



New York Cabbies vs. UK Black

What differentiates a black cab driver from a New York Cabbie? All of the official London cab drivers are required to pass a test called “The Knowledge”. The Knowledge may take anywhere between 2-4 years to acquire and many claim it comes from having an extraordinary memory. London taxi drivers are said to have a part of the brain governing spatial and visual information that is double the size of an average persons. In an article in BBC online, Dr Eleanor Maguire exam-

ined the hippocampus of numerous black cab drivers and says (the frontal area of the brain) it has changed its structure to accommodate the huge amount of navigating experience. The fact is, London taxi drivers have a detailed knowledge of at least 25,000 streets, joined with a general knowledge of all the major routes running throughout London. The Knowledge is also accredited for having a constant interaction with London’s people meaning they are extremely connected with what is

happening in the life of the city.

There’s no better way to see London than by a black taxi. The Knowledge are available as personal guides allowing visitors and residents the opportunity to see London at their own pace stopping whenever and where ever they please. Passengers can decide how long they want to spend at each tourist attraction and may also customize their own itinerary for their travelling needs.

Now Let’s Compare...

Examinations:

New York Cabbies - score of 70 or better (out of a possible 100 points) on a 50 question exam

The Knowledge - seven stages of testing including a written test, driving test and numerous one-to-one interviews

Who wants to be a cab driver:

New York Cabbie - immigrants to better their income

The Knowledge - high school and college graduates

Length of training:

New York Cabbie - 3 day course

The Knowledge - 2-4 years

Routes memorized:

New York Cabbie - n/a (not specified in text)

The Knowledge - 320 routes

Number one reason for being a cab driver:

New York Cabbie - to make money

The Knowledge - to be known as “the Knowledge”



continued... So how does one become “The Knowledge”? Black cab drivers endure extensive mental training before receiving the badge of honor. They study for numerous exams over a period of 2-4 years testing their knowledge on the best routes from a start to finish point. By the time of their graduation, black cab drivers are experts on 320 routes within a six mile radius circling Charing

Cross, the central hub in the city of London. Black cab drivers have a mental map of the city and can tell the history behind each monument, museum, cathedral, park, and fun facts about particular buildings and residences.

Black cab driver trainee, Mark Harrington, says, “Training is tuff, but I knew what I was getting into and I’m for the challenge.” Harrington has been training

for seven months and currently preparing for the second stage in training: the examination. With a total of seven stages Harrington hopes to complete the last stage by the end of 2008. “I have finished the initial assessment and taken a mock exam on the first five lists (80 routes) and I’ve got quite a bit more to study before taking the stage two examination of the remaining 240 routes.”

Stage 1: self assessment practice test (given 6 months to study)

Stage 2: two part written examination

Stages 3-5: in each of stages 3, 4, and 5 several examinations are to be taken.

As one progresses from one stage to the next, the intervals between examinations will become shorter starting from 8 weeks to 3 weeks.

Stage 5: driving test

Stage 6: Single oral one-to-one examination on suburban area routes

Stage 7: Final talk and presentation of taxi driver’s licence and badge

