



**St Anne's  
College**  
University of Oxford

**International  
Freshers' Handbook  
2023-2024**

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Welcome to St Anne's! .....	3
Contacts and Useful Links .....	4
Before Arriving in Oxford .....	5
Packing .....	5
Getting to Oxford .....	7
Flying .....	7
Train .....	8
Taxis .....	8
Getting to Anne's .....	9
Once in Oxford .....	10
Banking .....	10
Digital Banks .....	11
Getting a Sim Card .....	11
Health care and Insurance .....	13
Getting around Oxford .....	14
Where to Buy Things .....	14
Food .....	16
Societies .....	16
Welfare Support .....	17
Between Terms .....	18
Final Tips .....	19

# Introduction

## **Welcome to St. Anne's!**

Congratulations!! We're so excited to welcome you to Oxford as a whole, but more specifically to St Anne's!

I'm Sofia, a second-year Classics student here at Anne's. I was born and raised in Milan, Italy, so moving here to Oxford when I was still sixteen was quite the change. I therefore really do hope to be someone you can turn to when facing any sort of trouble or issue, and, if not, I will do my best to provide you with means to tackle them!

I'm going to be representing us International Students on the JCR (Junior Common Room) this year. That means I'll be the one helping with anything from storage to setting up bank accounts. I will try my best to get you settled into Oxford and let you get to know more people here. Essentially, I'll be an extra point of contact, as well as a bridge between you and the college regarding all things International. St Anne's is very welcoming, so I'm sure you will all feel quite at home in no time, but if there's any problems feel free to reach out to me, I will gladly help.

This guide should answer any questions or concerns you might have as the beginning of term approaches. Everyone arriving at St Anne's will be nervous about what's to come, but above all you should be proud of yourself and excited for what's ahead.

Right now, enjoy your summers, and make sure to stock up on food from home! I'm looking forwards to meeting you all in October!

# Contacts and Useful Links



## Contacts

College contacts (academic office, treasurer, domestic bursar, dean of welfare, etc.):	<a href="https://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/contact/">https://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/contact/</a>
Student Union	<a href="https://www.oxfordsu.org">https://www.oxfordsu.org</a>
St Anne's Facebook Group	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/884583404974521/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/884583404974521/</a>
St Anne's International Facebook group	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/349861959361168/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/349861959361168/</a>
My email	<a href="mailto:sofia.arata@st-annes.ox.ac.uk">sofia.arata@st-annes.ox.ac.uk</a>
My Facebook	@sofiarata
My Instagram	@sofiarata

## Useful Links

Oxford Bus Company, The Airline	Website: <a href="https://airline.oxfordbus.co.uk/heathrow/">https://airline.oxfordbus.co.uk/heathrow/</a>
001 Taxis	Website: <a href="https://www.001taxi.com">https://www.001taxi.com</a> Phone number: 01865 240000 App: 001 Taxis (available on IOS and Android)
Eurostar	<a href="https://www.eurostar.com/rw-en">https://www.eurostar.com/rw-en</a>
Send my bag	<a href="https://www.sendmybag.com/">https://www.sendmybag.com/</a>
Clubs and Societies	<a href="https://www.oxfordsu.org/communities/clubs-and-socs/">https://www.oxfordsu.org/communities/clubs-and-socs/</a>

# Before Arriving in Oxford

## Packing

It can be quite difficult to pack your entire life into a few suitcases. In my experience it's best to start packing quite early so you can avoid last minute panicking. The fresher's handbook should contain a full packing list, but here you'll find a few tips catered more to international students.

- It's a good idea to **pack light!** Anything you pack you'll have to transport to college. And carrying multiple suitcases can be quite difficult (especially when living on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Rayne- or of Wolfson, or ATB- anywhere really).
  - You can have suitcases delivered with some services such as Send my Bag (pg.4), but you'll still have to carry them from the lodge to your room.
- Make sure to bring clothes for **English weather**. It never gets terribly cold in Oxford, but it can reach negative temperatures. Also, speaking from personal experience, the heating in some buildings doesn't work particularly well. I brought many warm sweaters, coats (and raincoats), socks and warm shoes. Another thing I learned, is definitely bring some water resistant shoes.
- If you're not going home between terms, make sure to bring some **summer clothes**. It doesn't reach tropical weather but having some shorts and T-shirts can come in handy.
- Bring **adaptors** or **cables** with U.K. plugs (While you can buy these in Oxford it's a good idea to bring at least one to charge your phone in case the shops are closed when you first arrive).

