Getting around

This chapter is written from the point of view of someone coming to London, possibly for the first time. It presents information and practical advice about getting around, based on our experience and research. It can, of course, be of value to residents who may want to use any of the transport methods described, and may be particularly useful to Londoners who have a disabled visitor. You will almost certainly benefit from having good maps - discussed in the General information chapter.

There is no question that since the last edition of the guide in 2003 things have improved, but there is still a long way to go before the transport system can be described as accessible. Several specialist information and advice agencies have disappeared - like Tripscope (an independent and experienced resource) and the Disability Unit at London Transport. Information is now provided by well meaning people at the Transport for London (TfL) call centre, who have no specialist knowledge other than what they can read on the screen in front of them. There is an active Equality & Inclusion department, who reflect the current trend towards ‘mainstreaming’ accessibility issues, about which we have mixed feelings. We did, however, have extensive and helpful discussions with them when drafting this chapter.

In our view, some of the claims made about accessibility by TfL both in their literature, and on their website, are somewhat optimistic - and you need to expect that not everything will go entirely smoothly. It is therefore essential to allow extra time when travelling, especially if you are unfamiliar with particular parts of the system. The campaigning group Transport for All (TfA) provide information based on their experience. They present an excellent overview of what is available to disabled Londoners, in a booklet titled Get Moving, which they will send you on request.

We would like to draw people’s attention to a recent RADAR report, Doing transport differently available from www.disabilityrightsuk.org and it’s on our website as well.
The TfA website says "London’s public transport system has become much more accessible in recent years, but it is far from being fully accessible. TfA believes that the key to using the system is to plan ahead and know as much as you can, to allow time for glitches, and be aware of your rights - so you don’t get stranded if something unexpected happens during your journey."

Hopefully the information that both TfL and TfA can provide, together with help from TfL staff, will give you enough to make the transport system work for you.

If you would like to talk about planning a journey, please call TfA’s information line on 020 7737-2339 or e-mail them.

In this chapter there’s an introductory section, setting the scene, and then one’s covering:

- Transport for London (TfL)
- getting around using a car or adapted vehicle, or using taxis or minicabs
- using buses, the Underground (tube), the DLR, the Overground, and Tramlink
- using the riverbuses and other boats
- services for London residents, Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard and the Freedom Pass
- arriving in London from elsewhere by:
  - National Rail (NR), coach, Eurostar, or by air

We have included information about station improvements on both the Underground and Overground which are scheduled to become operational up to 2020, and on Crossrail which will have opened by then. There is also some discussion about the New London Bus.

What does accessible mean in relation to the transport provisions?

Throughout the guide we use the descriptors ‘accessible’, and accessible. What ‘accessible’ means is accessible in principle, and it applies to most tube and train stations where accessible (as described by the provider) means usually only from pavement to platform, and it is not necessarily step-free into the train itself. Getting on and off some tube trains, the Overground and all NR trains, involves a big step. Thus a chair user, and some walkers, would need help in overcoming the barrier.

‘Accessible’ (in our view) also applies to buses and to black cabs. The statement from TfL is that “all are accessible”, when in practice the traveller can run into significant barriers. These are discussed in the guide text, and by TfA - based on disabled peoples experience.

If we say that somewhere is accessible we mean that it is step-free, and thus suitable for an unaccompanied electric wheelchair user, possibly using lifts and/or permanent ramps. There are, of course, issues to do with distance and
slopes, and the roughness of slopes which affect accessibility, but in this chapter we are particularly concerned with questions to do with getting on and off buses, taxis and trains.

Much has been done to make travel easier and safer for people who are visually impaired (like the tactile strips and bright yellow lines warning of the platform edge on tube stations) and for people who are hearing impaired (with more loops). Our focus is on accessibility for those with physical mobility issues, not because other people aren’t important, but because that is what our experience is based on. The best people to report on facilities for the visually or hearing impaired are those WITH the relevant challenges.

**Setting the scene**

London is big, and much of its transport system was designed a century ago, in particular its railways, both surface and underground. There has been some investment in improving the facilities, in particular on the buses. Nearly 70 underground stations and 40 on the Overground are ‘accessible’, together with 40 accessible ones on the DLR. All the buses and black cabs are now, in principle, wheelchair accessible (but see the detailed text and comments, later in this chapter). As a result, it is worth the adventure of trying out both the tube and the buses - particularly the buses, as the network is so extensive.

Partly because of the country’s recent economic difficulties, the programme for making more of the tube system ‘accessible’ has, regrettably, been cut back. However, by 2018, Crossrail should have been completed, bringing significant improvements, and there are other things in the pipeline. Crossrail will go east-west, and there is already a partly ‘accessible’ north-south rail line called Thameslink. Both are described later, and Southwest Trains and other lines also provide some useful ‘accessible’ NR links.

**In spite of the progress, travelling around in London is probably the biggest challenge/problem for the disabled person who wants to be both independent and mobile, and to visit many of the sights.** Planning, determination and a sense of humour are all essential - and some patience!

The authority responsible for the provisions is Transport for London (TfL), together with the various borough/city councils like Camden, Lambeth and Westminster.
Transport for London (TfL)
Windsor House, 42-50 Victoria Street SW1W 0TL
Tel: travel information 0343 222-1234 (24 hours) Textphone: 020 7918-3015
website: www.tfl.gov.uk e-mail: enquire@tfl.gov.uk
TfL runs the buses, the tubes, the DLR and a number of other services. It is responsible for managing 580km of main roads, for managing the Congestion Charge and for making London’s transport more accessible.
Its principal function is to provide a fast mass transport system which best meets the needs of Londoners and visitors. It was created in 2000 by the Greater London Authority, ending the 67 year use of the name London Transport. The Underground was integrated into TfL in 2003. Bus services are operated under contract to London Buses, largely by private sector companies.

It is only relatively recently that the needs of disabled passengers have been seriously addressed. This has resulted from increased awareness of need, and from legislation to reduce discrimination against disabled people.
Things have undoubtedly improved, but there is a long way to go before disabled passengers can get around on an equal basis with their able-bodied counterparts. A survey some years ago showed that over 400,000 Londoners could not use the normal public transport system because of their disability. That number is not likely to have changed very much, since although some services have improved significantly, the population is both growing and ageing. There will additionally be thousands of visitors who will also have problems, and probably many more who will be deterred from coming altogether.

In Understanding the travel needs of London’s diverse communities April 2012, TfL recognises that some 11% of Londoners say that they are disabled, representing more than 800,000 residents.

TfL has an Independent Disability Advisory Group (IDAG), who feed in various ideas and concerns. They are not, however, directly involved in management, nor with the many difficult decisions relating to priorities, practicalities, budgets and costs. We understand these, and know that many practical decisions are compromises, but it seems that with ‘mainstreaming’ they are largely be made by well-meaning able-bodied people with only an ‘intellectual’ feel for the implications. The IDAG come up with some excellent thoughts and ideas, but their stellar CVs (see the TfL website) suggest that they may sometimes be too busy to reflect the experience of Mr Joe Public. The IDAG are not responsible for either policy or management, but are a useful thinktank.

One problem with all the TfL information is that it seems to have been put together by people with only a partial understanding of the needs of visitors travelling around in a wheelchair or with other significant mobility challenges. The perceptions and needs of regular travellers, and of ‘locals’, are often different from those of a visitor.
We note that although this guide has been around since 1984, it is only in the last six months that we have been consulted about any aspect of transport in London!

Some good news is that all London’s buses and taxis are now in principle ‘accessible’. The use of the inverted commas is deliberate, as it implies that it is not necessarily a straightforward process (see the earlier discussion, and the later sections on the buses, and on taxi use). Many of the ‘accessible’ underground stations, together with the accessible DLR, are in east London, where there has been a lot of recent development. There are, however, some important ‘accessible’ tube stations in the west, and at several, staff can help chair users get on board using a portable ramp. Tramlink in the southern suburbs is an accessible system, and there are some ‘accessible’ stations on both the Overground and on NR. There is also the accessible Emirates cable car link across the Thames.

TfL have set up a detailed Journey planner on their website where you can input your proposed starting point and destination. This provides quite a lot of information, but we found that:

- it’s quite clunky to use, and in relation to many enquiries provides too much information, which can confuse rather than clarify
- the text and structure had been input and designed (we would guess) by able-bodied people with computer/digital information backgrounds
- you can put in various mobility options, like not using escalators, and/or not using steps,
- it wasn’t (in our experience) entirely clear or comprehensive, although some information is said to be updated to ‘real time’
- it includes a lot of redundant information, making it difficult to identify what is relevant to your journey, particularly for a visitor
- it has the limitations of all computerised systems in that it cannot apply knowledgeable commonsense.

