

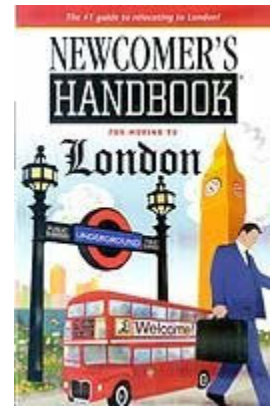
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Newcomer's Handbook for Moving to London

First Books

Attention all those who are currently sitting in an internet café in London fantasizing about living in the city permanently: here is a guide to the city designed not for tourists (those dilettantes who fancy themselves anglophiles after one high tea and *Romeo and Juliet* at the Globe), but for those thinking seriously of living and working in one of the most vibrant, diverse and intellectually alive cities in the world. This is not your parents' London, although admittedly some here (like everywhere else) bemoan the changes wrought by immigration and the disrespectful young. Still, it is a truly cosmopolitan place that celebrates its history, but provides ample room for the creative surge that is writing and rewriting the 21st century.



This anonymously offered handbook, part of a series that includes volumes dedicated to several major American cities, reveals a UK that is comparatively welcoming to lesbian and gay immigrants, even those with illnesses, such as AIDS, who are, under some circumstances, granted entrance on compassionate grounds. The book records some of the history of Earl's Court, an attractive district that once served as the heart of "Gay London" and still maintains a large gay population, and also of Soho, the new cultural hub.

The book provides reasonably thorough instructions for getting a work permit or student status; and in the "immigrant advice" section, the editors note that "long-term partners in same-sex relationships of at least four years may be given leave to remain with their British partner" — not exactly the epitome of enlightened thought, but a notable improvement over the atavistic positions of some other nations we might mention.

The book advises newcomers to rent and provides guidance for those of differing financial means. *The Pink Paper*, a free lesbian and gay magazine distributed widely throughout the city, carries ads for available flats and other accommodations.

The darker realities of London are not papered over: the book notes the city's chronic homeless problem, its poverty, the nasty expense of living here. But for those of us determined to make a go of it, the book is a place to begin making plans. There's a section on how to retire in London that makes it sound just feasible enough to stir old hearts, still fantasizing away in an internet café.

Review by Rick Taylor