- Bring enough of any **medication** you have prescribed to last the whole term. Prescriptions don't necessarily work internationally.
- College provides two pillows, a duvet, and sheets, so no need to bring these. You can also ask the lodge for a towel, but I still recommend bringing your own.
  - After my first year, I found that the college sheets weren't really working for me, so my biggest tip is using the first term to see what works and what doesn't, don't feel like you need to get it allright the first try.
- **Most** essentials can be bought **in Oxford** (and then stored there), e.g. towels, sheets (if you don't use the college ones), hangers, toiletries, stationery and kitchen stuff.
- Pack some things that **make you happy!** It's definitely not a waste of space. They can really help during the term (especially if you end up having to isolate. This could be food from home, pictures, an instrument, etc. The rooms can be very bare, making it feel homey can make you feel much more comfortable.

# Flying

## **Option 1: Heathrow**

Flying to Heathrow is the quickest and most direct way to get to Oxford. The Oxford Bus Company has direct regular buses (theAirline) from all Heathrow terminals into Oxford. The trip takes about an hour but really depends on traffic.

## **Option 2: Gatwick**

Flights to Gatwick are often cheaper than to Heathrow, but it will take you longer to get from there to Oxford, and that journey may be slightly more expensive.

There is also a direct line through the Oxford Bus Company, but these take between 2-2.5 hours

## **Option 3: Other airports**

You may have a flight into another airport in London (Stansted, Luton, or London City Airport) and it is possible to get to Oxford from these too, however the journey is much less direct and takes quite a bit longer. As such I would recommend flying to Heathrow or Gatwick whenever possible.

## **Buses from the airport**

As mentioned, there is a direct bus service (theAirline) from Heathrow/Gatwick to Oxford.

If you plan on going back home at the end of term, it could be worth getting a 'period return' ticket (basically a 2-way ticket that lasts 3 months) to save money.

The closest bus stop to Anne's is Gloucester Green (10-15 min walk). However, there can often be lots of traffic in the city centre so it may be worth it to get off at Queen's Lane and walking the extra 5 minutes.

## Train

If you live in Europe, you could consider taking the Eurostar train. It may be cheaper (but not necessarily) and is definitely better for the environment! If you have a lot of luggage though, it may be better to go another way.

The Eurostar ends at St Pancras International. To get to Oxford, take the London Underground to Paddington and then the train to Oxford. This takes around 1.5 hours.

