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# LONDON



London, the capital city of England, originally occupied just the left bank of the river Thames. The city now boasts 32 districts and 7 million inhabitants. Its residents come from the four corners of the globe, speak a total of over 300 languages and represent all the world's religions. London is a city with many hearts, which the visitor can find both fascinating and at the same time disorientating.

**LONDON AT A GLANCE - TRANSPORTS - DON'T MISS THE CLASSICS! - TO WALK - SHOPPING AND MARKETS - EAT AND DRINK - RESTAURANTS - GOING OUT - USEFUL EMERGENCY NUMBERS - HOTELS AND HOSTELS**

## » LONDON AT A GLANCE...

The city's many centres are in a state of constant change, both architecturally and socially. London is a busy and complex city, an intricate web of buildings, spaces and people; where there is the



ever present risk for the visitor of getting lost. London is vast and would require months in order to explore it in-depth! But don't worry! A list of things to see could also be misleading, given the richness and diversity of what the city has to offer. You can also count on valid public transportations: buses, tube...or why not? Experience a ride on the famous cabs! In any case, for a few days in London, organize your time and your ideas. First thing to

do: pop in at any newsagent and ask for the **LONDON A-Z**, a pocket-sized map book. It will help you finding your way around the chaos! For now have a look to some tips for you! For your convenience we divided the city in **5 big areas** which contain the highest concentration of London's major sights of, as we like

to say, 'the best of': 1. Westminster; 2. Trafalgar Square; 3. Whitehall, Soho, South Kensington; 4. Knightsbridge; South Bank.

1. The area of **Westminster**, a short distance up-river, began to develop in the 11th Century, shortly after the Norman conquest. Home to Westminster Abbey, the coronation site and the final resting place for England's Kings and Queens, which today functions both as an official church and a national museum.

The road which, runs along the river from Westminster to The City, is the most important in London. This road bears two names, at its starting point, it is referred to as the Strand, whilst in The City it has the name Fleet Street. In order to protect the city and its port, the Norman kings built the **Tower of London**. The building, which also served as a prison, and home to the English kings from William the Conqueror to James 1st, now houses the crown jewels.

2. **Buckingham Palace**, the official London residence of the Queen, stands at one end of St James' Park.



The park's grounds stretch from Parliament to Trafalgar Square, home to the tall column, which commemorates Lord Nelson. Take the typical picture on the bronze lions with the National Gallery on

the background to send home! Number 10 Downing Street, is located a short distance away and is the official residence of the British Prime Minister.

3. The elegant districts of **West End, Mayfair, Belgravia and Kensington** stretch to the north and west of Westminster, and contain numerous spacious parks: St James, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Regent's Park, Soho and Bloomsbury.

These districts are criss-crossed by large busy streets where shopping is a 'must': Piccadilly, Bond Street, Park Lane, Knightsbridge, Regent's Street, Oxford Street, Charing Cross Road and Haymarket.

4. In the eastern part of the city, in the boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark, the area of the old docks serves as a reminder of the poverty of this zone of the city. The residential districts stretch throughout the city towards the green slopes of Hampstead, Highgate and St John's Wood and onwards to Wimbledon and Richmond parks; ideal for those who love long walks.

5. **South Bank** an area of incredible

history that from a rural heaven of green fields has become home to



the great national centres of art and culture, a vibrant community of artists of new generations and some of the finest achievements in architecture, such as the London Eye (the world's tallest observation wheel offering spectacular views across London; [www.ba-londoneye.com](http://www.ba-londoneye.com); ph: +44 (20) 870 990 8883), The Old Vic Theatre (one of the oldest theatres in the city on which stage performed great actors of the last century and it is now under the artistic direction of

Kevin Spacey; [www.oldvictheatre.com](http://www.oldvictheatre.com); ph: +44 (20) 870 060 66 28). Other interesting sites to see in this area: Jubilee Gardens, Royal Festival Hall (free performances in the foyer every weekday lunchtime: [www.rfh.org.uk](http://www.rfh.org.uk); reopens in Summer 2007), Hayward Gallery, the largest most versatile public art exhibition space in the country ([www.hayward.org.uk](http://www.hayward.org.uk)) and the BFI London IMAX Cinemas that allows you to watch 2D and 3D movies with ultra-realistic digital sounds and images on its largest cinema screens in UK ([www.bfi.org.uk/imax](http://www.bfi.org.uk/imax); ph +44 (20) 870 787 2525)

## » TRANSPORTS

The **public transport network** is enormous. London is divided into five circular zones and tickets are valid for individual travel within each zone. Visitors usually limit themselves to travelling within the first three zones. It is recommended to purchase a **Travelcard**, available from station ticket-booths. Once purchased, the Travelcard permits the holder to travel anywhere within the chosen zone on all means of public transport, including the Docklands Light Railway and the British Rail trains within that zone.

The Travelcard is not valid during public holidays, for night-time bus journeys or before 9:30 am. The Weekly Travelcard is valid 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for travel in the chosen zone.



