King's Sustainable Travel Guide

2024-25

Contents

Business travel at King's

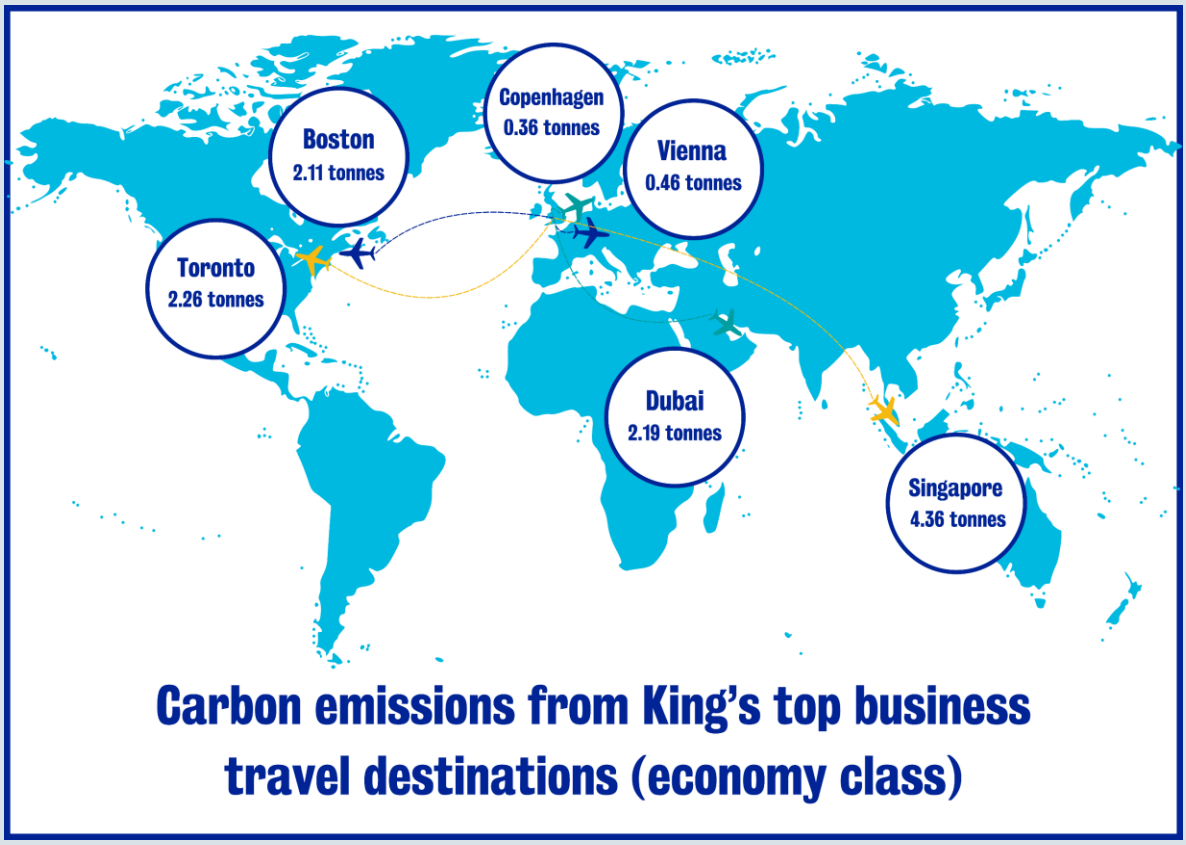
Why are we focusing on reducing business travel emissions at King's?

> Our aim is to help reduce our business travel emissions, while supporting our academic mission and ensuring fair outcomes. This means we would like you to consider how you make your journeys.

At King's, we are committed to taking positive action on the climate crisis through our education, research and impact. As a large university, we also have a large environmental footprint.

King's carbon emissions from business travel flights are nearly 6,500 tonnes per year (2018/19), making them the fourth largest source after supply chain (107,319), electricity (19,394) and natural gas (11,157). King's has committed to reducing these emissions by 30% by 2025, and 50% by 2030 (compared to 2018-19).

The following infographic shows the carbon emissions of a return flight (economy class) to King's top six international business travel destinations.



What measures have been introduced in the new Sustainable Travel Policy & Procedures?