## Taxi

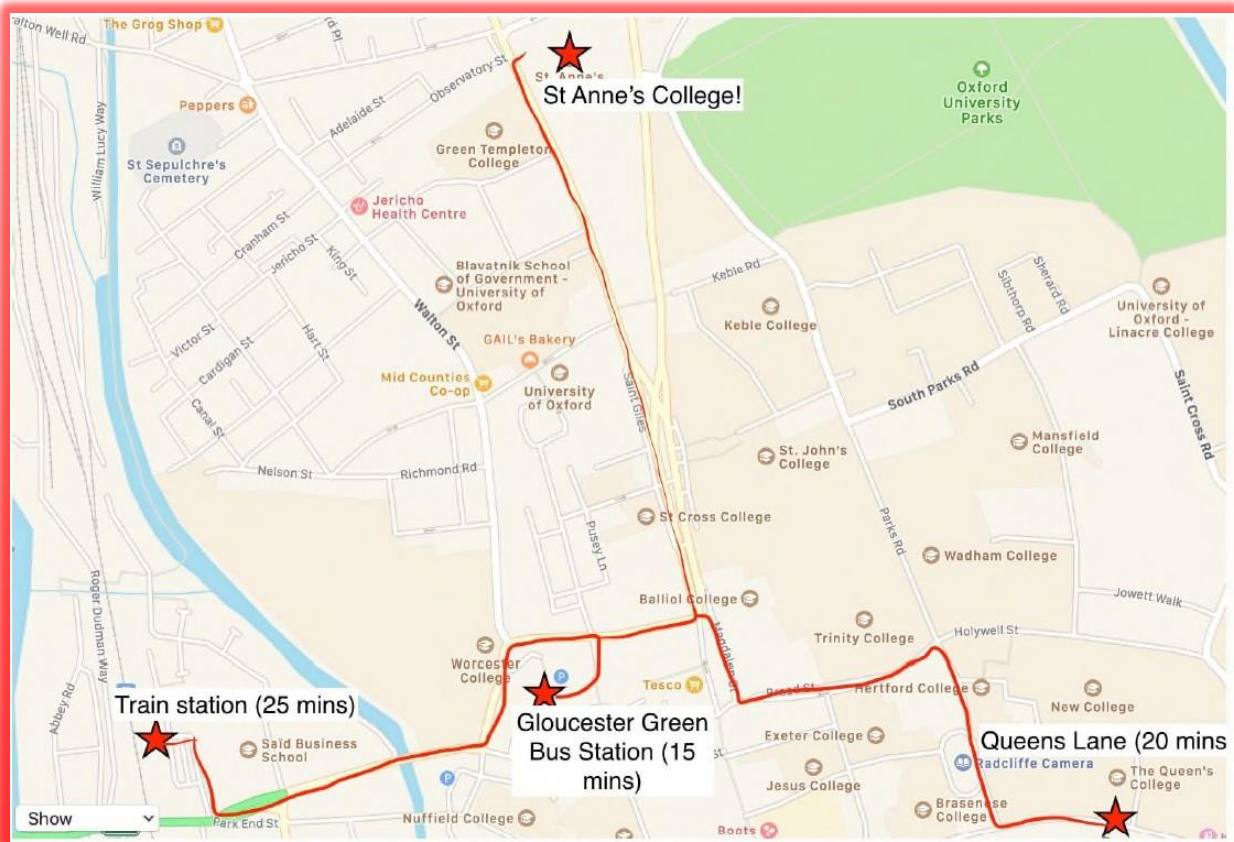
There are sadly no Ubers in Oxford. However, the regular taxi service is quite good.

### *From the airport*

You can get a taxi straight from some airports to Oxford using the 001-taxi airport transfer service, although you typically have to book this service in advance. It may still be worth it if you have a lot of luggage and some extra money to spare.



# Getting to Anne's



Oxford is quite small, so if you don't have too much luggage you could walk to St Anne's. The easiest routes are shown above.

# Once in Oxford

## Banking

When coming to a new country, you may want to open a UK bank account. The process can feel quite overwhelming, but in truth it can be a simple task.

The first step is to choose the bank you want to use. There are many to choose from, and while they each have their own perks, they all serve the same purpose in the end - so don't stress too much about picking the "perfect" bank for you.

Some things to keep in mind when choosing your bank are:

- how fast/easy/expensive are international transfers
- does the bank offer online banking services
- what is the overdraft rate like
- do they offer any "rewards" for joining the bank that interest you (i.e. free rail card, online streaming services, travel insurance...)
- do I have the necessary documentation to open an account

You will have to make an appointment with the bank to open an account (unless you choose a digital bank, which is what I did). The first few weeks of term might be really busy so consider ringing up to make an appointment before arriving.

To open an account, most banks require the following documents.

- Oxford Student Enrolment Certificate OR Proof of Residence. This can be found at [evision.ox.ac.uk](http://evision.ox.ac.uk) under Student Record and will need to be stamped and signed by the academic office ([enquiries@st-annes.ox.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@st-annes.ox.ac.uk))
- Passport/National ID (with visa if you need one)

The university provides a document with lots of useful information explaining how banks in the UK work and comparing banks.

## Digital Banks



Monzo and Revolut are fully online banks and are often popular with international students due to their ease with converting currencies. Also setting up your account is really easy, and they will deliver your card to college, the only thing you should need is your passport and a UK number.

Although it is rare, it may take a long time for the account to be set up. Therefore, I would advise setting up a bank account as soon as possible (during the freshers' week, if possible) as though the payment of battels (college bills for accommodation) can be delayed for a while, college will charge you interest. If something does go wrong, speak to the college treasury - they are there to help.

\*\*Use the college's address when setting up your account!

## Getting a Sim Card



You may want a UK phone number for when you're in the UK. I would recommend doing so, although it's not absolutely necessary.

### *Pay-as-you-go SIM*

- With this kind of contract, you pay once a month, but with no commitment.
- Easy to cancel and pick back up between terms, making it a good option if you don't plan on using your UK SIM while away from Oxford.
- But you may need to go back to your network's shop each month to renew the SIM, which can be impractical.
- At the same time, it is very useful because if you go back home you do not need to continue to be charged for your SIM card.

