



Budget Planner for Study in Wales

To begin the process of determining your personal study abroad budget, you should cross-reference this guide with [Preparing to Study Abroad](#), [Money Matters](#) and the program costs listed on our website, www.ifsa-butler.org.

The information in this guide was compiled by staff in the IFSA-Butler Wales office and by current and former students. Despite years of experience, we have yet to create a “perfect” budget. However, if you’re honest with yourself about your expectations and lifestyle, this guide will give you a good idea of how much money you will need abroad.

Costs are in U.S. dollars unless otherwise stated.

Tips for Determining Your Budget

- When calculating your budget, enter the minimum amounts on which you think you could manage. Include items such as meals, personal expenses, entertainment and vacation travel.
- Estimate a second set of figures that are more generous. You might be able to afford the more generous projection.
- If your resources are more limited, go back and make selective adjustments based on close questioning of what you *really need*, what would be *nice to have* and what you *could do without*. Your final budget should fall somewhere in the middle.

The budget worksheet (on the last page) itemizes costs you will incur in Wales. It is in three parts: **fixed expenses**, which are expenses prepaid in the United States in American dollars; **variable expenses**, which are mainly incurred in Wales and include start-up and term-time costs; and **vacation expenses**, which are expenses for your university vacation in Wales and at the end of the program. We have also added a line where you should enter your personal resources, which you will subtract from your estimated expenses to determine a working budget.

Exchange Rates

The currency in Wales is the pound sterling (£). While money printed in Wales looks slightly different than that printed in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland, all currencies have equal value and can be spent throughout the United Kingdom. The latest exchange rate is available at any bank, in most major newspapers and on the Web at www.oanda.com.

Fixed Expenses

All students have the fixed expenses of the program fee, housing deposit and transportation to and from London. Other expenses could include the [Tuition Payment Plan](#) enrollment fee and/or tuition differential.

- **Program fee:** Use the “program fee coverage” information in [Money Matters](#) to determine what is included in your program fee. Remember that your \$500 program deposit is credited to the fee.
- **Housing deposit:** Students who select IFSA-Butler’s guaranteed housing option must pay a separate \$300 housing deposit, which is refundable at the end of the program, less any fines, damages or outstanding debts in your name.
- **Transportation costs:** Enter the cost of travel from your home city to London. IFSA-Butler pays for one-way ground transportation from orientation to your host university. At the end of the program, you are responsible for your return travel to the city from which your return flight departs.

- **Tuition Payment Plan** (not applicable to all students): If you use the monthly payment plan through Tuition Payment Plan, enter the enrollment fee, which is \$55 for the year or \$35 for the semester.
- **Tuition differentials** (not applicable to all students): Most institutions charge higher tuition for subjects such as engineering, sciences, psychology and sometimes music. The IFSA-Butler website and the program fee sheet provide specific fee information for your particular university. You will not be billed for tuition differentials until you have registered abroad.
- **Overload fee:** Some host universities charge a fee for taking more than the required credit, called an overload fee. These universities do not always tell IFSA-Butler about the overload fee in advance. If you plan to take an overload abroad, investigate the possibility of additional fees. You are responsible for overload fees if they occur. The *Student Handbook* you receive during orientation discusses a full course load so you can avoid overloads and their related fees.
- **Meal plan bills** (not applicable to all students): Some university residence halls carry mandatory meal plans. If you are assigned to one of these residence halls, we will send an invoice to your designated billing address toward the end of your time abroad. To determine if your housing might include a meal plan, consult the university's page on our website and your host university's fee sheet (sent with your acceptance materials at a later date).
- **Cost of medical, travel and property insurance:** While in Wales, you will have medical coverage through an IFSA-Butler group medical plan, the cost of which is included in your IFSA-Butler program fee. See [Preparing to Study Abroad](#) for more information. It is your responsibility to make sure you are properly insured to travel and study abroad; consider securing personal property and travel insurance.
- **Passport:** The fee for obtaining a U.S. passport is \$135 or \$110 to renew an expired one. If you already have a passport, check the expiration date to ensure that it is valid for six months past the time you will be in Wales.
- **PBS Tier 4 Student Visa:** Students studying for six months or more must have the PBS Tier 4 Student Visa. Semester students studying in England who do not wish to work part-time **OR** engage in volunteering **OR** will not be in the U.K. for more than six months do not need to apply for an entry clearance visa prior to departure; upon arrival in the U.K., your passport will be stamped granting you student visitor status. As of July 2015, the cost for an entry clearance visa is approximately \$500.

Variable Expenses

- **Independent housing:** While IFSA-Butler guarantees and arranges housing for students on our programs, you may choose to arrange housing independently through the university accommodation office. Most students who choose independent housing do so because of health or religious reasons, or because they wish to stay with family while abroad.

Should you choose to arrange your own housing, we will not charge you the housing component of your program fee or the \$300 housing deposit. Students who choose independent housing must make all arrangements, including deposits, damage costs and payment of utilities. IFSA-Butler does not guarantee independent housing, nor do we assist in resolving housing issues if you choose the independent housing option.

