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ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY
LONDON



LONDON CAMPUS

Winter Survival Guide

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Winter in England

If you are an international student, winter in the UK might be very different than in your home country. The weather, the festivities, and changes in schedule can sometimes be confusing and overwhelming. However, this guide will help you navigate the winter months here and empower you to enjoy the wonderful holiday season.

Holiday dates and travel for visa holders

The University holiday period runs from **Saturday 20 December to Monday 12 January**. This means the University is officially closed for teaching during this period, and it is your free time to spend how you wish. It is a great opportunity to schedule some time to relax, spend time with friends or family if they are here with you, and explore more of what London and the UK have to offer.

Important dates:

- Saturday 20 December – Campus closes
- Monday 22 December – Winter break starts
- Monday 5 January – Campus opens
- Sunday 11 January – Winter break ends

As the holiday period is out of term time you can work 40 hours per week. However once term time resumes on Monday 12 January you will only be able to work 20 hours per week.

When term time resumes, you are expected to attend any classes which have been timetabled for you in the weeks that follow.

This means your attention and focus should be on attending any timetabled classes, completing assignments, and any other university tasks that have been assigned.

When normal study resumes, if you need to take a leave of absence or leave the UK you must go through the formal process of filling in an [Absence Request Form](#). You must fill in the details and wait for a response from the Visa team before you make any arrangements for your leave of absence.

Please note: Term time absences will not be authorised other than in exceptional circumstances. You will need to provide evidence of the urgency of your request. If you are a visa holder and need to apply for an authorised absence of more than 3 days you need to apply through this separate [online absence request form](#).

You can find more information on student visa conditions and absences on the [Student Hub](#).



Your Student Hub

Remember, the Student Hub is your first point of contact for any queries or issues you may have, even during the winter period. You can access the Student Hub via their website at studenthub.yorksj.ac.uk. This is open 24/7, all year round. The Student Hub has hundreds of knowledge base articles to help guide you through your enquiry or issues, including finance, visa, or wellbeing concerns.

However, please be aware that the HELP team and the Level 3 Student Hub desk will be closed from Saturday 20 December to Monday 5 January 2026.

Once campus is open you can contact the Student Hub:

- in person – at the Student Hub desk on Level 3, 9.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.
- by telephone – on 01904 876 500, 9.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

For more information on how to access the Student Hub please visit the [website](#) or the [London campus student guide](#).



London Campus Services

While the campus is closed over the Christmas winter period, support staff members such as the Student Hub HELP team, IT support, Finance, Visa, Learning and Wellness and all other campus personnel will also be on annual leave.

The Students' Union Advice Service

The Students' Union Advice Service will be closed between Saturday 20 December 2025 to Monday 5 January 2026. If you need to contact an Adviser please email su.advice@yorksj.ac.uk or book an appointment on the [Students' Union website](#).

Health and Wellbeing Services

Emergency services

Emergency services (police, ambulance and fire) will be available throughout the Christmas period. In the event of an emergency, call 999 and ask for the relevant service. The operator will talk you through what to do next. You can call 999 free from any phone.

Doctors and non emergency services

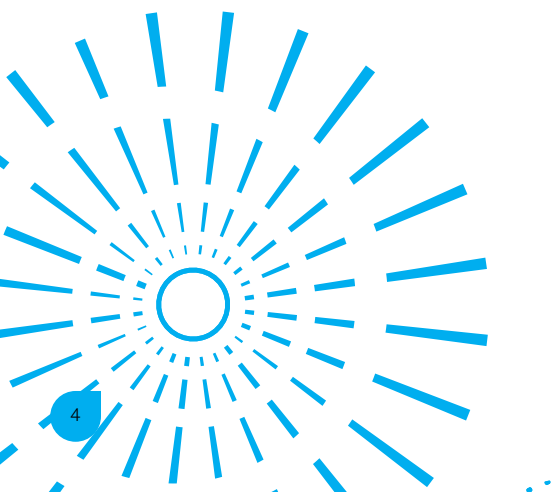
General Practitioner (GP) surgeries will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. If you are registered to a GP, please check their website for their opening times during this period as they may be closed on other dates.