It is clearly easier to use if you’re already familiar with London’s geography and if you’re familiar with using such computerised tools. It is also easier if you simply want to make one journey rather than consider plans and options (which is generally more common). If you’re having a hassle, TfA may be able to help.

In the descriptions which follow, we describe the various transport system/s, and most of our comments about them are based on experience.
TfL Publications
TfL produces a range of maps and guides, all listed on their website - where it is also possible to place orders for delivery to a UK address. These can be found on the website under: Getting around→Transport accessibility→Accessibility guides, and include an/a/the:

- audio tube guide;
- large print tube map in either colour or black & white
- **Step Free Tube Guide** (SFTG) - an invaluable tool
- guide to River Thames boat services
- **Central London Bus Guide (large print)**
- **Getting Around London**, a guide to accessibility, and help with planning your journey using Tube, buses, DLR, taxis and private hire, trains, trams and riverboats
- **There is a specific page on the TfL website entitled Support for people with learning difficulties** which highlights the Travel support card - and there’s a Travel support card User Guide. The card is to help communications with staff, and is mainly for London residents, but may be useful to a visitor who needs specific help in travelling
- **Assisted transport services** offer people who find it difficult to use public transport the freedom to travel around London. The travel support guide will help you decide whether you should apply to use assisted transport and which service suits your mobility and travel requirements, and
- **Getting around with Oyster**, which is the cheapest and generally easiest way to pay for journeys using TfL services

There are also some resources which are only downloadable, namely the:

- Avoiding Stairs Tube Guide, and the Tube Toilet map
- Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers (available also in large print). This document includes station accessibility information for Overground, and shows how TfL is making rail accessible and working to improve the services provided

**Also, of considerable value are the localised bus ‘spider’ maps**, available at: TfL→Getting around→Buses→Bus route maps→Select a borough→Select a location

There are 33 boroughs to choose between, but just looking in the centre, there are some 30 maps covering the City; >50 covering Lambeth and >70 for Westminster. Overall there are several hundred of these maps, all downloadable as pdfs.

We provide examples, and links, on our website to some of the key central ones, covering Parliament Square, Trafalgar Square, St Paul’s, the Tower, and others.

Note that among the various downloadable resources, particularly the SFTG, when downloaded on a conventional desktop with an A4 printer, the output is too small to be useful. The printout is unreadable unless using a magnifying glass!
We suggested that a more user-friendly format is used, as is done for the Avoiding Stairs Tube Guide (which includes escalators).

When ordering these publications ourselves, we had a rather poor experience. Our first attempt at making an order was a complete failure, and none were delivered. We were told that they must have been ‘lost in the post’. A couple of weeks later we tried again - and again nothing happened apart from the e-mail acknowledgement of an order, which included a telephone number for ‘enquiries’ which was a wrong number. We rang ‘customer services’ and eventually the various items were delivered, although they came in three separate packages on different days and from different places.

Rush hours
One thing that we have to warn people about, and that is that during the rush hour peaks, it’s difficult enough for anyone to get on some of the central tube trains and/or the buses. It depends on exactly where you are, but the rush hours last from roughly 07.30 to 09.30 and 16.30 to 18.30, with the deep sections of the tube being even more overcrowded than the sub-surface lines, which have bigger trains. It’s probably not practical for most disabled travellers to battle with the most overcrowded parts of the system. One has to recognise that it’s not easy or even possible, to design facilities that can cope adequately with huge numbers of passengers, all wanting to travel at the same time. Some trains will be packed, with standing passengers filling every crevice.

Similar comments apply to getting to and from major events, and the advice has to be “allow plenty of time, get there early - and just be patient when it comes to getting home”.

Using a car or adapted minibus
For many disabled people, getting around by car or in an adapted vehicle is the most practical way, since much of the public transport system is still difficult to use. Drivers have to face a fairly aggressive driving style and some congestion, especially during rush hours. Having said that, driving in London is certainly more disciplined than it is in other large European cities like Paris or Rome. Your reaction to driving in London will depend very much on your experience as well as on driving skills and temperament. Londoners tend to be positive (some would say aggressive) and to go quite fast. Major junctions are nearly all controlled by traffic lights. Most lanes are now clearly marked, and driving speeds have dropped over the years. This makes it easier for visiting drivers.

Problems include the one-way streets and no-right-turns (and sometimes no-left-turns), which seem to crop up unexpectedly. The secret is not to panic and just press on. Make sure that you’ve got a good map or Satnav. If you have a
navigator, so much the better, and if you have a map you can at least stop and sort yourself out, working out another route if necessary, though it may be difficult to find somewhere to pull in (and you cannot stop anywhere on red routes). There can be difficulties finding somewhere to park, especially for vehicles over 2m high which cannot use the majority of MSCPs and UGCPs. Parking regulations are slightly different in each of the central boroughs, and it’s not always easy to find out just what they are. In the City, in Westminster and in some other areas the normal BB rules don’t apply.

During 2003 the **Central London congestion charge** was introduced, in the area bounded by Park Lane in the west, the Euston Road and Pentonville Road in the north, Commercial Street and Tower Bridge in the east and the New Kent Road, Kennington Lane and Vauxhall Bridge in the south. It is administered by TfL. For details, contact:

**Congestion Charging**, P O Box 4782, Worthing, BN11 9PS

*website:* www.cclondon.com  *Tel:* 0845 900-1234  *Textphone:* 020 7649-9123

Vehicles used by disabled drivers which are exempt from Vehicle Excise Duty are not charged. BB holders need to register with TfL. This costs £10, and you can register up to two vehicles which you use regularly. The registration procedure takes several days, and the application form can be downloaded from the website. Exemption from the charge only applies if the BB holder is in the car. Once registered, the BB holder can ring to change the vehicle details, if travelling with friends in a different car for particular journeys.

If you’re paying the charge, WATCH OUT for unofficial sites who will include extra fees when you pay - and make sure that you only pay through the TfL site. You have to register with them when you pay online, or you can simply ring and just pay for a single day.

It is not quite clear how it will work for a disabled visitor who uses a hire car, but doubtless the hire company will be able to advise. Note the time taken to register for exemption from the charge. For visitors from European countries, their BB should be valid, but the exemption does not apply to disabled visitors from other countries.

**Parking for Blue Badge holders**

The standard entitlements of the BB do not apply in the City of London, the City of Westminster, in Kensington and Chelsea and in parts of Camden. The BB normally entitles you to park on single yellow lines for up to three hours (providing you are not causing obstruction), and in pay and display, pay by phone or parking meter bays for free and without any time limit. In the areas of London mentioned, these entitlements do not apply. You cannot park on yellow lines during their period of application. You must pay to park in pay and display, pay by phone or parking meter bays and adhere to any maximum stay period.
Getting Around

There is detailed information on the TfL website:
TfL → Getting around → Transport accessibility, road users → Blue badge holders
where there is a downloadable guide for BB holders.

There’s a comprehensive map entitled the Blue Badge Parking Guide for London
showing the location of the BB spaces throughout central London. It doesn’t,
however, say how many spaces there are at each location. The map is available
from:
PIE Enterprises Ltd  website: www.thePIEguide.com  Tel: 020 7952-0459
There is good practical advice in the Guide, and if you’re planning to park in
central London we recommend that you get a copy.
One of the ways to use BB spaces to best advantage is to park just after 14.00 in
an area where the restrictions end at 18.00, and therefore you can stay for a good
long time, if your BB gives you 4h of parking. A key practical issue is to find
several BB spaces near each other, since if there is only one (or two) and they
are occupied when you arrive, your chances of finding convenient parking are
greatly reduced. We have made suggestions along these lines in the text in Places
of interest.

Parking at or near your destination isn’t always as difficult as people make out. If
you can plan in advance, it is possible to reserve a BB space at some major sites
and sights in London. Details are given elsewhere in the guide. Bear in mind that
there are only a small number of such spaces.
Parking in the centre is much easier in the evening, and/or at weekends.

Note that BBs are issued throughout the EU, and are valid in the UK. Disabled
visitors from countries outside the EU will find that the entitlements and
concessions do not legally apply. This definitely makes it more difficult for the
non-EU visitor who hires a car or who is a passenger in a friends car.
Disabled visitors from non-EU countries (without a BB) will, hopefully, be
treated with understanding at some private CPs, but the legal position is that
you cannot use public BB spaces unless you have the badge. The situation is
made more difficult because of the level of abuse of the badges, and the need for
enforcement. To justify concessions of all kinds, you may be asked for ‘proof
of disability’, and carrying a copy of an appropriate doctors note or something
similar, may help in some situations. It does not, however, alter the legal position
over parking.