It is possible to view the city from one of the famous **red double-decker buses**. The buses leave daily from Piccadilly Circus every half hour from 10am until 5pm. The faster, single-decker, red buses run from Westminster to Victoria (line C1) from Monday to Saturday and operate a fixed-rate fare.

The London Metropolitan, **the Tube**, is the oldest underground system in the world. The system operates every day of the year with the exception of Christmas Day. From Monday to Saturday the first train is 5:30 am, the last 11.30; on Sunday 7.30am /12:30. Each of the eleven lines has both a name and

a colour.

Taxis, called black cabs, charge high fares; minicabs, which can be pre-booked by phone, are less expensive and call directly to the door.

## » DON'T MISS THE CLASSICS!

A mid-week visit to the **British Museum**, in Great Russell Street, is highly recommended. Entrance is free and the museum houses the world's largest collection of antique art. The museum also has



a large and well-stocked book and souvenir shop. Tube stop; Russell Square on the Holborn Line. British Museum (Great Russell Street, WC1 ph: +44 (20) 73 23 82 99; [www.thebritishmuseum.as.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.as.uk))

Catch the Charing Cross line to Trafalgar Square in order to visit the **National Gallery**. (ph. +44

(20) 7747 2885 [www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk) ). It is advisable to divide the gallery tour into various different days, in order to see its vast quantity of European masterpieces. Entrance is free and the gallery houses a café, restaurant and a book and souvenir shop. Tube nearest stops: Charing Cross, Leicester Square, Embankment.

The **Victoria and Albert Museum** has galleries housing paintings, designs, sculptures and clothing. Admission to the Museum is free but some exhibitions and events carry a separate charge. A café and self service restaurant are located in the gallery court yard. ([www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk); openings hours 10 - 5.45pm daily; 10am to 10 pm Wednesdays and the last Friday of the month) Tube stop: Cromwell Road on the South Kensington line.

**The Tate Britain** (Millbank, SW1, ph: +44 (20) 7887 8000; [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk) ; email: [visiting.britain@tate.org.uk](mailto:visiting.britain@tate.org.uk) ) houses London's second great collection of art, after the national Gallery. It hosts important contemporary art exhibitions. Entrance is free. The gallery is located on the Pimlico tube- line.

For post-modern art you cannot miss **the Tate Modern** (Bankside, SE1, ph: +44 (20) 788 788 88; [visiting.modern@tate.org.uk](mailto:visiting.modern@tate.org.uk) )

Admission to the gallery is free, but donations from visitors are needed to support the gallery's work...even with a coffee at the cafeteria! Tate Modern is located on the south bank of the River Thames at Bankside, near Blackfriars Bridge, opposite St Paul's Cathedral and next to the Globe Theatre. Tube stops at: Southwark (Jubilee Line) and Blackfriars (District and Circle Lines) approximately ten minutes walk away.

### » Other...

Visit **Kew gardens**: its historic green-houses, allow the visitor to admire the vast assortment of flora gathered from around the world. The Gardens are open



every day EXCEPT Christmas Eve and Christmas Day when we are closed. ([www.rbgekew.org.uk](http://www.rbgekew.org.uk); email: [info@kew.org](mailto:info@kew.org) or ph: +44 (20) 8332 5655 ) Many special activities and tours for children as the 'Cactus Trail, 'Climbers and creepers', etc. Tube stop: Kew Bridge.

**Covent Gardens**: don't miss this typical London area! Covent Garden hosts events and celebrations in all manner of ways all through the year, and the daily routine includes street entertainment performances seven days a week. Many of Europe's most celebrated theatres, museums, galleries and other places of interest are here; there is always plenty to see and do in and around Covent Garden. What's on now? See here: [www.coventgarden.uk.com/whatson.html](http://www.coventgarden.uk.com/whatson.html) or our latest Flashnews! <http://www.flashbooking.com/listnews.do?news.html>

By the way: Covent Garden is where you can find all the hippest clothes shops! J

Animals are you thing in every sense? You can chose between the **London Zoo** ( Regent's Park, NW1, ph: +44 (20) 772233 33 [www.londonzoo.co.uk](http://www.londonzoo.co.uk); Tube nearest stop: Camden Town and then a 10 min. walk ) or the **Natural History Museum** ( Cromwell Road, SW7,

ph. +44 (20) 794 250 00 [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)) Tube stop: South Kensington on District, Circle and Piccadilly lines.

### » TO WALK

- One of the most evocative **walks in the city**, is a stroll along the banks of the River Thames, best undertaken either early in the morning or late in the evening, when the light reflects off the water, the bridges and the fronts of buildings. Depart from Waterloo Station on the south bank of the river, an ideal view point to appreciate the city's myriads of colours.



- A visit to the South Bank Centre is a must. This complex houses cinemas, museums, gardens, theatres, art galleries and the Bramah Museum: a museum dedicated to coffee and tea, which has a shop with the same

theme, located below Tower Bridge. We suggest you take a ride on the world's biggest observation wheel as first thing to do when in Town!

- Exploring the English countryside, especially along the West Coast, is possible either by car, boat, on foot or using public transport.