- **Personal items:** Estimate what you will spend on clothing, a new backpack or travel items. You will want comfortable, color-coordinated clothes and shoes suitable for walking, but you should also plan on buying some items abroad. Remember, you don't need a new wardrobe! See the "packing" section in your [Preparing to Study Abroad](#) booklet.
- **Orientation:** During your orientation, housing, light breakfasts, lunches and some entertainment are provided. Although meals can cost as little as £5 in pubs and fast food chains, most students spend an average of £10 to £20 for their dinners. We recommend budgeting £50 to £70 for dinners and entertainment.

- **Family visit (optional):** Travel to and from your family visit is not included in the program fee, however ISFA-Butler will put \$50 towards the total cost. Your host family will provide all meals, but you should have about £30 to £50 to offer paying your own way at a restaurant or on an excursion where entry fees are involved. Most students bring a thank you gift from home, so you also may need to purchase this.
- **Textbooks:** The IFSA-Butler London staff estimate full-year students will spend £225 to £300 for books and semester students, £110 to £150. A textbook estimate is included in the personal cost sheet on our website. The cost varies by course.
- **Emergency reserve:** Whether it's a credit card or a cash reserve, it's a good idea to have something set aside for emergencies. You might want to consider £150 to £300.
- **Meals:** Current students living in Cardiff report spending about £50 weekly on food; students outside of the city spend about £40. This, of course, will depend on your own habits and preferences. Students tend to spend more freely in the first couple of months and often have to call home for funds.

Cafeterias, restaurants and snack bars are located in many of the main university buildings. Menus vary. Residence halls and student houses/flats have kitchen facilities for those who wish to prepare their own meals (self-cater). Where meal plans are compulsory, we send a bill to your designated billing address toward the end of the semester.

You can save money by using subsidized campus dining services and also by preparing your own breakfasts and dinners. You can also take your main meal at lunchtime in a campus dining facility, so your evening meal can be just a hearty snack. Shop in street markets or chain supermarkets rather than convenience stores. Take advantage of seasonal fruits and vegetables, as they are less expensive than those that are out of season.

- **Local transportation:** Transportation in Wales varies by city, but most students walk to class. We recommend budgeting about £8 a week for local transportation. Wales students usually walk, although they may take the bus in bad weather. Bus fares in Cardiff are £1.70 one way or £3.40 for a day pass. A weekly pass (Student Ridacard) is available for £31.

Taxis are fairly expensive, up to £8 for a 10-minute trip. Students avoid using them or take them as a group and split the cost.

- **Personal expenses:** Students report personal spending at about £25 weekly. They recommend stocking up on certain toiletries (which average £5 weekly) and prescriptions before leaving the United States. Toiletries in Wales are very expensive, especially contact lens solutions. Certain items students often purchase after arriving in Wales are hair dryers, curling irons and CD players.

In your planning, be sure to include laundry, postage, school supplies, photocopying, etc. Also consider the cost of purchasing a prepaid phone card or perhaps using a mobile phone. See [Preparing to Study Abroad](#) for more information about telephones.

The cost to send a postcard or letter to the United States is 56p for those that weigh 10 grams or less; those between 10 and 20 grams cost 81p to send and those between 20 and 40 grams cost £1.22. Air letters are another way to write home and can be purchased for 78p each at any post office.

Be sure to set aside money in case you need to visit a doctor or fill a prescription.

- **Entertainment:** Students' ideas of entertainment vary as much as their meal preferences. Past students report spending £25–£50 weekly in Cardiff, £30 in other Welsh cities. For some students, the cost of alcohol should be considered. A night in the pubs could cost as little as £10 or as much as £20, depending on lifestyles. Some people find this to be a major budgeting problem!

Student unions offer a wide range of activities, including sports, films and clubs. If you plan to rent movies, be sure to set aside money for that. Many students use Internet cafés, so you should plan on that cost as well. Most café prices range from £2 to £5 for one hour of Internet access.

Vacation Expenses

- **Travel:** Student unions have services to help you travel as inexpensively as possible and our office in London has compiled information to guide you through Britain, Ireland and Europe on a relatively tight budget. There are also a number of budget travel agencies in major cities to visit for comparisons. No matter where you're going, be sure to check out the State Department warnings online at www.travel.state.gov.

For travel in Europe, you have the option of Eurail, Britrail, InterRail and Wasteels BIJ tickets. Eurail offers four types of tickets for use across Europe: Global Pass, Select Pass, Regional Pass and National Pass. Britrail offers a selection of tickets for use in the U.K. and Ireland. Eurail and Britrail passes are only available to non-European residents, so it may be easier to purchase these prior to your departure. However, some students have been disappointed with Eurail passes after discovering cheaper options abroad. It is possible to purchase Eurail and Britrail passes online but note that you will be charged for international courier delivery to Europe. You must be in Europe for more than six months to be eligible for an InterRail pass, which is less expensive than Eurail and covers more countries. InterRail passes can be purchased online or from travel agents on campus in Wales. Wasteels BIJ is an online facility that offers good deals on rail cards in Europe.