There are two kinds of penalty. Penalty Charge Notices are issued by councils
while Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by the police. If your vehicle is missing
when you return, call the TRACE service (Tel: 0845 206-8602, 24h) and someone
will hopefully be able to tell you what has happened to it.
By taxi or minicab
If you cannot use the public transport system, and do not wish to drive around, taxis and/or minicabs are almost your only option.

Taxis
London taxis/cabs are of unique design, adapted from the hackney (horse-drawn) carriage of Victorian times. Black cabs are licenced by TfL. Taxi drivers all pass a challenging test called ‘The Knowledge’ showing that they know central London’s geography in great detail.
London taxis have a turning circle of just 8m (25ft), so that they can turn round in the narrow streets of the City. One story about this requirement is that it is based on the turning circle needed to get round the roundabout at the entrance to the (prestigious) Savoy hotel!
Taxis operate a meter on which the fare is recorded. Although cabs are relatively expensive as a way of getting around for individual travellers, they can offer great convenience, time saving, and reasonable accessibility. If the fare is shared between several people, the cost per person is proportionately reduced.

Taxis can be hailed (stopped) in the street, but while they are legally obliged to take a fare there are still a few drivers who seem to become temporarily ‘blind’, when they don’t want to stop, possibly because they can’t be bothered with the ramps etc. TfL provides Disability Equality training to all drivers of black cabs and the situation has certainly improved over the years.
All black taxicabs are wheelchair accessible in principle.
The newest cabs have the facility to fold back half the back seat, thus enabling a chair user to sit facing forwards. In practice, this is not something that has ever been offered to us when using a cab. The latest cabs have belts and restraints for a chair user. This, however can be a slightly mixed blessing, because it can take several minutes to fix all the necessary straps, and that may be time when the meter is ticking.
The design of the London cab is evolving, and is likely to change in the coming years, especially if some of the regulations are modified. New models may appear, offering more choice, although it will become even more of a lottery as to which cab drives past and/or is available.
The Mercedes Vito is a new larger cab with 6 rather than 5 seats. It has rear wheel steering to meet the turning circle requirement. The vehicle is 40cm longer and 22cm wider than the TX4, and so it’s slightly easier to fit a wheelchair in and to face forwards. There’s a specialist company providing these: Mercedes London
Taxis website: www.merctaxi.com/Mercedes_London_Taxis/Home.html Tel: 020 7107-1646
We would simply comment here that the design has had a somewhat mixed reception within the black cab community.
The manufacturer of the conventional cab recently went into administration, but they have been taken over by a Chinese company, with the intention of continuing its manufacture and maintenance. There are several rival designs, some of which provide better accommodation for disabled passengers. They are used in other English cities, but do not meet London’s turning circle specification.

The conventional black cab can be particularly difficult for people with arthritis, as the main seat is some distance back, away from the door, and you have to bend down to get in. One American who wrote to us, said that it was undignified for an elderly gentleman to have to crawl on his knees to get to the seat, as he couldn’t easily bend. The newer vehicles have a fold-out seat on a hinge, which means that it can be unfolded, and will swing right outside the cab over the pavement. You can then sit down outside, and swing in while sitting on the seat. This may well help some, but cab drivers aren’t necessarily quick to spot when you might need this facility. You also travel looking backwards, which doesn’t suit everyone.

If you want to book a cab to go to the theatre, a museum or to the shops, there are three main companies. All offer the possibility of setting up an account for regular customers. They are:

**Computer Cab**

*Website:* www.computercab.co.uk
*Cash customers* Tel: 020 7908-0207  *Credit card customers* Tel: 020 7432-1432
*Taxicard holders* Tel: 020 7763-5001

**Dial-a-Cab**

Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service, Dial-a-Cab House, 39-47 East Road, N1 6AH
*Website:* www.dialacab.co.uk  *Tel:* 020 7251-0581
*Cash customers* Tel: 020 7253-5000  *Credit card customers* Tel: 020 7426-3420

With a fleet of over 2,500 taxis, Dial-a-Cab are the largest supplier of licensed taxis in Central London

**Radio Taxicabs**

*Website:* www.radiotaxis.co.uk
*Cash or credit card customers* Tel: 020 7272-0272

There are a few details to be aware of. If you order a cab by phone, there will be an initial charge to enable it to reach you. If you’re unlucky, the phone line to the cab company will be busy. One of us recently spent thirty minutes hanging on to the phone to a cab company being assured that ‘we will answer as quickly as possible’ (true) and that ‘we’ll be with you very soon’ (a downright lie). The use of mobile phones can make all this easier, and if there are two or three people in the party, you can each phone a different company, and simply use the first call to get through. If it’s raining, it’ll be much much longer before you’ll be able to get a cab, and you may have to be very patient and/or join the queue at a cab rank.
There’s also a hassle, because even a ‘booked’ cab may not turn up. It is not guaranteed. One of our surveyors booked a ComCab to pick him up after a concert at the Barbican. None came and he was told that “no cab was available”. As a result, he finished up pushing all the way to Waterloo.

As a casual user, there are limits to pre-booking. Houses, hotels and business premises are generally OK as a pick-up point, and restaurants are pretty much acceptable. When it comes to museums, theatres, cinemas and other places where you may need a cab, you will have to negotiate carefully. From the cab companies viewpoint, it is infuriating if you book a vehicle which isn’t necessarily right outside the theatre door when you come out, and you take the nearest empty cab instead - ignoring the one you’ve booked. The different companies have slightly different approaches to all this. You are more likely to be able to pre-book if you pay by credit card, and you may well get through more quickly to an operator.

There’s a useful service provided by **Black Taxi Tours of London**

- **website:** www.blacktaxitours.co.uk  
- **Tel:** 020 7935-9363  
- **e-mail:** info@blacktaxitours.co.uk who offer a two-hour tour for £130-140 (2012 prices). One great advantage of such a tour is that you can get into the squares, mews and back streets where no tour bus would be able to take you.

**Minicabs**

Minicabs are conventional cars or small people carriers, which are generally not wheelchair accessible (but see Addison Lee below). Because you can transfer sideways into a car seat, they will be easier for some people to use than a black taxi. They can only be booked at a minicab office, by phone or on the internet. You cannot stop or book one on the street. Minicabs have offered a variable level of service in the past. There is now a proper licensing system, making standards much more uniform. The TfL website has a searchable database of licensed minicab operators.

You need to check that the driver knows your destination before getting in, and that there is an agreed fare. People should normally sit in the back, and it’s sensible to carry a mobile phone.

There are, unfortunately, unlicensed drivers around, operating illegally. Some may hang around outside stations or nightclubs. You are strongly advised NOT to use unlicensed minicabs, and ONLY to book through a licensed operator.

**Addison Lee**

- **35 William Road, NW1 3ER  
  Tel:** 020 7387-8888  
- **website:** www.addisonlee.com

Addison Lee is the largest minicab company in London, and you can book a cab either online or on the phone. At the time of writing, they don’t mention on their website that they have **four accessible vehicles**, and are shortly to add to that number. Both Parcels and Private jets are mentioned, but not their wheelchair
GETTING AROUND

accessible minicabs! You can book one by ringing up, and may find that it is cheaper than using a conventional taxi for some journeys. It may also be more comfortable, as access is via a ramp at the back, rather than from the side.

Buses
A very constructive change in recent times, is that all London’s buses, except for a tiny number on two heritage routes, are now in principle wheelchair accessible. They also ‘kneel down’ to make the step smaller when getting on and off, which is a very helpful feature for elderly people and/or disabled walkers. All buses have an extending ramp to facilitate a wheelchair user getting on board and all have a designated wheelchair space.

This reflects enormous progress.

A new bus design has been introduced which provides for an open platform at the back where people can jump on and off, and has a conductor on board, as well as being wheelchair ‘accessible’ like the others, see: TfL → Corporate → Projects and schemes → New Bus for London

All buses now have automatic voice announcements and visual information displays, telling you where the bus is eventually going, and the name of the next stop. The display is only visible from some seats.

