LOCATION GUIDE

United Kingdom

Command sponsorship, pets, driving on the left, housing and base notes for RAF Lakenheath, Mildenhall and the U.S. bases across England.

BOARDING PASS

FROM	TO	START
Your current duty station	United Kingdom	6+ months out

BASES	ALLOWANCES
Lakenheath · Mildenhall · Feltwell · Alconbury · Croughton · Fairford · Menwith Hill	OHA + COLA

SERIES OCONUS PCS

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WELCOME

The UK at a glance

Most U.S. families in the UK live in the Suffolk and Norfolk countryside around RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall. Smaller sites are spread across England.

INSTALLATION	AREA	MAIN SERVICES	NOTES
RAF Lakenheath	Suffolk	Air Force	48th Fighter Wing; hospital and main schools
RAF Mildenhall	Suffolk	Air Force	Refueling and special operations; no schools on base
RAF Feltwell	Norfolk	Air Force	Housing, elementary school and vet clinic
RAF Alconbury / Molesworth	Cambridgeshire	Air Force, joint	Intelligence centers; DoDEA schools
RAF Croughton and Fairford	Northants and Gloucestershire	Air Force	Communications hub; bomber base
RAF Menwith Hill	North Yorkshire	Air Force, joint	Remote; no DoDEA school

Five things that work differently here

1

Command sponsorship

Families need it to come on orders and to get housing.

2

OHA + COLA

Overseas allowances replace BAH; most families live off base.

3

Drive on the left

A 3rd Air Force driving test comes in your first 30 days.

4

Strict pet routes

Pets fly as cargo on approved airlines — never on AMC flights.

5

Council tax relief

Send your orders to the council to claim the exemption.

Book lodging early

On-base lodging fills up in summer. Mildenhall's Gateway Inn takes bookings up to a year ahead.

COUNTDOWN

Command sponsorship and timeline

Every family member needs overseas screening and a no-fee passport. Your gaining squadron assigns a sponsor — if no one calls, reach out first.

As soon as you have orders 6+ MONTHS OUT

- [ ] Request command sponsorship for your family
- [ ] Apply for no-fee passports and tourist passports
- [ ] Contact your sponsor and the family readiness center
- [ ] Start overseas or EFMP screening for every family member
- [ ] Start the pet microchip and rabies vaccine
- [ ] Register interest in base housing through HEAT

Book the move 90–120 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Book temporary lodging
- [ ] Split household goods: express, main and storage
- [ ] Gather school, medical and IEP/504 records
- [ ] Book a pet-approved airline and route
- [ ] Decide whether to ship your car (older cars often aren't worth it)

Final prep 30 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Get a "no claims" letter from your U.S. car insurer
- [ ] Bring a 90-day supply of prescriptions
- [ ] Carry passports, orders and pet papers together
- [ ] Study the UK Highway Code for your driving test

Your first 30 days

Plan to attend the newcomer briefing and pass the 3rd Air Force driving exam in your first month. You join the housing waitlist only after the briefing.

FOUR-LEGGED FAMILY

Bringing pets to the UK

Great Britain is strict about pets, and the travel itself is the hardest part. Pets must fly as manifest cargo on an approved airline and route.

Four steps, in this order

1

Microchip

ISO 15-digit; implanted and read before the rabies shot.

FIRST

2

Rabies vaccine

At 12 weeks or older, at least 21 days before arrival.

21+ DAYS OUT

3

GB health certificate

A U.S. pet passport isn't accepted — you need the GB certificate.

BEFORE FLYING

4

Tapeworm (dogs)

Praziquantel treatment by a vet 1–5 days before arrival.

24–120 HOURS OUT

Pets arriving at Heathrow clear through the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre. Source: GOV.UK pet travel; City of London HARC.

Military-specific rules

- AMC flights don't carry pets to the UK — book a commercial airline
- Banned dogs: Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro and XL Bully
- Crates need metal hardware and reachable food and water dishes
- Pets can't fly in the cabin on U.S.-to-UK routes
- Dogs are judged by how they look, not their papers
- RAF Feltwell vet clinic: 01638 527097

Season and breed matter

Summer heat and snub-nosed breeds can rule out cargo flights. Talk to a pet shipper and the base vet early.

ON THE ROAD

Driving on the left

Roads are narrow, roundabouts are everywhere, and speed cameras are common. Most families ship one car or buy locally.