King's introduced its new Sustainable Travel Policy & Procedures in November 2024. Please consult Business Travel Intranet site for further guidance.

The main changes are:

- Flights for business travel within mainland UK will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances (includng caring responsibilities or mobility issues) or for connecting flights. Formal approval for exceptional circumstances must be provided by the relevant senior officer before travel is booked.

- For international destinations reachable from London within five hours, colleagues are encouraged to use land-based travel options where available.

- Everyone is encouraged to consider whether travel is essential for University business, to use virtual collaboration tools instead where possible, and choose low-carbon options for journeys that cannot be replaced.

- Travellers are encouraged to choose the more environmentally sustainable travel option even when this is more expensive, where funds (and funding regulations) permit.

How to travel in a carbon-efficient way

Ways to make travel more carbon-efficient (adapted from King's 2019 Sustainable Travel Paper):

1. **Reflect: is the trip essential?**

    - Reducing the number of business trips is the most effective way of decreasing travel-related emissions. Is your attendance essential? Could you participate virtually?

    - **Use Key Travel for all your work-related trips** – this helps King's collect travel-related emissions data and identify priority areas for action. Travellers are encouraged to choose the more environmentally sustainable travel option even when this is more expensive, where funds (and funding regulations) permit. Please add a note on the relevant Purchase Order (PO) that a more expensive option was selected on sustainability basis.

2. **If the trip is essential, consider low-carbon transport methods.**

    - Consult the travel hierarchy below and opt for rail, ferry, coach, or (electric) car travel over flying.

    - Eurostar trains are 100% electric and the carbon footprint of one flight can be the same as making 13 Eurostar journeys (e.g. to Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam where on-connections can be made). Within the UK, rail is also the more carbon-efficient way to travel around: emissions factors for carbon emitted per passenger kilometre are approximately six times lower for domestic rail vs domestic flights. UK Rail, Eurostar and European Rail[1] are available to book in the Key Travel Online Booking Tool.

    - Ferry, coach, or (electric) car travel are also more carbon-efficient travel modes than flying. All of these may not be available to

[1] As of May 2023: SNCF, DB, SNCB and some routes in Northern Italy. Key Travel is continuously working on expanding the network of European Rail bookable through them.

book via Key Travel, in which case we would recommend speaking to the Procurement team or to use alternative platforms (such as ComparaBUS and Direct Ferries).

3. **If flying is essential, consider ways to reduce emissions.**

    - **Use direct flights over indirect flights**. The argument here is that approximately 25% of carbon emissions occur during take-off and landing. However, Key Travel state that the most carbon-efficient flights are the ones that use the shortest route. So, an indirect flight from London to Singapore that flies over the arctic circle could travel fewer miles than a direct flight that went around the wider part of the Earth's surface.

    - **Fly economy over premium class.** Flights taken in economy class generally have a lower carbon footprint than those taken in premium economy, business or first class. This is due to the higher proportion of space taken up by premium classes, making individual passengers responsible for a larger proportion of the plane's emissions. Emissions factors for carbon emitted per passenger kilometre is approximately three times higher for international business class flights vs international economy class flights. As a charitable institution, University policy has for some time been that first class, business or any premium air fare will only be permitted under exceptional conditions.

4. **Sustainable accommodation:** refer to credible sustainability ranking and certification schemes and choose accommodation that reduces daily travel.

    - Consider selecting 'Do good rates' when booking accommodation in the Key Travel Online Booking Tool, as the CO_2 emissions of these hotel bookings will be fully offset by Key Travel and Expedia at no extra cost for King's. The Good Tourism Institute has created a list of nine criteria to help travellers select sustainable accommodation.

A note on Carbon Offsetting

The University is currently developing an institutional approach to offsetting carbon emissions (expected to be completed in 2025). Therefore, we recommend that you please do not undertake individual carbon offsetting currently.

However, staff travelling on Wellcome Trust grants are required to offset the emissions created through their travel. You can find more information, including a calculator, on King's intranet pages.

King's Travel Decision Tree

Can I carry out my work virtually rather than attending in-person?

Yes

I will use virtual collaboration tools to attend

No

Is my destination in mainland UK?

