residential area with period properties, riverside walks and large green spaces. Richmond is popular with families and professionals seeking a quieter lifestyle while remaining well connected by rail and Underground.

f. Greenwich

A historic and multicultural area with a village-like feel. Greenwich offers parks, riverside living and good transport links, particularly to Canary Wharf and the City.

g. Stratford

Lively and rapidly developing, Stratford is known for modern housing, major transport connections and large shopping and leisure areas. A popular option for those prioritising connectivity and newer developments.

h. Walthamstow

Less touristy and increasingly popular, Walthamstow offers more space and comparatively lower rents. Well connected by the Victoria line, it's often chosen by those priced out of inner London hotspots.

i. Bermondsey

A well-connected inner-city area close to the River Thames. Bermondsey balances residential calm with easy access to London Bridge, the City and Shoreditch, making it popular with professionals.

j. Clapham

Known for Clapham Common and a strong social scene. Clapham is popular with young professionals and couples looking for green space, nightlife and good transport into central London.

k. Peckham

An emerging area with a growing creative scene and improving infrastructure. Peckham offers better value for money than many central neighbourhoods and has become increasingly attractive to renters seeking space and culture.

l. Muswell Hill

Located north of central London, Muswell Hill is greener and more residential. Popular with families and professionals looking for space, period housing and a quieter pace while remaining within commuting distance.

m. Battersea

Close to the Thames and Battersea Park, this area offers a mix of modern developments and residential streets. Well suited to those who want outdoor space and relatively easy access to central London and the West End.



Buying property

Buying property in the UK is possible for international buyers, and many expats choose to purchase once they feel settled in London.

London property prices are high by European standards and vary significantly by borough, transport links and property type. While buying can offer long-term stability, the market is competitive and the process can feel complex if you're unfamiliar with the UK system.

For this reason, many international professionals choose to rent first. Renting allows time to understand neighbourhoods, commute patterns, pricing and long-term suitability before committing to a purchase.

Buying a property in London and getting a mortgage

UK lenders assess both the property and the buyer's financial profile. In addition to the purchase price, buyers should budget for additional costs such as stamp duty, legal fees, survey costs and (where applicable) agent fees.

Typically:

- Buyers are expected to contribute a deposit of at least 10–20% of the purchase price
- Additional costs can add 5–15% depending on price band and stamp duty rates

Mortgage availability depends on income, employment status, residency status and credit history. International buyers and recent arrivals may face stricter criteria, and some lenders require a longer UK credit history. Larger deposits can improve approval chances.

Getting around

London has one of the world's most extensive public transport networks, and most residents do not need a car.

Transport options include:

- Underground (Tube)
- Overground and National Rail
- Buses
- Cycling and walking

Most people travel using contactless payment or an Oyster card, with daily and weekly fare caps providing cost control. Cycling infrastructure has improved significantly, and bike hire schemes are widely used.

Driving in central London is often impractical due to congestion, parking costs and the Congestion Charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). UK driving licences are valid immediately, while non-UK licence holders may need to exchange their licence within a set period depending on their country of origin.

Healthcare

Healthcare in the UK is provided primarily through the National Health Service (NHS).

Most visa holders pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) as part of their visa application, which grants access to NHS services. Once resident, you register with a local GP (doctor) to access care.

The NHS provides comprehensive coverage, though wait times for non-urgent specialist care can be longer. Many employers offer private health insurance as a benefit, which can provide faster access to diagnostics and specialist treatment.

Bank account

Opening a UK bank account is an essential step after arrival. You'll need one to receive your salary, pay rent and manage daily expenses.

Banks typically require:

- A valid passport
- Proof of UK address
- Proof of right to work or visa status

Many expats begin with a digital bank such as Monzo, which can be opened quickly with minimal documentation, and later switch to a traditional high-street bank once fully settled.

Mobile phone

To get a UK SIM card, you'll need valid ID. Contract plans usually require proof of address and a UK credit check.

- Pay-as-you-go (prepaid) SIMs are flexible and easy to set up
- Contract plans offer better long-term value but typically require 12–24 month commitments

Some employers provide a work phone or reimburse mobile costs, so it's worth checking before signing a contract.

Internet & TV

Internet availability and speed vary by building and area. Fibre broadband is common, but not universal, particularly in older properties.

If internet is not included in your rent, you'll need to arrange a contract directly with a provider. Installation timelines can range from a few days to several weeks, so it's best to organise this early.

Many providers offer bundled packages covering internet, TV and mobile services.

Utilities

Utilities in the UK are usually billed separately from rent.

Tenants are typically responsible for:

- Electricity and gas
- Water
- Council Tax (local authority tax based on property value)
- Internet and TV licence (if applicable)

Before signing a rental agreement, make sure you understand:

- What utilities are included in your rent (if any)
- Which services you need to set up yourself
- How and when bills are paid

Understanding these costs upfront will help you budget accurately and avoid surprises once you move in.

Community & Lifestyle

Your new city won't truly feel like home until you start building a community. While many people make their first connections through work, London offers countless ways to meet people beyond the office.

With one of the world's most international populations and an open, social culture, London is relatively easy to settle into—whether you're looking to build professional connections, a social circle, or both.



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Meetup's, groups and clubs

London has a strong culture of community-led events, particularly across tech, product, startups and creative industries.

Popular ways to get involved include:

- Instagram & Facebook — Increasingly popular for building friendships in a large city
- LinkedIn & Slack communities — Widely used for industry-specific networking and events
- Sports clubs and fitness classes — One of the easiest ways to meet people outside of work

Given London's international makeup, most groups are welcoming to newcomers and used to integrating people from overseas.

London tech events

London hosts a constant stream of tech events throughout the year, ranging from small, community-led meetups to large international conferences.

Events commonly focus on:

- Software engineering and product development
- AI, data and emerging technologies
- Startups, founders and scaling businesses

Events are promoted through newsletters, event platforms and community channels, with many offering free or low-cost entry. Regular attendance is one of the best ways to stay connected to the local tech ecosystem.

Bar, Restaurants and cafes to check out

London's food and drink scene is one of the most diverse in the world, shaped by its international population and constantly evolving neighbourhoods. Below are a few popular spots across the city.

Breakfast & brunch

- Dishoom
- Daisy Green
- Megan's

Lunch

- Borough Market
- Flat Iron
- Beigal Shop Brick Lane

Dinner

- Ibai
- AGORA
- Berenjak

Drinks

- The Churchill Arms
- Vagabond
- Sky Garden

Exploring neighbourhood cafés, pubs, wine bars and late-night spots is one of the best ways to experience London's character and build connections naturally outside of work.



Your Relocation Checklist

Before you leave

- Ensure you have a valid passport and any required documents for your visa
- Secure a job offer with a UK employer (required for most work visas)
- Confirm whether your employer offers visa sponsorship or relocation support
- Complete your visa application and pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (if applicable)
- Arrange temporary or long-term accommodation
- Gather key documents (employment contract, qualifications, certificates)
- Plan your move and shipment of belongings

Mandatory on arrival

- Collect your Biometric Residence Permit (if applicable)
- Apply for or receive your National Insurance number
- Register with a local GP (doctor) to access NHS services
- Provide right-to-work documentation to your employer

Optional on arrival

- Open a UK bank account
- Set up mobile phone, internet and utilities
- Arrange a public transport pass or cycling option
- Exchange your driving licence if required
- Register with your embassy or consulate
- Explore schools or childcare if relocating with family

Get settled

- Join local meetups, professional groups or sports clubs
- Attend London tech and startup events
- Explore neighbourhood cafés, parks and cultural venues
- Build a routine and give yourself time to settle in