### *Contract*

- You will have to commit to at least 6 months of continuous payments.
- Can only be set up once you have a UK bank account.
- Good if you also want to buy a new phone.
- Many phone companies offer contract packages where the included data can be used freely in a number of countries. If you live in one of these countries, this could be a really good option for you!

# Which phone company should I choose?

*Below are a few options for phone companies with shops in Oxford*

<b>Company</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Opinion</b>
<b>EE</b>	www.ee.co.uk	Westgate shopping centre, Cornmarket Street	Pretty good reception across Oxford.
<b>GiffGaff</b>	www.giffgaff.com	No in-person stores (budget, online derivative of O2)	I know a person who tried to get one delivered and it never came. Also, along with O2, it is notorious for having bad service in college.
<b>O2</b>	www.o2.co.uk	Westgate shopping Centre	The pay-as-you-go SIM is kind of hard to renew. And, again, it has bad reception in college.
<b>Three</b>	www.three.co.uk	Westgate Shopping Centre	I know many people that are happy with their Three contract. It has great reception all across Oxford.
<b>Vodafone</b>	www.vodafone.co.uk	Cornmarket Street	I know people who use Vodafone and are very happy with it.

# Health Care and Insurance



If you are registered for a course lasting at least six months, you are entitled to **free healthcare** from the NHS (National Health Service). You should be able to register with the college doctors before arriving in Oxford. All the information you will need to do this will be provided by college. If you need any more information, please let me know.

There is also a well-stocked pharmacy right across the road in case you need to buy medication. If you have an active prescription, bring enough to last the time you will be in Oxford. You should be able to get a prescription that can be used in the UK from your doctor in Oxford, but this may take time.

The Jericho Health Centre is across the road from St Anne's. There is also an in-college nurse who can help direct you to the right service.

## **!If you take the pill!**

Not every type of pill you may be taking at home is available at Oxford, so it may be good to check first. However, if you still are not sure, it is always better to stock up and bring with you your own pills, so as to cover the entire duration of the stay at Oxford.

# Getting around Oxford



If you are interested in getting a bike you will find lots of offers for second-hand and new bikes. Our JCR also has its own bike scheme that you can opt into where you pay a fixed sum to be able to use one of the JCR bikes whenever you want. Personally, I find that walking to places works great for me, but I know that many people who tried it say it has been a very good choice for them. If you do decide to buy your own bike, make sure you have lights at night (if not, you may be fined by the police).

Bike theft is common in Oxford, so remember to always lock your bike at a safe place (and also detach your lights if you can) when you park your bike. Also, remember to register your bike with the University Cycle Registration Scheme because it is much easier to find your bike if you are registered. You can get a registration pack from the college lodge.

As an international student you will also be able to store your bike in the bike racks over the holidays provided that you get a tag from the lodge. For more information contact the JCR environment representative who can answer questions about the college bike scheme and buying second-hand bikes.

## Where to buy things

While Amazon might feel like a quick, easy, and cheap option for buying things you didn't bring from home, it's not always the best choice. Below is a list of some nearby shops where you can find everything Amazon offers and more!

### 1) Supermarkets

- **Tesco**= The Tesco Metro on Magdalen Street is in my opinion the best supermarket in Oxford. It's not too far from St Anne's and is big enough to have variety
- **Sainsbury's**= Right next door to the Tesco it's basically the same but smaller and closes earlier. Another one is in Westgate, very big with loads of variety, can be a great choice
- **The Co-Operative**= 2 in Jericho, closes supermarkets to St Anne's. Can be a little more expensive than Tesco and have less choice.
- **East West Provisions**= Corner shop right across the street from Anne's. Non basics can be pricey, and choice is limited, but good in case of emergency (or laziness).
- **M&S**= In Westgate. Can be much more expensive than regular supermarkets but if you're looking for a 'foreign' ingredient you might find it here.

- **OxUnboxed**= A no-packaging store in Jericho with a lot of cupboard basics.

## 2) Household/ Electronics

- **Robert Dyas**= Outside the Westgate shopping centre. Good place to buy adapters, extension cords, batteries etc. Also has some kitchen and laundry items
- **Westgate**= There are LOTS of shops in Westgate and you could probably find most things somewhere here
- **TK Maxx**= In the Clarendon Centre, and has a very wide and quite random array of many different things (clothes, kitchen appliances, biscuits!) so you might not find what you're looking for, but, when you do, it is at very affordable prices.