Yes

I will travel by train or coach other than in exceptional circumstances

No

Can I reach my destination by train, ferry or coach within 5 hours?*

Yes

I will travel by train, ferry or coach where possible

No

Is a low-carbon travel option still viable?**

Yes

No

Does the purpose of the trip justify the carbon cost of flying?

Yes

I will make efforts to lower the impact of my flights***

No

I will not travel

Please do not undertake individual carbon offsetting, as the University is developing an institutional approach to offsetting carbon emissions (expected to be completed in early 2025).

* The Key Travel dedicated service team can help you to identify low-carbon options for your journey.

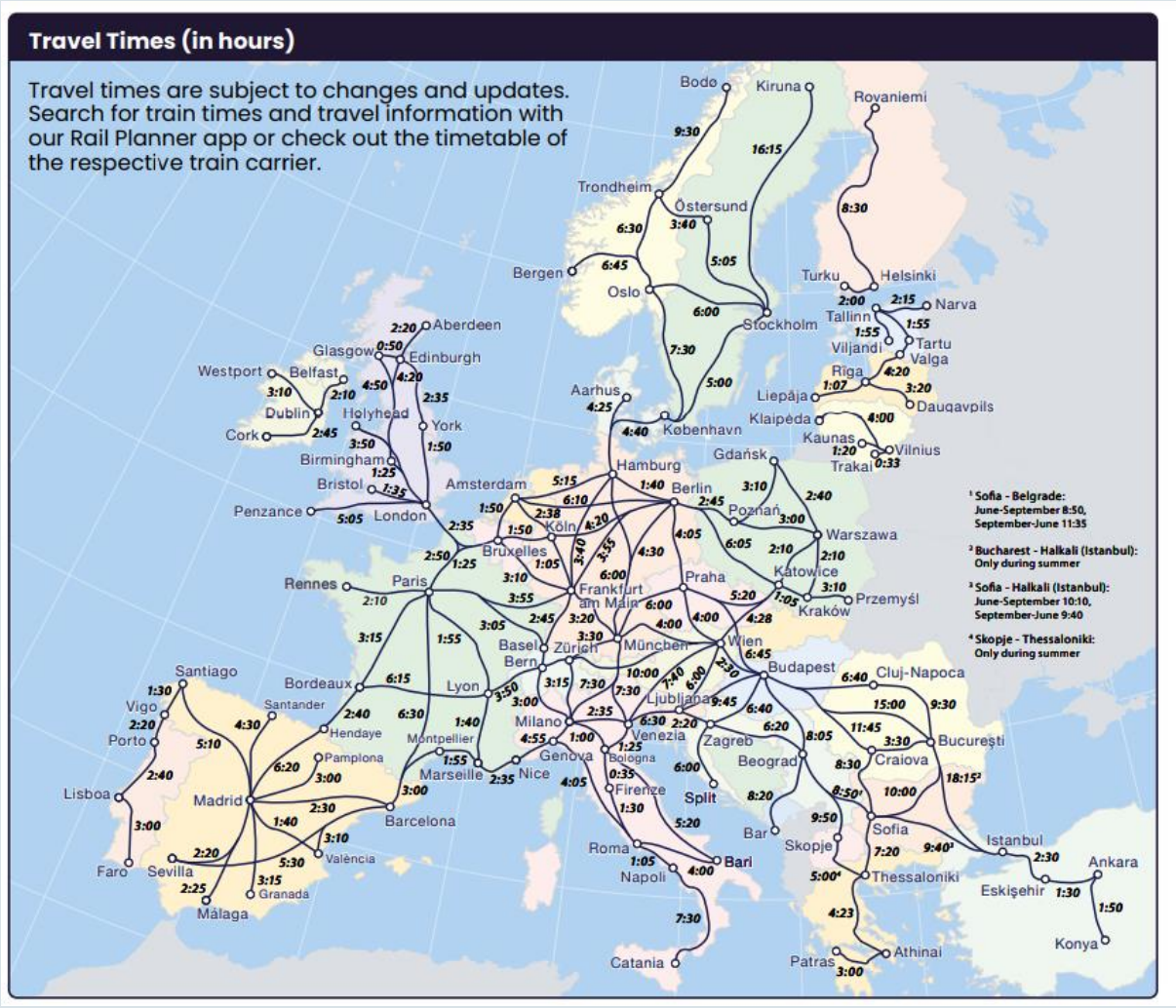
** Please see the travel hierarchy for more information about low-carbon travel options

*** If you have to fly, lower your impact by:

- Flying economy class only;
- Combining the trip with other work-related activities;
- Using direct flights (without layovers);
- Using land-based travel options at the destinations, where possible

Useful resources

- The Key Travel dedicated service team can help you to identify low-carbon options for your journey.
- The interactive Eurail map shows connections between bigger cities in Europe and how long it takes to travel between them.