If you require non urgent medical advice and your GP surgery is closed, call 111 to access the free NHS medical advice telephone service. The NHS 111 is available 24/7 a day, every day, and will enable you to speak with a healthcare professional. If needed, they will refer you to Accident and Emergency (A&E), to an out of hours urgent care centre, or to emergency dental services. Unless a life is in immediate danger, you should call 111 before calling 999. Only use 999 in a medical emergency or when someone is seriously injured. In a medical emergency, call 999 or go directly to A&E. You can find your nearest A&E via the [NHS website](#).

If you need healthcare assistance that is not urgent or life threatening, you can also visit your local pharmacy. Pharmacists are qualified healthcare professionals who can assist you with minor injuries and ailments. They can also guide you to make sure you get the right medication you require. You can find your local pharmacy using this [NHS website](#). You can filter the results to only show pharmacies which are open. Pharmacies will have differing opening hours over the Christmas period, with many closed on Christmas Day.

Remember!

If you are an international student and a visa holder, as part of your visa application, you will have paid for use of the NHS for healthcare. This is called the Immigration Health Surcharge or IHS. This means you are entitled to use the National Health Service for free. Therefore, if you require medical attention at A&E, or you need to visit a GP, there is no cost for this.



Dentists and opticians

If you require an eye test or an optician or dental treatment you may have to pay. Dental treatment is subsidised by the NHS, but it is not fully covered. If you need to visit a dentist, be prepared to pay a bill at the end of the appointment. For more information on the cost of dental treatment, please check the [NHS website](#).

For any health related questions or query, the [NHS website](#) is the best place to find information.

The opening times and dates for different dental practices will vary over the Christmas period. If you require a dental appointment, you will therefore need to refer to your dentist's website or call them directly.

If they are unable to offer you an appointment, or refer you to someone who can, call NHS 111. Do not contact your local GP as they will not be able to assist with emergency dental care. If you are advised by NHS 111 to go to an emergency treatment centre, you can find out more about [emergency dental care on the NHS website](#).



Available wellbeing support

The University's Wellbeing teams, including Learning and Wellness will be unavailable during the winter vacation due to campus closure. However, there are other mental health and wellbeing services available during this period:

- Samaritans offer confidential support 24/7 a day, every day. You can call for free on 116 123, email jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org.
- HOPELINE247 provide support for people under the age of 35 who are having thoughts of suicide, or anyone who is concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide. They are available 24/7, 365 days of the year. You can call them on 0800 068 4141, text on 07860 039 967 or email pat@papyrusuk.org.
- SHOUT is a 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis. Text "SHOUT" to 85258.

[Bexley Crisis Café](#) offers a drop-in service where you can access mental health support and advice from mental health workers. This is open every day (including Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day).

As a York St John student you are also entitled to free counselling through Spectrum.Life.

Spectrum.Life is our student assistance programme and wellbeing platform. It offers free, confidential counselling and wellbeing support to all students 24/7, 365 days a year. Please see the [Spectrum.Life help](#) page on the Student Hub online portal for details. Spectrum.Life also offers counselling in many different languages, so students can access counselling support in their native languages.

Spectrum.Life also run short, online courses for managing stress and anxiety:

- [Managing anxiety and stress](#)
- [Understanding stress](#)
- [Dealing with anxiety](#)
- [Stress Less!](#)

Their [Be Calm video](#) offers a range of self-guided meditation and tips on how to improve your sleep and reduce your anxiety.

Visit the [Student Hub information article](#) to find out more about the service.



Healthy habits

We understand that in the cold weather and changes in season, it may be harder than usual to stay healthy. So here are our top tips for a healthy and happy winter!

- Take a moment - whether it's prayer, journaling, or gratitude, daily rituals can help reset your mind.
- Gentle movement - movement isn't just for fitness, it's a stress reliever. Try walking around your local area and taking consistent stretching breaks to keep your body moving.
- Eat well to feel well – eating fruit and vegetables through healthy recipes is a great way to feel good and stay healthy. You can find budget friendly healthy recipes online and share them with friends.
- Make time for meaningful connections – there are lots of free activities around London that can help build community. Look on [Eventbrite](#) for some fun activities and get stuck in!