Getting your license

1

Study the Highway Code

The 3rd Air Force test is based on UK road rules and signs.

2

Pass the test

Bring your valid U.S. license; you get the USAFE driving and fuel permit.

3

Insure locally

UK insurance is mandatory; a U.S. no-claims letter can cut the cost.

Buying and owning a car

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW
Shipping	Bring the title or a lienholder letter; cars arrive at Mildenhall
First 72 hours	Register at Pass & Registration; drive only home or to the MOT
Light conversion	Required for U.S. cars; base shops can charge up to about $700
MOT	A yearly inspection for cars 3 years or older
Road tax	Paid yearly; shipped cars are exempt the first year
Fuel	The USAFE permit is required to buy fuel on base

Rules of the road

- Drive on the left; give way to the right at roundabouts
- Motorcycle riders need an MSF course and ECE-approved helmets
- Speed cameras are common, and fines arrive by mail
- Cars 10 years or older are often better left in the U.S.

WHERE TO LIVE

Housing, OHA and allowances

Overseas allowances replace BAH. There are about 1,000 base homes across Lakenheath, Mildenhall and Feltwell, so many families rent in nearby villages.

1
OHA
The lower of your rent or your rank cap, plus a monthly utility amount.

2
COLA
Paid to command-sponsored members; it shifts with the exchange rate.

3
MIHA and TLA
MIHA helps with setup; TLA covers lodging while you look.

Double-check your rates — OHA and COLA change often.
OHA: travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Overseas-Housing-Allowance/OHA-Rate-Lookup/
Overseas COLA: travel.dod.mil/allowances/overseas-cost-of-living-allowance/overseas-cola-rate-lookup/

Base housing LAKENHEATH · MILDENHALL · FELTWELL

- Register interest in advance through HEAT
- Families in base housing don't get OHA
- You join the waitlist after the newcomer briefing
- The Furnishings Office loans appliances and transformers

Living off base WITHIN 20 MILES OR 60 MINUTES

- Use homes.mil, Rightmove or Zoopla — and get Housing Office approval first
- Claim the council tax exemption with your orders
- Deposits are capped at five weeks' rent
- You need a TV licence for live TV or BBC iPlayer

Answer every council letter
Councils still send council tax bills each spring. Reply with your exemption form and orders so they don't pile up.

KIDS

Schools and child care

DoDEA runs schools at Lakenheath, Feltwell and Alconbury. Kids at Mildenhall attend Lakenheath and Feltwell schools.

AREA	SCHOOLS
Lakenheath	Elementary (PreK–3), Liberty Intermediate (4–5), Middle and High School
Feltwell	Feltwell Elementary (PreK–5)
Alconbury	Alconbury Elementary and Middle/High
Other sites	British schools or homeschool; Menwith Hill has no DoDEA school

British schools

An option for families who want a local experience.

Military Interstate Compact

DoDEA follows it for records, placement and graduation rules.

School Liaison

Lakenheath: +44 1638 52 5078.

Child care

- Request Child Development Center care on MilitaryChildCare.com as soon as you have orders
- Youth centers and teen programs run at Lakenheath and Mildenhall
- Family Child Care homes on base fill gaps
- British nurseries are an option off base

HEALTH CARE

Medical and dental

The UK is in the TRICARE Overseas Program. The 48th Medical Group at RAF Lakenheath is the main U.S. hospital, with a 24/7 emergency department.

1

48th Medical Group

RAF Lakenheath; 24/7 emergency department and weekday clinics.

2

Referrals

Specialty care goes through the Referral Management Center, often to NHS hospitals.

Before you go

- Complete overseas screening for every family member
- Get copies of medical, dental and shot records
- Ask how care works at smaller sites far from Lakenheath
- Bring a 90-day supply of prescriptions in original bottles
- Clinics close on federal holidays and some Wednesdays
- Learn the NHS 111 line for non-emergencies

Good to know

TOPIC	DETAIL
Emergencies	Dial 999 (112 also works)
Appointments	Lakenheath: 01638 52 8010; nurse line is option 5
Dental	Active duty uses base clinics; families use the TRICARE Dental Program overseas
Pharmacy	Bring prescriptions; some U.S. brands have UK equivalents

DAILY LIFE

Money, phones and daily life

English is spoken, but plenty is different — from plugs and phones to Sunday shopping hours.