Source: Eurail Map 2022

Create a departmental sustainable travel plan

Here are some example actions to help you create a departmental sustainable travel plan:

- Encourage the team to make all travel bookings through Key Travel.
- Identify the most frequent destinations and develop specific guides to reach them in low-carbon travel modes.
- Identify the most carbon-intensive teams and send advice to help them reduce their travel footprint.
- Conduct a survey or focus groups to identify staff members' obstacles to travelling less or in more carbon-efficient ways.
- Ask the Head of Department to send a letter of support to everyone for reduced travel and their agreement with longer and more expensive land-based travel.
- Organise training sessions to raise awareness of the most carbon-efficient modes of transport and to reflect on essential travel.
- Organise training sessions to improve digital literacy to encourage more virtual participation in conferences.

Actions for academics (taken from a Working paper by Simon Sleight and Toby Green):

- Set advisory ceilings to colleagues' international conference participation, dependent on:
    - discipline/location of research area;
    - level of seniority, with junior colleagues (postdocs and lecturers) given added leeway to participate in more conferences where appropriate.
- Normalise vivas by Skype, Zoom or other remote means.
- Take conference attendance and seminar activity out of annual review and promotion assessments.
- Guide colleagues who are members of international panels, review boards or committees to inform chairs of these boards that they prefer to attend such meetings virtually.

- Respond to invitations to participate in international conferences by offering to do so virtually.

Template Sustainable Travel Action Plan

Impact to be addressed		Targets		Actions	Responsible Person(s)	Timescale	Progress
	Staff and Student carbon footprint from business travel. Overall target to reduce business travel emissions by 50% by 2030, in line with King's targets.	TR1.1	Measure reasons for staff business travel	Develop survey to find out reasons for travel in the last year, with the aim of tracking future travel	John Doe	6 months	

Appendix

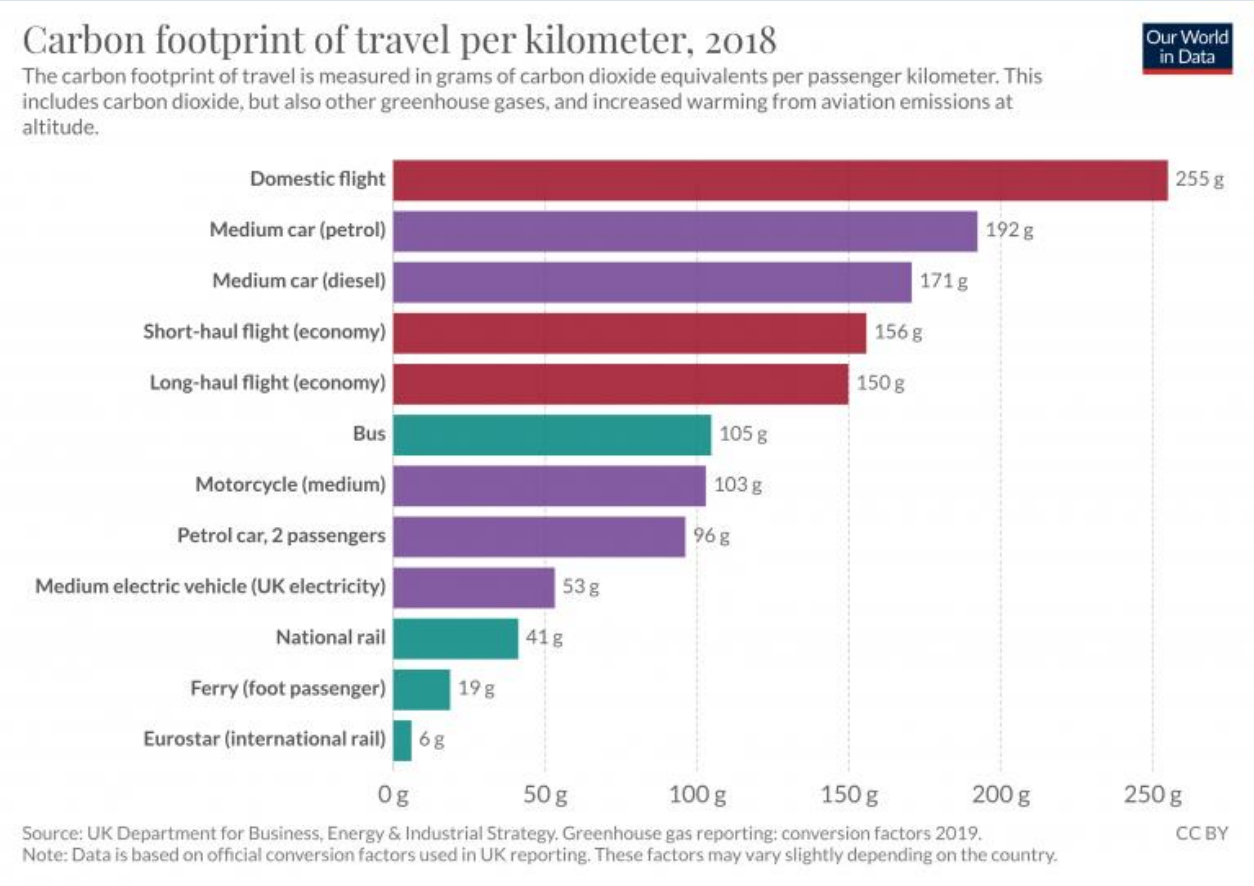
Actions related to business travel from the King's Climate & Sustainability Action Plan

