# Britons embrace early airport drinking as part of holiday ritual despite moderation concerns



Travelling abroad often elicits a sense of excitement, as individuals immerse themselves in new cultures, savour different cuisines, and encounter unique customs. This vibrant experience can sometimes lead to surprising revelations about national behaviours, particularly when it comes to social drinking habits. Recently, an American visitor to a UK airport was taken aback by the scene she encountered: throngs of Britons indulging in alcohol, even at the early hour of 7 AM. This prompted her to post a video on TikTok, expressing her astonishment at what she perceived as a “party” atmosphere before take-off.

For many Britons, the airport is not merely a transit point but a prelude to adventure—a vortex where the normal rules of time and sobriety seem to dissipate. According to a study commissioned by Heathrow, approximately two-thirds of Brits view a drink at the airport as the true start of their holiday. This cultural norm underscores the British penchant for celebrating even before their journeys officially commence. The notion of a "pre-holiday pint" is not just about indulgence; it encapsulates a collective mindset that embraces relaxation and festivity as integral parts of the travel experience.

Yet, this tendency towards early drinking raises questions about responsible consumption. Notably, some lounges have instituted Fit2Fly policies aimed at ensuring that alcohol is consumed thoughtfully. These mandates are designed to prevent underage drinking and safeguard other patrons’ safety by monitoring consumption levels. Such measures highlight the growing recognition among airport lounges of the need for a balanced approach to alcohol service. After all, while enjoying a drink can enhance the travel experience, too much can lead to complications that might taint the journey.

Moreover, lounges have increasingly embraced this trend of indulgence, offering a luxurious environment complemented by self-serve alcohol options. Facilities often provide a range of premium beverages—ranging from whiskey to prosecco—inviting guests to pour as they please. This model of unlimited drinks not only attracts many customers but serves as a reminder of the fine line between enjoyment and excess.

Airport lounges across the UK are adapting to this burgeoning trend of pre-flight indulgence by enhancing their offerings. For instance, lounges like The No1 at Heathrow boast an array of hot and cold dishes alongside diverse beverage selections, starting from £34 for a three-hour visit. Meanwhile, exclusive lounges, like The Windsor at Heathrow, cater to elite travellers and offer exceptional amenities for a premium price. There, guests can experience gourmet meals and curated services, making their travel experience even more memorable.

Heathrow Airport has taken a proactive approach to this cultural phenomenon by partnering with renowned establishments like Gordon Ramsay Plane Food to create bespoke 'Airportifs'—special cocktails and mocktails designed to reflect British flavours. Available throughout October, these drinks serve both as a celebration of British culture and a subtle reminder to consume alcohol responsibly while travelling.

As the trend of pre-airport drinking continues to flourish, it remains vital for travellers to recognise the importance of moderation. Balancing the joy of indulging in drinks with a sense of responsibility not only enhances the travel experience but also prioritises the wellbeing of all passengers. Ultimately, while airports may serve as gateways to new adventures, they are also places where the starting line for many a holiday can spark both joyous celebrations and thoughtful reflections on responsible behaviour.

### Reference Map

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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/travel/articles/2053317/airport-lounge-alcohol-drinking-brits-UK-US> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/387933bc-f922-4f7c-b0e3-369f9d483bc1> - Heathrow's VIP lounge, The Windsor, has undergone a £3 million refurbishment, elevating its luxury and exclusivity for elite guests like royals, executives, and celebrities. Managed by Scottish twins Sonia Dixon and Adrienne 'Ade' Campbell since 1989, the lounge offers unparalleled privacy, security, and high-end amenities, including gourmet meals crafted by chef Jason Atherton. Customers, paying from £3,812 for two hours, benefit from dedicated baggage handling, immigration facilities, and direct limousine transfers to their flights. The Windsor's allure lies in its serene and private environment, contrasting the bustling airport, and boasts amenities like a curated art collection and a personal shopping service. Despite the sisters' long tenure and intimate bonds with high-profile guests, they remain dedicated to their roles over managerial positions, prioritizing direct interaction with clients.
3. <https://www.executivelounges.com/fit2fly> - Executive Lounges' Fit2Fly policy is designed to promote responsible alcohol consumption within airport lounges. The policy prohibits serving alcohol to individuals under 18 and reserves the right to eject guests whose behavior under the influence compromises the safety of others. Staff monitor alcohol consumption and will advise guests if their levels may pose a threat to travel plans. The policy emphasizes the importance of enjoying a drink responsibly to ensure a pleasant start to the journey.
4. <https://mediacentre.heathrow.com/pressrelease/detail/17945> - Research commissioned by Heathrow reveals that two-thirds of Brits consider a drink at the airport as the official start of their holiday. To celebrate this tradition, Heathrow has partnered with Gordon Ramsay Plane Food and Heston’s The Perfectionists’ Café to create four bespoke 'Airportifs'—two cocktails and two mocktails—crafted with 'Best of British' ingredients. The purple drinks, reflecting Heathrow’s brand colors, are available throughout October, with a reminder for passengers to always drink responsibly when traveling.
5. <https://www.businessinsider.com/airport-lounge-features-food-alcohol-crowded-2022-11> - A first-time visitor to an airport lounge shares their experience of unlimited self-serve alcohol, including beer, wine, and liquor, with no monitoring of consumption. The lounge offers a variety of alcoholic beverages, such as whiskey, bourbon, prosecco, chardonnay, and red wine, all available for guests to pour themselves. This self-serve model is a significant draw for travelers, with nearly everyone taking advantage of the free-flowing drinks.
6. <https://www.scotsman.com/read-this/best-uk-airport-lounge-deals-4629550> - An overview of various UK airport lounges, highlighting their offerings and prices. For instance, the No1 Lounge at Heathrow Terminal 3 provides a selection of hot and cold food, premium beers, wines, spirits, and unlimited Wi-Fi, with prices starting at £34 per person for up to three hours. The Plaza Premium Lounge at Terminal 4 serves British and international cuisine, with children welcome and unlimited Wi-Fi. The 1432 Runway Club offers complimentary light meals, a glass of bubbles on arrival, and an extensive array of premium beverages, including alcohol, with prices starting at £49 for up to three hours.
7. <https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/media-centre/press-release/2023/03/09/cheers-british-airways-and-american-airlines-raise-a-glass-to-blake-livelys-betty-buzz-and-ryan-reynolds-aviation-american-gin-at-jfk-terminal-8-lounge> - British Airways and American Airlines have enhanced the Greenwich Lounge at JFK Airport's Terminal 8 by introducing the Bridge Bar, featuring a variety of non-alcoholic and alcoholic cocktails, including Aviation American Gin and Betty Buzz. This collaboration marks the first time these beverage brands have come together, offering passengers a unique pre-flight experience with a selection of spirited and non-spirited drinks.