Having said that, there’s still some way to go before the system is really user-friendly, and we need to point out that:

• visitors to a city rarely use buses to get around, because the routeing is difficult to work out (see the picture/diagram for route 46, which is not untypical). The Underground lines are generally much easier to understand, and even Londoners who have lived in the city for decades, often do not know where the buses go, whereas they readily understand the tube

• for a wheelchair user, the number of different designs and layouts used inside the bus makes getting on and reversing against the vertical panel/support quite challenging

• the bus stop names are often of limited help to a visitor

• only relatively few mobility scooters have been approved for travelling on buses, see: www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/tfl-guide-to-approved-mobility-scooters.pdf

• buses can and do, accelerate quickly, brake and swerve (for example around mini-roundabouts and sharp corners), and this can be a challenge for both chair users and disabled walkers

• drivers often do not allow enough time for (generally older) disabled walkers to sit down before the bus pulls away

• in spite of improved driver training, not all drivers are equally helpful or knowledgeable. It is difficult for them sometimes, as they are on their own in a protected, boxed-in, somewhat isolated area, and are out of real contact with the human interactions among the passengers.
The first point we make in this list is very poorly understood. Our own experience of travelling widely is that in a ‘strange’/new city, we would rarely try to use buses to get around. We would nearly always use the metro system (if there is one) or taxis - or even walk or wheel.

**Bus route No 46**

Bus No 46 does NOT go via a remotely direct route to get from Lancaster Gate on the Bayswater Road to Holborn and Farringdon Street, which would take it along Oxford Street and High Holborn. Instead it goes miles to the north via Hampstead! Many of London’s bus routes twist and turn in similar and (to the visitor) unforeseeable ways, and while there are good reasons for this, it doesn’t make them easy to use.

There’s a useful map of key central routes at: www.londonmet.ac.uk/fms/MRSite/acad/lgri/summer-school/central_bus_map.pdf

We will mention again the bus ‘spider’ maps referred to under TfL publications. If they were more widely used, they would provide invaluable information. You will find a selection on our website.

Our experience some ten years ago was that only around 50% of the bus journeys...
attempted by our chair users on ‘accessible’ buses were actually successful. In 2011 this proportion had increased to some 65-70%, based on about fifty fairly random journeys by a chair user with an able-bodied friend. The journeys were mainly in central London, and the percentage would almost certainly be a bit lower for a solo wheelchair user.

The reasons why we didn’t get on the bus were several. They included when:

• the bus couldn’t get in the right position alongside the pavement;
• the ramp didn’t work;
• the driver ‘couldn’t be bothered’; and,
• the space was already occupied by baby buggies, some loaded with shopping underneath - where it would have been very difficult (not to say slightly ‘inhuman’) to insist on priority for a chair user, thus effectively forcing one or more mums and babies off the bus.

Visitors do use the special sightseeing buses where the routes used are more easily understood. They are particularly attractive if you can climb up to the open deck on top. The view available to the passengers on the lower deck is much more restricted, and someone using the wheelchair space is on that deck and is facing backwards.

Some are circular hop-on hop-off routes:

• **The Big Bus Company** offers two main routes, with a pick-up link to St Pancras, see www.bigbustours.com/eng/london

• **The Original London Sightseeing Tour** highlights the accessibility of its hop-on hop-off tour options. They offer three routes, each lasting less than 2 hours from The Original London Visitor Centre, 17-19 Cockspur Street, Trafalgar Square SW1Y 5BL. Tel: 020 7389-5040
  
  website: www.theoriginaltour.com  e-mail: info@theoriginaltour.com

  Note that there’s an excellent itinerary on the website [London for free](http://www.londonforfree.net/outdoors/bustour/bustour.shtml) which sets out an interesting route which you can follow using conventional buses, and you will only need to get a TFL Oyster card. A full day’s travelling by bus currently costs less than £5.

**The underground (tube)**

Because the system is old, and with deep tunnels in many places, there are steps and escalators at the majority of stations.

The London Underground has come a long way since the original proposal in 1845 of ‘putting trains in drains’ to reduce road congestion. This was extraordinary, as the first passenger steam service had only started in 1830, and it seems that pollution in the form of dirt and noise wasn’t considered to be much of a barrier in those far off days!

The first railways were just sub-surface (as are some lines now). Later in the early 1900s, tunnelling techniques improved, and together with the possibility of using electric traction, the deeper lines became possible.
The current system consists of ten tube lines, six of which have deep sections in central London, and four of which run sub-surface, going through or around the centre. The deep tubes use smaller carriages than the sub-surface lines.

The lines are based on the routes followed by a range of privately owned companies dating from Victorian times. Some of the companies combined with others, or sold the infrastructure to someone else.

This complex history results in some routes where the station platforms are shared between the smaller deep tube trains and the larger, higher sub-surface carriages. Thus (for example) at Acton Town and Hammersmith, there is a step down into the Piccadilly line trains and a large step up into the District line carriages from the shared platform.

Developments have included extensions to the Central line, the opening of the Victoria line and, for the Millennium, the building of the Jubilee line extension (JLE).

The JLE is of particular importance, since it is the only truly accessible part of the Underground, running between Westminster and Stratford. There are lifts at each station, and the gap from the platform to the train is less than 8.5cm and the step is less than 5cm. Thus most electric chair users could/would be able to cope with getting on and off.

Recently, some stations have had ‘humps’ installed, while others have portable ramps available, to facilitate people in chairs getting on and off.

General information

If you need help, ask one of the staff. All TfL staff have regular training on how to assist disabled passengers. If necessary, they will help you find a seat. They will then, hopefully, call ahead to your destination or interchange stations, and arrange for a member of staff to meet and assist you there too.

There are now more than 250 wide-aisle automatic ticket gates at the stations, so you don’t have to try to squeeze through the standard barriers if that’s a problem.

NOTE THAT if you arrive at a step-free station, and a lift is broken, talk to the staff about how best to get to your destination. If there is a single accessible bus journey from the next step-free station, then you will be advised to take that route. If there is not, TfL are obliged to order you a taxi, at their expense. This also applies to certain other service interruptions.

All trains have clearly marked priority seating for older or disabled passengers next to doors.

Pregnant women can wear a ‘Baby on board’ badge to let other passengers know they may need a seat. Badges are available from TfL Customer Service Tel: 0343 222-1234 or e-mail: babyonboard@tfl.gov.uk.

Most trains have automatic voice announcements and visual information displays, telling you where the train is going, and the name of the next stop.

Note that Assistance Dogs which have been specifically trained in how to use escalators (and carry the appropriate identification) are now able to use escalators.
Most stations have a vertical step into the train which may be as high as 12 inches (300mm). There may also be a gap between the train and the platform, and at a few stations the platform is curved, resulting in a variable size gap between the train doors and the platform edge.

**Underground stations with step-free access from pavement to platform**

The best information source will be the latest edition of the TfL *Step Free Tube Guide* (SFTG), which is a comprehensive map and description of both the ‘accessible’ and accessible stations. The description is, of necessity, highly abbreviated, and the alphabetical listing makes it quite difficult to use when trying to work out the best way to go, because the map and descriptions are on the opposite sides of a huge sheet of folded paper measuring 40x130cm.

If you’re going to use the SFTG, we suggest that you order at least two copies, as the printed information is on both sides. With two of them (and a big flat surface to lay them out on) it’s easier to get to the information you need.

It is such an important presentation of data that it would be helpful if it were available in more than one form, for example:

- with an ‘along the line’ listing rather than it just being alphabetical; and,
- in booklet form for the station descriptions rather than on the back of the map in twelve double-folded segments.

In addition, there are some interchange stations where long distances up to 500m are involved in changing trains, and at some the routes to be taken are not well signed. We include a brief list of some those with the biggest distances.

Note that TfL will only post copies to a UK address.

The original step-free map was published in the 1996 edition of *Access in London*. In 2002, SCOPE enhanced its presentation for London Transport, and it is now part of the standard information available from TfL. It is continually being edited, but (in our view) the latest version has become over-complicated, particularly for a first-time visitor.

The one used during the Olympics incorporated the *Overground* lines (which has very few links to ‘accessible’ tube stations) and it showed the places where ramps can be provided.

The editors seem to have forgotten that one of the beauties of Harry Beck’s iconic Underground map developed in the 1930s, was/is its essential simplicity.

We have included a map showing the ‘accessible’ stations in the centre, including information about whether the ‘accessibility’ is dependent on a portable ramp, or a platform hump. They are all step-free from pavement to platform.

It is in this context that we hope that our parallel presentation of the 2012/13 data on a line-by-line basis, with some commentary, may help people use both the iconic Underground map and the SFTG version more easily.