Objective	Target	KPI	Related SDGs
Reducing the need for travel by continuing to support staff in using digital alternatives	Make training on digital alternatives available to all staff at least annually.	Availability of training on digital alternatives to meetings.	9, 13
Defining 'essential' business travel and agree on a plan for how we significantly reduce 'non-essential' travel	Develop definition of 'essential' travel in 2022/23.	Availability of definition of essential travel.	13
	Develop suggestions on how to reduce non-essential travel in 2023/24.	Availability of suggestions of how to reduce non-essential travel.	13
Working towards ceasing air travel within mainland UK, excluding a set of exceptional circumstances	Reduce mainland UK domestic air travel emissions by 95% compared to 2018/19.	Tonnes CO2e from UK mainland air travel.	13
Increasing awareness of the policies which allow rail travel even where it is more costly than the equivalent flight, and encouraging staff to use land-based travel	Include travel policy in all staff inductions by 2023/24, highlighting its sustainability elements.	Inclusion of travel policy in staff inductions.	13
Engaging with our travel provider to make international train journeys easier to book and provide information on sustainable travel to our most common destinations [2]	Develop front page within booking portal by the end of 2022/23, displaying information on sustainable travel booking.	Availability of front page, number of page views	13
Work with the sector to change the system and reduce the need for air travel	Engage with at least one grant provider on offsetting or travel per academic year	Number of engagements with grant providers	13, 17
	Identify and engage with at least one King's partner per academic year to share approaches to reduce unnecessary travel	Number of engagements with King's partners on travel	13, 17
	Engage with sector-wide networks and other universities on travel at least once per year	Number of engagements with sector networks and other universities on travel	13, 17
Publicly reporting our business air travel emissions annually	Publicly report our business travel emissions annually.	Availability of annual reporting.	13

[2] In the Key Travel online booking tool it is possible to sort flight options by the 'greenest'. By clicking on flight details, for each option the CO_2 emission is shown as provided by the airline. So alternative flights are easily comparable from a sustainability perspective, and this enables travellers to make a well-informed choice when booking with Key Travel online.

Key Travel has developed 'Eco Fares' collaboratively and in partnership with Emirates airlines, exclusively for Key Travel customers in the not-for-profit sector, in order to support their sustainable travel programmes. For every "Eco Fare" booked, 1% of the airfare will be dedicated towards a verified carbon-reduction project around the world.

Carbon footprint of travel per kilometre



Our World in Data, 2018