Most students have found the 16-25 Railcard to be a much better deal than the Britrail Pass. The 16-25 Railcard costs £28 and gets you one-third off most train trips in the United Kingdom for a year. You can purchase one at most U.K. railway stations.

Invest in a guidebook that will cover your personal travel style (*Let's Go*, *Fodor's*, *The Rough Guide*, *Lonely Planet*, *Insight Guides*, etc.). You can save on lodging costs by staying at hostels. Although it is not necessary to join Hostelling International, members have priority if the hostel is full. For information, see its website at www.hihostels.com.

- **Accommodation:** Program housing in some university residence halls or student houses/flats is offered only during the weeks when classes are in session, but storage space is usually provided for students who travel during vacations. In such cases, those who wish to remain in residence must make arrangements in advance and pay daily or weekly fees. You may be required to move into another room if you stay during official university vacations because some universities rent their rooms for conferences.
- **Meals:** When you travel, you'll eat most of your meals in restaurants, so you might want to estimate £80 weekly, not including beverages.
- **Personal expenses:** The telephone call component of your budget will be higher during vacation periods than in term time, but other expenses should be about the same. Entertainment and recreational expenses will vary. You will obviously need less if you're backpacking and hostelling than when staying in city hotels. It's difficult to gauge how much you'll spend on clothing and gifts, but keep in mind you must carry (or ship) all those purchases home at the end of your program.

Approximate Costs of Commonly Purchased Items in Wales

Now you're ready to begin your budget planning. The cost estimates in this guide are in **pounds sterling (£)**. To calculate the value of the U.S. dollar to the pound sterling, consult the business section of any major newspaper or visit www.oanda.com.

Keep in mind that 1000 g = 1 kg = 2.2 lbs; £1 = 100 pence

Groceries

Pint of milk	57p	Beef, steak	£6 per half kg
Yogurt	40p	Beef, minced	£2 per half kg
Cheese	£1.79 per 250 g	Peanut butter	£1.23 per 340 g
Eggs	£1.39 for half dozen	Bread	89p per loaf
Juice	£1.69 per liter	Soda	£1.49 per 2 liter
Apples	£1.79 per kg	Coffee	£2.49 per 250 g
Oranges	£1.69 per kg	Tea	£1.79 per 250 g
Lettuce	79p per half kg	Sugar	89p per half kg
Bananas	79p per kg	Potato chips	£1.49 per 150 g
Potatoes	99p per 1.5 kg	Pasta	99p per 500 g
Rice	89p per 500		

Personal Items

Contact lens solution	£9.99 per 360 ml	Hair dryer	£18
Deodorant	£1.99	CD player	£29.99
Toothpaste	£2 per 100 ml	Laundry detergent	£3.50 per 1.5 ltrs
Shampoo/conditioner	£3.29 per 400 ml	Laundry costs	£5 per week
Soap	£1.79 for 4 bars	Haircut, women's	£20 to £40
Box of 32 tampons	£2.99	Haircut, men's	£7 to £20

Entertainment

Movies	£4.50–£6.50
Theater	£8–£30
Museum or gallery	about £4, but many are free; others ask for a contribution
Cup of coffee	£1.50–£2.50
Pub meal	£5+
Pint of light beer in a pub	£2.50 (less in some student union bars)
Alcohol/mixed drinks by the glass in a pub	£2.50+ (size smaller than in United States)
House wine by the glass in pub or wine bar	£3; restaurant £3.50+

Budget Worksheet - Wales

Wales Program: _____

Current Exchange Rate: _____

Fixed expenses

U.S.\$

Program fee (see program fees on www.ifsa-butler.org)	\$ _____
U.S. domestic and round-trip transportation	\$ _____
Housing deposit	\$ <u>300</u> _____
Tuition Payment Plan enrollment fee*	\$ _____
Supplemental fee surcharge*	\$ _____

**may not apply to all students*

Total fixed expenses

A \$ _____

Variable Expenses

£

Passport fee (first time or renewal)	£ _____
Personal items (clothing, luggage)	£ _____
Personal expenses	£ _____
Orientation spending money	£ _____
Family visit	£ _____
Textbooks (see your program fee sheet)	£ _____
Local transportation	£ _____
Meals	£ _____
Entertainment	£ _____
Emergency reserve fund	£ _____

Total variable expenses (conversion to U.S.\$)

B \$ _____

Vacation expenses (check with travel professionals and/or guidebooks)

Travel costs (train, airfare, etc.)	£ _____	\$ _____
	£ _____	\$ _____
Accommodation	£ _____	\$ _____
	£ _____	\$ _____
Meals	£ _____	\$ _____
Personal, including entertainment	£ _____	\$ _____

Total vacation expenses (conversion to U.S.\$)

C \$ _____

Total estimated expenses (add lines A, B and C)

\$ _____

List personal resources available such as savings, family contribution, financial aid, summer earnings, etc.

Total estimated resources	\$ _____
Less total estimated expenses	\$ _____

Your Study Abroad Budget

\$ _____