## 3) Stationary

- Ryman (outside Westgate)
- WHSmith (on Cornmarket Street)

## 4) Pharmacies/Drugstores

- **Woodstock Road Chemist**= Right across the road from St Anne's. Good for collecting prescriptions and tissues when you get sick. Very nice staff!
- **Boots**= On Cornmarket Street. The best place to get shampoo, make up, hand sanitiser, cold medicine, hairbrushes...

## 5) Atms/ Cash Machines

- By the Co-op in Jericho
- Between the Tesco and Sainsbury's on Magdalen Street



## Food

One of the things I missed most when coming to Anne's was the food I could not get here easily. Finding non-English foods in supermarkets can be really daunting and not particularly easy.

I would definitely recommend bringing some with you, and below are some places recommended by other students where you might be able to find ingredients/foods less common in the UK.

- 
- Baltic food (Cowley Road)
  - Euro Supermarket (Cowley Road)
  - Lung Wah Chong (near the train station)
  - Seoul Plaza (Cowley Road)
  - Skogen Kitchen (off High Street)
  - Il Principe (Cowley Road)
  - Gloucester Green Market (often has pop-up stands with food from all over the world)

## Societies

Societies are a great way to find others with the same interests as you. Most countries or regions have a society, so it's a great way to meet people from the same cultural background, or a completely different one if you want. You can find a full list of all the societies on the Student Union website.

There is also a university wide International Society.



# Welfare Support



Moving to university is never an easy task, as an international student it can feel much harder to settle in. Whether you're struggling with adjusting to a new language, home sickness, culture shocks, loneliness, or anything else, the college will have support for you.

I will be teaming up with our two welfare officers and the college's welfare deans to assure that all of your needs are addressed. However, sometimes it is hard to know where to go or who to talk to about a specific problem, but good news is that's exactly what I'm here to do, help you find those places and people, as well as being there for you when you need it. The best thing for you to do is to always seek help if you need it, and to do it in the way that makes you feel most comfortable. It is very important to keep in mind that, here at Anne's, our community only wants you to have the best experience possible. You deserve it!

# Between Terms

## International Storage

Fortunately, you DON'T have to bring all of your stuff back home over the holidays (including over the summer break).

St Anne's has a shed designated for international storage where you can keep stuff during holidays as well as during the term time. You can find it behind the Claire Palley building.

You will receive forms about this scheme somewhere in the middle of term. Do remember to sign up for this! (But if you do forget, you can contact ASAP via email the accommodation office, they usually will be still happy to help 😊)

Anything left in storage needs to be sealed in your own boxes or suitcases and labelled with your name. You can get cardboard boxes from Amazon or buy decently cheap plastic ones (which you can use again) at Ryman (they have a shop near Westgate).

To carry your stuff to the storage, you can use one of the many trolleys lying around college. They can usually be found between the Ruth Deech building and STACS. If not, ask the Porters and they should be able to help you find one.

## Vacation Residence

If you don't want to/aren't able to return home between terms, you can apply for vacation residence. A form will be left in your room and an email sent to you sometime during term with the relevant application information.

You may have to pay slightly higher rates than during term time and you might not be given the same room. Hall and STACS have different opening times or may close completely out of term time, so make sure you're aware of this.

While most students do go home between terms, there will be plenty of people around to keep you company and the international society often organize events for those who stay.

We understand that many students will be experiencing financial hardship during this period of crisis. If you are not able to travel back home due to overseas restrictions or any other reason, please know that the college can help support you financially if necessary.

# *Final Tips*

If possible, come a few days before fresher's week to settle into your new environment and adjust to the time difference. I will not be back to Oxford until after freshers' week, but plenty of my international friends would be happy to give you a tour, so email me if you would like one!

If you are arriving from a warm country (or one with good central heating), bring clothes twice as warm as you think you need. It is not uncommon to see me in a winter coat while my friends are wearing shorts and a t- shirt.

If you are going to use Amazon, activate your Amazon Prime Student trial and use that to buy the stuff you didn't bring home

Don't be afraid to ask questions! Your college parents, the welfare team, the JCR, and college staff are all there happy to help you!

*Very excited to get to know you all soon!*