We have not attempted here to present one vital piece of information about the ‘accessible’ stations, and that is “How do you get from street to platform ?”. You
may be dependent on a single lift, or possibly on as many as three sequential lifts, as at Kings Cross/St Pancras, where all three have to be working. You may be dependent on a platform stairlift, and therefore on staff assistance. There may be ramped access to the platform, but you may depend on staff help to get an access gate opened.

We intend to put the basic information (as it is here) on our website, and to enhance it with a description of how to get from street to platform for all the ‘accessible’ stations. We will also include updated information during 2014/15, and as we have said elsewhere, if you want a printed copy of this, please let us know.

We are including only the ‘accessible’ stations where there is access in both directions, and are using the same descriptive notation that TfL uses for defining how big the step is for getting on or off the train, and for how big the horizontal gap is.

The size of the step up/down to the train car is:
- **(green circle)** 0-5cm (0-2in)
- **(amber circle)** 5-12cm (2-4.7in)
- **(red circle)** Over 12cm (4.7in)

The horizontal gap to get in/out of the train car is:
- **A** 0-8.5cm (0-3.3in)
- **B** 8.5-18cm (3.3-7in)
- **C** Over 18cm (7in)

Thus the ideal requirement for disabled travellers, and particularly for chair users and for mums with buggies, is for stations with **(green A)**.

Note that as this book is being written, a new category of step-free transfer from platform to train and vice versa is being introduced. This involves the provision of platform ‘humps’ which raise the platform height by a few cm along the length of a single car/carriage, making the transfer **(green A)** to and from that car.

We are using a different colour in the text to distinguish the information about humps where it is integrated into the line-by-line commentary, as it is quite complicated.

Humps are a very neat and relatively inexpensive solution to the problem caused by the difference of height between the platform and the train carriage is the provision of raised section along part of the platform length with a ramp at each end. It only works where there is a step up from the platform into the train.

It is essential to have a consistent and well explained policy relating to where these humps are provided, and about which section of the platform length is used. What has happened so far (by 2012/13) is a bit of a mixture!

The **(green A)** criteria are ONLY to be found at the DLR stations (described separately), and on the **JLE**.

The **(green A)** classification awarded on the current TfL map to the four Victoria line stations, and elsewhere on the maps in the trains themselves, because
there are platform humps. We regret this ‘award’, and think that in spite of any complexity, there should be a clear distinction between where there is a platform hump and where the whole platform is (green A).

There are only a tiny number of ‘accessible’ stations in and near the centre. From the Bank and Tower Gateway, the DLR lines go to Canary Wharf, Greenwich, Lewisham, Beckton, Woolwich Arsenal, Beckton and Stratford. ALL the DLR stations are classified as (green A).

The JLE which is also classified as (green A) runs from Stratford and West Ham in the east, past the O2/Dome at North Greenwich, through Canary Wharf and via London Bridge and Waterloo, to Westminster. The Jubilee line then goes to Green Park and Kings Cross/St Pancras. Blackfriars is ‘accessible’.

These central stations do provide immensely useful opportunities for visitors, particularly if used in conjunction with buses to go short distances from (for example) Westminster, Green Park, or Waterloo.

**Accessible stations in central London 2012**

- Connection with National Rail
- Connection with River boats
- Platform hump covering only 1 or 2 cars
- A portable ramp is available to facilitate transfer
While in general the bus route system is challenging for most people (both visitors and suburban residents) it is often possible to use just one route with relative ease.

Because the linkages and caveats are so complex, we suggest that you concentrate on the JLE stations, on the links with the DLR, and just a few other west London links like those on the Piccadilly line. If you can manage the big steps, the District line in from Richmond and Wimbledon in the west, and from Upminster in the east can be particularly useful, especially, now, with the provision of ramps at a good number of the outer stations. The only central one with ramps is Westminster.

One thing we discovered when looking into this and when visiting stations, is that the trains on different lines have different numbers of cars/carriages. On the Piccadilly and Northern lines there are 6, on the Bakerloo and Jubilee there are 7, while on the Central, Victoria and Metropolitan lines there are 8. The new trains on the H&C, Circle and District lines will have 7 cars.
This affects where it is sensible to put a hump, and how long it needs to be.

The location of platform humps:

Metropolitan (8 cars, with the new lower trains) - cars 4 and 5, but the humps cover only the 3rd door of car 4, and the 1st door of car 5
Northern (6 cars) - car 5 northbound, car 2 southbound, for both pairs of doors
Piccadilly (6 cars) - car 5 eastbound, car 2 westbound, for both pairs of doors
Victoria (8 cars) - cars 4 and 5 in each case, for both pairs of centre doors.

New trains
A major change that is underway is the introduction of new trains on the sub-surface lines which makes the step into the cars much smaller, although there’s a slightly variable horizontal gap. The new trains also include through walkways between carriages, and for the first time on the tube, air conditioning.
In 2013, all the new Metropolitan line trains are in service. Those on the H&C and Circle lines are being introduced progressively, and the process will be complete by the end of 2014.
The District line has a large fleet of 80 trains, and the new rolling stock will be introduced gradually, to be completed in 2016.

Line by line listings. A snapshot from 2012/13
The notation (colour A, B or C), duplicates the information in the circles on the SFTG, so (green A) is the best, and means virtually step-free transfer from platform to carriage.
[Name] indicates the other lines with which there is a step-free interchange.
Humps are listed, which provide (green A) transfer from train car to platform
only from a particular car/cars. Stations where portable ramps are available are shown by R.

**Bakerloo**
The line was opened in 1906 and runs from central London northwards. It has 25 stations, 15 of which are deep underground. The trains have 7 cars.

_It has only three ‘accessible’ stations_, all of which link with the _Overground_.

‘Accessible’ stations

- Harrow & Wealdstone (red A) [NR] [Overground]
- Wembley Central (red B) [Overground]
- Willesden Junction (red B) [Overground]

There are useful step-free platform to platform transfers possible at Baker Street (to and from the Jubilee line) and at Oxford Circus (to and from the Victoria line).

With _Crossrail_, Paddington will become ‘accessible’.

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**Central**
The Central line has been extended in both directions. Its original route in the late 1890s was from Shepherds Bush to Liverpool Street, and the line was among the first to use electric locomotives. Of the 49 stations, 20 are deep underground. The trains have 8 cars.

_There are only 5 ‘accessible’ stations, four of them way out in the northeast suburbs (towards Epping). The fifth is the Stratford interchange._

‘Accessible’ stations

- Epping (green C) R with 450m to get from platform to platform. See the SFTG.
- Woodford (amber B)
- Roding Valley (red C) with 520m to get from platform to platform. See the SFTG.
- Hainault (amber C) R
- Stratford (red C) R [DLR] [JLE][NR] A very large interchange station. Four more stations in the Epping/Woodford area are ‘accessible’ in one direction only.

At Mile End (with R) and Ealing Broadway, useful line to line interchange is possible.

There will be additional ‘accessible’ stations when _Crossrail_ opens in 2018, including Tottenham Court Road, Bond Street and Ealing Broadway.

Greenford station is due to have an inclined lift by 2015.
Circle
This sub-surface line is now a loop running from Edgware Road round the ‘old’ Circle, and past Edgware Road to Hammersmith. There are 36 stations. Most of the route, and all of the stations, are shared by the District, H&C and/or Metropolitan lines.

There are just 4 stations which are ‘accessible’, but these provide key central links.

ALL the stations have really big steps to get up into the train carriage. This will change with the introduction of new 7 car trains in 2013-14.

‘Accessible’ stations
Westminster (red C) R [JLE]
Blackfriars (red A) [NR]
Kings Cross/St Pancras R (red A) [Northern] [Piccadilly] [Victoria] [NR]

Some interchanges involve >500m.

Hammersmith (red A) R [District] [Piccadilly] It is 520m between the two stations. See the SFTG.

Liverpool Street (red A) and Euston Square (red A) are ‘accessible’ in one direction only.

District
This sub-surface line runs through the central area in shallow cut-and-cover tunnels. It has branches to Ealing, Richmond and Wimbledon in the south and west, and then a line going a long way east, to Upminster. It has some 60 stations.

It provides some key ‘accessible’ linkages, and several stations with portable ramps.

There are important interchanges at Richmond, Wimbledon, Earls Court, Westminster, Blackfriars and West Ham.

It has 18 ‘accessible’ stations, but ALL have a big step to get up into the train carriage. This will change as new lower trains are introduced in 2014-16.