Transport and travel

Public transport systems usually operate a different schedule during the Christmas period, in particular on:

- Christmas Eve (Wednesday 24 December)
- Christmas Day (Thursday 25 December)
- Boxing Day (Friday 26 December)
- New Year's Eve (Wednesday 31 December)
- and New Year's Day (Thursday 1 January)

Please refer directly to the Transport for London (TFL) and specific rail network websites to check for changes.

On Christmas Eve (Wednesday 24 December) public transport will be reduced from late afternoon. The night tubes and night buses are non operational and will not run.

On Christmas Day (Thursday 25 December) public transport in London will not operate so there will be no public transport services across London. This includes the London Underground, overground trains, trams and buses. Also, there will be no national train services.

On Boxing Day (Friday 26 December) a reduced public transport service will run. It is best to check the transport website for these changes.



Buses may operate a different schedule during the Christmas period, in particular on Christmas Eve. Taxi services will often be more expensive and busier during the Christmas and New Year periods, so it is better to plan your journey ahead of time.

Due to the winter period being extremely busy, disruptions on public transport are likely to happen. It is always best to keep yourself updated about the latest changes. You can do this by downloading travel apps like:

- [Citymapper](#)
- [Transport for London](#)
- [National rail](#)
- [Googlemaps](#)
- [Bustimes](#)
- [Trainline](#)

Setting alerts notifying you of any disruptions can save you a lot of time and money, so remember to plan ahead of any travelling.

Food

On Christmas Day (Thursday 25 December) and New Year's Day (Thursday 1 January) it is likely that all or most shops and local facilities will be closed. Most shops (including supermarkets) will also operate reduced hours on Christmas Eve (Wednesday 24 December), Boxing Day (Friday 26 December) and New Year's Eve (Wednesday 31 December). It is worth planning ahead and making sure you have enough food for these periods.

Restaurants and cafes will also have reduced opening times or will be closed during these periods, so it is best not to rely on them if the supermarkets are closed.



Festive activities

London has a lot to see and do, both festive and nonfestive. Being in London during the Christmas period can be an excellent opportunity to explore what the city has to offer. Below are some hidden gems around London that are sure to put you in the Christmas mood.

Christmas Markets

London has many Christmas markets across the city from late November into December and January where you'll usually find a wide selection of gifts, crafts and food!

Why not visit a market or two in the run up to Christmas and enjoy a hot chocolate as you browse the gifts and take in more of the city? The Christmas Markets are also a great place to arrange to meet friends and experience the festive spirit. The markets are found in various locations across the city such as Covent Garden, Spitalfields, King's Cross, Battersea Power station and Greenwich.

Meet Santa

If you've never met Santa before, now's your chance! Every year, Santa's grottoes are set up in markets, shops and shopping centres around the UK. Whilst these are primarily aimed at children, if you're only here for a year then take the opportunity to visit Santa and get a real Christmas experience. There is a long list of Santa's grottos in Central London.

Christmas Carols at St. Paul's

Would you like to experience hearing some Christmas carols with a spectacular backdrop? St. Paul's Cathedral offers free, unticketed carol services. That means anyone can go along and enjoy the carols while also admiring the architecture of the building. These events run throughout the month of December. More details and information can be found on the St Paul's Cathedral website.



Watch a community pantomime

Pantomime theatre has a long history in the UK and are celebrated and watched by thousands of all people all over the country. They are usually musicals based on fairy tales that invite the audience to take part. Pantomimes, or Panto's as they're also known, can take place in big and small theatre venues so tickets will vary in price. However, if you do decide to go, make sure you're ready for a lot of fun, and to scream 'he's behind you!'

This is only a small selection of what London has to offer. To find out more look at guides such as:

- [Time Out](#)
- [Secret London](#)
- [Guide London \(paid for guided tours\)](#)
- [The Guide London 'Five Fun Ideas for New Year in London' blog](#)

Take a walk around the city and see what you can find.

We look forward to
welcoming you back onto
campus in January 2026!

Wishing you a very happy
holiday period.

Stay safe, warm and well.

Contact

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