Electricity

230V with three-pin Type G plugs. Loaner transformers are available.

Phones

U.S. DECT 6.0 cordless phones and baby monitors aren't legal here.

Recycling

Mandatory; each council sets its own rules.

Everyday details

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW
Money	Pounds sterling; VAT relief is available for some big purchases
Mail	APO address on base
Sunday shopping	Large stores may open for only six hours
Weather	Mild, gray and damp, with short winter days
Time zone	5 hours ahead of the U.S. East Coast

Get outside anyway

The weather is famously gray, but castles, cathedrals and countryside walks are minutes away. Bring a good raincoat.

LIVING IN THE UK

Culture, safety and the NEO go-bag

Local customs

- Queue politely and wait your turn
- Pubs order at the bar; tipping is modest
- Village life is quiet — be mindful of neighbors
- Learn local words: "flat," "lorry," "petrol" and "car park"
- Small talk about the weather is a national pastime

Safety

- Dial 999 for emergencies
- Look right first when crossing the street
- Country lanes are narrow and unlit at night
- Keep base ID with you
- Enroll in STEP for State Department alerts

NEO go-bag KEEP IT PACKED

- [ ] Passports, orders and ID cards for everyone
- [ ] Medications for at least a week
- [ ] Water, snacks and a flashlight
- [ ] Pet carrier, food and records
- [ ] Copies of birth and marriage certificates
- [ ] Cash in pounds and dollars
- [ ] Phone chargers and a battery pack
- [ ] A change of clothes for each person

NEO is part of overseas life

Command-sponsored families take part in noncombatant evacuation planning. Keep your NEO packet current and update it whenever your family changes.

BASE NOTES

Every U.S. site in the UK

RAF Lakenheath 48TH FIGHTER WING

- Main DoDEA campus and the 48th Medical Group hospital
- Housing Office: +44 1638 52 2101
- Military & Family Readiness Center: +44 1638 52 3847
- Popular villages include Lakenheath, Brandon, Thetford and Bury St Edmunds

SPONSOR | HOUSING OFFICE | LODGING | VET CLINIC

RAF Mildenhall 100TH ARW · 352ND SOW

- No schools on base — kids attend Lakenheath and Feltwell
- Gateway Inn: 01638 546001
- Vehicles arrive at the Mildenhall Vehicle Processing Center
- Airman & Family Readiness Center: 01638 543406

SPONSOR | HOUSING OFFICE | LODGING | CLINIC

Alconbury and Molesworth CAMBRIDGESHIRE

- Joint Analysis Center and NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre
- DoDEA elementary and middle/high schools

Croughton, Fairford and Menwith Hill SMALLER SITES

- Croughton is a worldwide communications hub; Fairford hosts bombers
- Menwith Hill is remote, with no DoDEA school

KEEP THIS HANDY

Contacts and links

Base numbers change often and use DSN or local formats. Write in your own from your sponsor and welcome packet.

OFFICE	DSN	FROM A CELL
Sponsor		
Housing office		
Lodging		
Family readiness center		
Clinic or hospital		
Vet clinic		

NUMBER	USE
999	Police, fire and ambulance
111	NHS non-emergency advice
01638 52 8010	Lakenheath appointments
+44 1638 52 5078	School Liaison

Links

GOV.UK pet travel · RAF Lakenheath newcomers · RAF Mildenhall newcomers · OHA Rate Lookup · Overseas COLA Rate Lookup · Plan My Move

Sources: RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall newcomer pages; Military OneSource UK installation pages; GOV.UK pet travel and banned dogs; Stars and Stripes UK housing guide; TV Licensing.

READY FOR THE FULL PLAYBOOK?

Go step by step with the kits.

Worksheets, trackers and a complete binder setup for every stage of your move.

pcslikeapro.org
hello@pcslikeapro.org

WORKSHEET

Pet tracker and budget

Pet import tracker

STEP	DATE DONE	PET 1	PET 2
Microchip number			
Rabies vaccine			
21 days ends			
GB health certificate			
Tapeworm treatment (dogs)			
Airline and route booked			
HARC clearance			
Base vet registration			

Monthly budget

ITEM	AMOUNT
OHA + utility allowance + COLA	$
Rent (if off base)	$
Utilities	$
Car insurance, MOT, road tax and fuel	$
Left over	$