‘Accessible’ stations
Acton Town (red B) [Piccadilly]
Richmond (red A) R [Overground] [NR]
Kew Gardens (red A) R and note the need to find the correct station entrance
Hammersmith [red A] [Circle] [H&C] [Piccadilly] with a bus station immediately above, but some 500m to the H&C station.
Wimbledon (red A) R [NR] [Tramlink]
Southfields (red A) R
Fulham Broadway (red A) R
Kensington Olympia (red A) [Overground] open part time only.
Earls Court (red B) R [Piccadilly]
Westminster (red C) R [JLE] [river boats]
Blackfriars (red A) [NR]
West Ham (red A) R [DLR] [JLE]
East Ham (red A) R
Barking (red A) [NR]
Upney (red A) R
Dagenham Heathway (red A)
Elm Park (red A)
Upminster (red A) [NR]

Ealing Broadway [line interchange with the Central and NR] will hopefully become an ‘accessible’ station after the opening of Crossrail in 2018.

Hammersmith & City (H&C)
A sub-surface line which includes the oldest part of the Underground system, dating back to the 1860s when the trains had steam locomotives.
ALL the stations have a big step to get up into the train carriage. This will change as new lower 7 car trains are introduced in 2013-14.
‘Accessible’ stations
Hammersmith (red A) R [District] [Piccadilly] with 520m and a road crossing between the stations.
Kings Cross/St Pancras (red A) R [Northern] [Piccadilly] [Victoria] is a big station.
West Ham (red A) R [DLR]
East Ham (red A) R
Barking (red A) [Overground] [NR]

Liverpool Street (red A) and Euston Square (red A) are ‘accessible’ in one direction only.
Jubilee (including the JLE)
From 1979 until 1999 the line ran from Stanmore to Charing Cross. Then the Jubilee Line Extension (JLE) was opened for the Millennium. **This is the only section of the tube providing step-free gap-free access from platform to car along the whole of the train.** It runs from Stratford to Westminster providing an enormous boost to accessibility. The line has 27 stations, 16 of which are listed below. Each train has 7 cars.

Accessible and ‘accessible’ stations
ALL the stations from Stratford to Westminster are accessible **(green A)**, and they are:
- **Stratford** [Central] [DLR] [JLE/Jubilee] [NR]
- **West Ham** [District] [DLR]
- **Canning Town**
- **North Greenwich (for the O2/Dome)**,
- **Canary Wharf** [DLR 300m]
- **Canada Water** [Overground]
- **Bermondsey**
- **London Bridge** [Northern with a 500m long interchange at street level] [NR]
- **Southwark**
- **Waterloo** [NR]
- **Westminster** [Circle] [District]

**Green Park** [Piccadilly] [Victoria] **towards Stanmore, there’s a hump covering only half of the 5th and 6th cars, ie one set of double doors in each car. Towards Stratford, the hump covers the 2nd car and the front half of the 3rd**

**Kilburn** **(red A)** and the step is up to get off the train.

**Wembley Park** for Wembley Stadium **(green B)** [Metropolitan]. The track and platform aren’t exactly parallel, so the size of the step up varies, depending on which car you are in. Towards Stanmore the step is minimal (and <5cm) from the rear car, while towards Stratford you take the front car for the same reason

**Kingsbury** **(green A)**

**Stanmore** **(red B)** and there’s a long ramp up to the CP and street.

Note that both Baker Street and Finchley Road have step-free interchanges between platforms for trains in the same direction and **humps are planned at Baker Street.**
GETTING AROUND

Metropolitan
The line is sub-surface in the centre, and goes a long way out in the northwest. It currently runs from Aldgate to Amersham, with branches to Uxbridge, Watford and Chesham. It has 34 stations, 9 of which are ‘accessible’. It includes the route of the old Metropolitan Railway between Paddington and Farringdon which was the first underground railway in the world, opened in 1863.

It is now operated with new lower trains with 8 cars and ‘through’ carriages with the additional advantage of air conditioning.

**All the ‘accessible’ stations used to have a big step to get up into the train carriage, but this has been substantially reduced with the new trains.**

‘Accessible’ stations

Chesham **(green C)**
Chalfont & Latimer **(green A) [NR]**
Chorleywood **(green A) [NR]**
Pinner **(green A)**
Uxbridge **(red A) [Piccadilly]**
Hillingdon **(red B) [Piccadilly]**
Wembley Park **(green A) [Jubilee]**
Kings Cross/St Pancras **(green A) [Circle] [H&C] [Northern] [Piccadilly] [Victoria]**
Farringdon **(green C) [NR including Thameslink]**

Amersham **(green A)** and Rickmansworth **(green C)** are ‘accessible’ in one direction only, as are Ruislip **(red B) [Piccadilly]**, Euston Square **(green A)** and Liverpool Street **(green A)**. Farringdon will become a big interchange when Crossrail is opened.
Northern
The line has quite a complicated history, and the current arrangement with
two northern branches, two central branches and the southern ‘tail’, reflects its
development from three separate companies that were combined in the 1920s and 30s. The trains have 7 cars.
There are 50 stations on the line, 36 of them are deep underground. 10 are
‘accessible’.
The branch through the West End, including Leicester Square has no
‘accessible’ stations, while the City branch has only London Bridge and Kings
Cross/St Pancras.
‘Accessible’ stations
Morden (red A) R
London Bridge has humps for the 2nd car southbound and the 5th car
northbound [JLE] [NR]
Kings Cross/St Pancras has humps for the 2nd car southbound and the
5th car northbound [Circle] [Piccadilly] [Victoria] [NR] [Eurostar]
Golders Green (red B) and humps are planned
Hendon Central has humps for the 2nd car southbound and the 5th car
northbound
Edgware all (red A) has humps for the 2nd car southbound and the 5th
car on arrival BUT on two of the platforms they are slightly misplaced
covering only one pair of double doors in the car
Finchley Central (red A) R
West Finchley (green B)
Woodside Park (red B) and humps are planned
High Barnet (red A) and humps are planned

Both Stockwell and Euston have no links to the surface but useful step-free
links with the Victoria line, going in the same direction. **Euston has humps for the 2nd car southbound and the 5th car northbound. Humps are planned for both Stockwell and Kennington.**
Elephant & Castle and Borough, on the City branch, are ‘accessible’ in one
direction only.
GETTING AROUND

Piccadilly
The line dates back to the early 1900s, but its main developments, westwards to Hounslow and northwards to Cockfosters, took place in the 1930s. It has 53 stations, of which 25 are deep underground. The trains have 6 cars. There are two branches in the west, including one to Heathrow Airport. It passes eastwards through the centre and then turns north. It has 11 ‘accessible’ stations, and some key interchanges at Hammersmith, Earls Court, Green Park and Kings Cross/St Pancras.

‘Accessible’ stations
Heathrow Terminal 5 (green B) along the whole length of the platform
Heathrow Terminals 1/2/3 and 4 have humps for the 2nd and 5th cars. The 2nd for getting off the train, and the 5th for getting on. We are told that these will shortly be properly signed.
Hounslow West has a hump for the 2nd car (just) westwards and for the 5th car east. To reach the road level above, there’s a staff operated platform stairlift.
Hounslow East (amber A)
Uxbridge (red B)
Hillingdon (red B)
Sudbury Town (red B)
Acton Town (red C) [District] and the car is below the platform level
Hammersmith (red B) [Circle] [District] [H&C] and the car is below the platform level. There’s a bus station immediately above. It’s 520m to the H&C station.
Earls Court Hump for the 2nd car westwards and the 5th car east [District]
Green Park Hump for the 2nd car west, and the 5th car east [Jubilee] [Victoria]
Kings Cross/St Pancras Hump for the 2nd car west and for the 5th car east/north
Caledonian Road (red A) R and a hump is planned
Oakwood Hump for the 2nd car west and for the 5th car north

At Finsbury Park there is a step-free interchange with the Victoria line for trains in the same direction with a hump for the 2nd car west and the 5th car north.
The line opened towards the end of the 1960s to make links between NR stations. Several existing underground stations were rearranged to allow for cross-platform interchange with the new line. Particularly significant is the direct same-level interchange with the Bakerloo line at Oxford Circus. There are 16 stations, only 4 of which are ‘accessible’, although the one at Victoria is due to become ‘accessible’ in 2018. The trains have 8 cars. Platform humps have been installed on all the stations except Pimlico, ALL covering the two middle cars (the 4th and 5th) making it the same in each direction.

‘Accessible’ stations
- **Brixton** has a platform hump covering the 4th and 5th cars
- **Green Park** has a platform hump covering the 4th and 5th cars
- **Kings Cross/St Pancras** has a platform hump covering the 4th and 5th cars
- **Tottenham Hale** has a platform hump covering the 4th and 5th cars

At Stockwell there is an interchange with Northern line trains going in the same direction and at Euston (with the City branch).

There are also useful step-free platform to platform interchanges at Oxford Circus, Euston Square and Finsbury Park.

**Big interchange stations**
A number of interchange stations are very large, often involving transfer distances of more than 500m and routes that are not necessarily well signed. These include:
- virtually all the links with main line train stations, and at the Heathrow terminals
- Canary Wharf (DLR/JLE)
- Green Park (Jubilee/Piccadilly)
- Kings Cross/St Pancras (with links between six underground lines)
- Hammersmith (District and Piccadilly/Circle and H&C)
- London Bridge (JLE/Northern)
- Stratford

When Crossrail has been completed, it is anticipated that this list will be added:
- Bond Street
- Farringdon/Barbican
- Liverpool Street/Moorgate
- Tottenham Court Road
- Whitechapel
### Central tube stations due to be made ‘accessible’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Further information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Vauxhall [Victoria]</td>
<td>With lift access to the NR station above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whitechapel [District &amp; Metropolitan, Overground]</td>
<td>a Crossrail station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tower Hill [Circle &amp; District]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Bond Street [Central &amp; Jubilee]</td>
<td>a Crossrail station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tottenham Court Road [Central &amp; Northern]</td>
<td>a Crossrail station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/9</td>
<td>Victoria [Victoria]</td>
<td>part of Crossrail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paddington [Bakerloo]</td>
<td>part of Crossrail via Farringdon station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barbican [District, H&amp;C &amp; Metropolitan]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other tube and Overground stations that are due to become ‘accessible’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Further information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Denmark Hill</td>
<td>Overground (completed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Brockley and Honor Oak Park</td>
<td>Overground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Blackhorse Road and Hampstead Heath, Kensal Rise and New Cross Gate Queues Road, Peckham, South Tottenham and West Hampstead</td>
<td>Overground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greenford [Central]</td>
<td>Using an inclined lift alongside the escalators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Finsbury Park [Piccadilly &amp; Victoria]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bromley-by-Bow [Central &amp; Metropolitan]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Watford Junction and associated stations</td>
<td>via the Croxley Rail Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Ealing Broadway [Central &amp; District]</td>
<td>a Crossrail station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/21</td>
<td>Nine Elms and Battersea</td>
<td>a proposed Northern line extension</td>
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Information taken from Your accessible transport network  TfL December 2012
Getting a Round

London Crossrail 2018-20

The ten completely new stations from Paddington to Abbey Wood will all be fully accessible, and step-free from street to train.

- Step-free access from platform to street (See text)
- Step-free access in one direction only
- Connection with National Rail
- Connection with Underground
- Surface line
- Tunnel

Looking into the future
Crossrail

London’s biggest infrastructure project is the development of Crossrail. This will link west and east London and make several more central stations ‘accessible’ with new links to and from various underground lines.

In particular it will have a link to Heathrow, and improve access into the centre from both Acton and Ealing in the west. In the east there will be two lines, both coming in to Whitechapel. One goes to Canary Wharf and Woolwich, and the other to Stratford, Ilford, Romford and Shenfield.

Various key stations will be completely rebuilt, such as those at Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road, and all the interchange lines there will become ‘accessible’.

One major limitation is that at all stations from Maidenhead to Acton, and for those from Stratford to Harold Wood and Shenfield are only ‘accessible’, since to get from platform to train a ramp is needed to bypass the substantial step involved. We have it on good authority that it isn’t possible to re-engineer the platforms, or even to provide platform humps (as on the tube), because of the mixed railway rolling stock using the lines including freight trains, which have different shapes, sizes and specifications.

The ten new stations, most of them in the tunnels, from Paddington through to Whitechapel and then on to Abbey Wood, as well as the station at Heathrow, will all be fully accessible from pavement to train. Ramps should not be needed for getting on and off, as the platform will be at the same height as the train carriage. No other railway rolling stock will use these stations.

The tube stations which are linked, will nearly all have ‘accessible’ step-free routes to and from Crossrail and to the Underground platforms, as shown, including Ealing Broadway, Paddington (but excluding the District line), Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon, Liverpool Street (but excluding the Central line), Whitechapel, Stratford, Canary Wharf and Custom House. At some of these stations, long distances of >500m may be involved in making transfers. Some Underground platforms may have humps to facilitate transfer to and from the train carriage.

The TfL programme for making more tube and Overground stations ‘accessible’ is summarised in the Table on an earlier page.
Docklands Light Railway (DLR)

website: www.dlr.co.uk or use the TfL site

The DLR and Tramlink are London’s only fully accessible transport systems.
The DLR links Lewisham and Greenwich, to Stratford, Tower Gateway or to the Bank. An extension goes on the north side of the docks past the ExCel Centre to Beckton, which is some 10km east from the centre. Another branch goes on the south side of the docks via London City Airport and then across the river to Woolwich Arsenal. The extent of the DLR is shown on the map, and it includes some important destinations. Links to other parts of the TfL system are quite limited and the key ones are shown on the map.

All the stations have step-free access with a lift or ramp from street to platform AND there is only a tiny step into the carriage. The cars have special spaces for a chair user, and most electric chair users would be able to manage getting on and off.

The railway has been built with some quite tight curves, and with some steepish gradients. As a result, the ride can be a bit rough on certain sections. Our advice is simply to ‘hang on tight’ and you’ll be OK, but it’s best to be prepared for a few jerks and turns!

NOTE THAT many of the DLR stations are unstaffed, and the trains have no driver. They do, however have a ‘train captain’ who can provide advice and assistance. After pressing the ‘Help’ button on the platform, you may have to wait a bit for any assistance.

During the early years of operation, there were some problems with the serviceability of the lifts, but the situation seems to have improved considerably. As the line runs at a high level over much of its length, the lifts are essential as you might otherwise have to manage anything up to 60 or 80 steps.

If you want to make enquiries about the serviceability of lifts at DLR stations you want to use on a particular day, ring 020 7363-9700 which is DLR customer service. Use option 4 to speak to a person. They can check with the control room about whether the lifts are working at particular stations. Out of office hours, the number to ring is 0843 222-1234.

If you are unlucky enough to encounter a non-operational lift, from most DLR stations the trick is to go on to the next station, and use the lifts there to come back to the station where you want to get off, using the ‘other’ lift from the opposite platform. Unfortunately this doesn’t work where there is a central island platform, and only the one (non-functional) lift!
GETTING AROUND

London Overground

- Watford Junction
- Harrow & Wealdstone
- Gospel Oak
- Camden Road
- Upper Holloway
- Caledonian Rd & Barnsbury
- Highbury & Islington
- Shoreditch High St
- Hackney Wick
- West Brompton
- Imperial Wharf
- Clapham Junction
- New Cross
- Forest Hill
- Crystal Palace
- Sydenham
- Anerley
- West Croydon
- Upper Holloway
- Carpenders Park
- Willesden Junction
- Kew Gardens
- South Acton
- Acton Central
- Shepherds Bush
- Kensington (Olympia)
- Canada Water
- Homerton
- Hackney Wick
- Stratford DLR
- Barking
- Walthamstow Queens Road

- Step-free access from platform to street in both directions
- Connection with National Rail
- Connection with London Underground
- Connection with Tramlink

HERTFORDSHIRE
- Barnet
- Barking & Dagenham
- Newham
- Greenwich
- Redbridge
- Hackney
- Bexley
- Waltham Forest
- Enfield
- Westminster
- Sutton
- Lambeth
- Wandsworth
- City of London
- Tower Hamlets
- Islington
- Croydon
- Bromley
- Lewisham
- Merton
- Southwark
- Hammersmith & Fulham
- Camden
- Haringey
- Harrow
- Hillingdon
- Ealing
- Brent
- Hounslow

* See text
The *Overground* is a new network of suburban rail services, managed by TfL. It is based mainly on old/pre-existing railway lines together with some extensions. **The routes and the ‘accessible’ stations are shown on the map.**

The *Overground* goes to/from Euston, Stratford and Watford, and in the south to Clapham Junction, Richmond and to West Croydon. In the east it goes to Barking. There are a number of links to NR services, and just a few to the Underground. At Canada Water it links with the JLE.

All the trains have a large step to get into the carriage from the platform, and our map highlights the stations which are step-free from the street to the platform. A chair user is then likely to need a ramp (and staff help) to get on and off the train. To ensure assistance is available, you are asked to contact the Help Line **Tel:** 0845 601-4867 (open 09:00 to 17:00 on weekdays) at least 24 hours before you travel. TfL is trying to move to a ‘turn up and go’ service, and as all the stations are staffed, you should be able to do this.

The network is generally much less crowded than the tube, and than some NR services, and if it runs near where you want to go, it can be really useful.

**Using the river**

Taking a river trip is one of the best and most relaxed ways of seeing central London. You can go from Westminster, the London Eye or Embankment piers via the Tower to Greenwich and the basic route would take in many of London’s more interesting sights. It is highly recommended. You can use the river to get to the O2/Dome.

**London River Services**, Tower Pier, Lower Thames Street, EC3N 4DT
**Tel:** 020 7941-2400  **e-mail:** enquiries@tfl-river.co.uk

As with other parts of London’s transport system, the accessibility of the various boats which provide both scheduled riverbus services and river trips for tourists, has improved considerably in recent years.

All the piers are wheelchair accessible, but note that the slope down from the river embankment is dependent on the state of the tide and at low tide it can be quite steep. Not all of the boats are accessible, though many/most are. You need to check. Chair users may have only a very limited space on the boat in which they can ‘park’, but the view/s should be good.

TfL riverbuses go regularly from the Embankment pier (across the Jubilee pedestrian bridges from the Festival Hall and the South Bank) via the Tower and Greenwich to Woolwich Arsenal. These services are operated by *Thames Clippers* all of whose boats are wheelchair accessible and have an accessible toilet.

Most of the *City Cruise* tourist boats operating from Westminster Pier, and going via the Tower to Greenwich are wheelchair accessible, but you need to check at the ticket office.

There are also services from the Festival Pier on the South Bank, and from Embankment Pier.
The boats which operate services to Putney, to Richmond and to Hampton Court are older, and have access barriers - which we have not specifically checked out by visit. We don’t think that they are readily wheelchair accessible..
Tramlink

website: www.tfl.gov.uk at the bottom of the Home page see Getting around London/Trams
unofficial website: www.tramlink.co.uk
This is an extensive system in south London, using modern and fully accessible trams.
There’s a central loop around Croydon (see the map), and then branches going both east and west through London’s southern suburbs. These go eastwards to New Addington, Elmers End or Beckenham, or westwards to Wimbledon via Mitcham.

The trams provide step-free access, equivalent to (green A) on the underground, and are much easier for a wheelchair user or disabled walker to get on and off than a bus.

There is a reasonably generous wheelchair space in each car, which can also be used by people travelling with young children in buggies, although chair users have priority. The trams tend to accelerate and brake more smoothly than buses which makes for a more comfortable ride.

Since ALL the stations on the 28km length of the tramway are accessible, we have only included the names of the key junctions. Detailed maps are readily available.

Much of the route goes through suburban south London, making it of considerable value to local residents. Croydon has extensive shopping facilities, and the Fairfield Halls and the Clocktower arts centre. Both East Croydon NR station, and Wimbledon NR and tube stations are fully ‘accessible’, providing a quick way of getting to and from central London.

For information about Tramlink, ring the central TfL call centre Tel: 0843 222-1234
Textphone: 020 7918-3015
website: www.tfl.gov.uk. There are maps on the website which can be downloaded. Ring TfL and they’ll send you a map and details, and the route is shown in the NR map London connections.
Services which are primarily for London residents

The principal additional improvements in the transport system for disabled residents in London have been the provision of Dial-a-Ride services, the use of the Taxicard and the availability of the Freedom Pass. All have gone through changes, some due to cuts in funding, and threatened cuts. In recent years, the provisions have varied from borough to borough, and from year to year. Some schemes have tight limitations on the number of journeys any individual can make, although the Freedom Pass is unlimited. Dial-a-Ride is administered by TfL and operated by a single company. The Taxicard and Freedom Passes are issued by the different London Boroughs. If you have a hassle, and want advice about any of these services, the best place to go is TfA.

Dial-a-Ride (DAR)

DAR is a membership scheme run by TfL. It provides a bookable door-to-door service for disabled and older London residents who have difficulties using public transport. It can also be used by visitors who are visiting London as long as they can show they are a member of a similar door to door service where they live. The service uses accessible minibuses or other appropriate vehicles (depending on the needs of the user), and is free of charge.

You can get more information from:

Dial-a-Ride, Progress House, 5 Mandela Way, SE1 5SS
Tel: 0845 999-1999 or 020 7309-8900 if you don’t want to use the 0845 number
e-mail: DAR@tfl.gov.uk (or you can contact TfA)

The idea is excellent. You can ring up and they will organise a driver to take you shopping, to visit friends or to go to church, either alone or with companions. DAR can be used by people living in sheltered housing, where several people may want to go to the same destination, either on a regular basis or for one-off outings. The concept is fine, although it requires a little organisation to make use of the service. It inevitably has limited capacity, and may get more requests than it can fulfill. The timing of both pick-up and arrival at your destination cannot be precise. For pick-up, for example, DAR allow a 15 minute period on either side of the booked time, so you need to be ready to leave early. En route to your destination your vehicle may pick-up other passengers.

In some places, parts of the day will be busier than others, and you may have to be flexible about when you travel.

The Call Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9am – 4pm and, particularly in the mornings, it can be difficult to get through, so prepare to be both patient and persistent.

You are entitled to take a carer or someone to help you if there is space in the vehicle. Let DAR know that you want to bring someone when you book your trip.

According to TfL, DAR should be able to take you within a five mile radius of
your home. However TfA reports that in practice this does not often happen – and it is only requests for very local trips that are generally being accepted. If you want to travel further, then you may be able to get DAR to drop you at an accessible station or bus stop to continue your journey. Please feel free to contact TfA for more advice or information.

**Taxicard**

**London Councils TEC Taxicard**

59½ Southwark Street, SE1 0AL  Tel: 020 7934-9791

*website:* www.londoncouncils.gov.uk → services → taxicard  
*e-mail:* taxicard@londoncouncils.gov.uk

The Taxicard Scheme is funded by the 32 London boroughs and by the Mayor of London. It aims to provide door-to-door transport for disabled and older people who have mobility impairments and have difficulty in using public transport.

The service is administered by individual London Councils, and is operated by Computer Cab. You can request an application form by phone, e-mail or post. Details of what your borough supplies can be found on the website, or you can ring the number above.

A Taxicard allows you to make a set number of subsidised journeys in licensed London taxis (or minicabs, by negotiation). The number of trips you are allocated differs depending on which borough you live in.

You can book with Computer Cab on *Tel:* 020 7763-5001, or it can be done online. There’s a useful page on their website www.computercab.co.uk/website/taxicard.aspx

**The card provides a reduced price taxi ride but, like all schemes, it has its limitations.**

Because of the current constraints, many boroughs are tightening up the assessment process. You will need to list exactly what your impairments are, how you are disabled by inaccessible transport services, and what effect this has on your daily life.

Talk to TfA if you are having difficulties with the process.

The Taxicard Call Centre is based in Scotland, and unfortunately it can be difficult to get through. Try to book your journey in good time to avoid disappointment. You will be asked for your Taxicard number, to confirm your name, the departure and arrival addresses. Always ask for a quote for longer journeys as it may be cheaper to book a local minicab rather than using your Taxicard.

There is a fifteen minute ‘window’ either side of your booking time, so make sure you are ready a quarter of an hour early, as the meter will be ticking. If you are ready on time, there should be no more than £3.40 on the meter. This is the maximum ‘run in charge’.
If you find it easier to get in or out of a minicab, rather than a black cab, or vice versa, you may request that a note is put on your account so you are always sent the right type of vehicle. There is a service called Capital Call operating in some boroughs where black cabs are relatively scarce, which uses minicabs as ‘first choice’. To register for this service Tel: 020 7275-2446.

**Freedom Pass(es) for Disabled and Older Persons and the 60+ Oyster Card**
The Freedom Pass is provided by local borough councils to give older and disabled Londoners free travel on almost all public transport in London. There are two passes with different eligibility criteria, one for disabled people, and the other for older people. It includes some people who cannot drive, and some with learning difficulties.

The eligibility criteria are set out on the London councils website, or you can contact:

The **Freedom Pass Helpline** Tel: 0845 275-7054 (Mon-Sat 8am-6pm)

website: www.londoncouncils.gov.uk \(\rightarrow\) services \(\rightarrow\) freedompass

e-mail: info@freedompass.org

The TfA helpline will also provide advice about eligibility if you need it.

There is also free travel for Londoners on TfL services, using the 60+ Oyster Card. This bridges the gap created by increases in the age of eligibility for the London Councils Freedom Pass (which provides free bus travel all over the country as well as free travel in London on most services).