## » SHOPPING AND MARKETS

London can satisfy the shopping tastes of everyone. Naturally it helps to know where the best places to shop are located. There are shops which offer end of line and designer sales; articles of fashion from past collections and second hand shops, which are now very much in vogue.

The various flea markets are a veritable treasure trove: Bermondey Market (Tower Hill tube-stop, bus route 78), Portobello market in Portobello Road (Notting Hill Gate or Ladbroke Grove tube-stop), Camden Lock (Camden tube-stop). For Victorian Antiques. Camden Passage (Angel tube-stop). For fashion shops and boutiques: Sloane Street.. Marks and Spencer is located in Oxford Street. Marble Arch is home to Virgin, HMV, H&M, Top Shop, Borders, Next, Gap and Muji.

Burberry, Aquascutum, Church's, 80 Jaeger, Country Casuals, Dickins and Jones and Hamleys are all located in Regent Street.

Covent Garden is the place to go to find oriental handcrafts and food.

The Charing Cross bookstores offer rare and antique books covering all topics (Leicester Square tube-stop).



The large department stores are original but the visitor can find the size of these shops a little disorientating: Harrods, Harvey Nichols (Knightsbridge tube-stop) and Liberty's in Regent Street.

Most districts have their own fruit and flower markets. Brixton (Brixton tube-stop) is the most interesting and exotic in the south of London, with Afro-Caribbean food, fashion and music.

The Leadenhall Market has a medieval theme (Bank tube-stop).

## » EAT AND DRINK

London offers international cuisine from around the world. With the creative and refined high-quality of its chefs, London has become the mecca of gastronomy. Global Food, modern European and Cal/Ital (a mix of Italian and Californian) are the terms used to describe this phenomena. There is food from every continent and country from Peruan to Lebanese. If you are a Far East Food Fan (Thai, Indian, Vietnamese, Pakistan, etc), consider going to South London to Southall, Wembley (Ealing Road) or Tooting.

Remember: the majority of the restaurants serve lunch from 12.30 to 2.30pm and dinner from 7pm to 11pm. The pubs open from 11am to 11pm Monday to Saturday and from 12 to 3pm and 7pm to 11pm on Sundays.

If you are in Covent Garden vicinity, Frank's Café in Neal Street can satisfy your hunger with cheap still generous meals for your after shopping hunger! Open Mon-Sat 7.30am-7.30pm.

The Gordon's Wine Bar, 47 in Villiers Street (beside Embankment Tube

stop) offer traditional English meals from 6 euros. It's been running since 1890. Try that old British atmosphere! Open Mon-Sat 11am-11pm; 12pm-10pm on Sun.



Want to cherish a London sunset? Relax with a chilled drink at the National Film Theatre at South Bank: the outdoor terrace is just perfect for long lazy afternoons. (on Waterloo Bridge)

## » RESTAURANTS

Fancy, chic dinner? Try the Gordon Restaurants: fantastic and excellent cuisine. Not cheap but fans say the food worths the bill! Reserve in advance! Smart with jackets preferred for gentlemen. Jeans, T-shirts or sportswear not accepted. All major credit cards. Smoking is not permitted. [www.gordonramsay.com](http://www.gordonramsay.com)

The Ivy restaurant in Covent Garden: one of the most renowned restaurants in London but still affordable. Great variety of Vegetarian and Vegan dishes. Average price 60 Euros. ( Address: 1, West Street, Covent Garden. Nearest Tube: Leicester Square; ph. +44 0871 22 38 001 [www.the-ivy.co.uk](http://www.the-ivy.co.uk))

## » GOING OUT

London has a very active night life and going out in the evening is part of any London holiday. Every evening there is a wide choice of entertainment from drag acts to comedy from dance clubs to classical music. Choosing is made easier by the publication of the magazines you can usually find for free in the hotels halls. They give detailed information on what the city has to offer.

An evening in the discotheque usually follows a pre-chosen theme, with the show starting around 11pm. For a good night out go to Shoreditch, Notting Hill, Brixton, Clerkenwell. The hottest clubs are (for now!) the Fabric, Plastic People and Herbal. Where you can enjoy a night dancing the most recent beats.

Recommend also: the Aquarium,

Cargo, Cherry Jam, Café de Paris!  
The rest it's up to you!

Tickets for exhibitions and shows are bought well in advance from the ticket booths located at Charing Cross Road and Shaftesbury Avenue. London is second to none in offering classical music concerts. Don't miss a concert at the Royal



Philharmonic Orchestra ([www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk))

London's world famous theatres include Covent Garden, the English National Theatre ([www.nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk)) and the English National Opera ([www.eno.org](http://www.eno.org)).

Now you just need to find your accommodation in town with

[www.flashbooking.com](http://www.flashbooking.com)

Flashbooking staff  
wishes you a pleasant stay!

## » USEFUL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Area Code: +44 (UK) 020 (London).  
 International Free Call Centre: 155  
 Currency: British Pound  
 Electricity: 220 Volts AC/50Hz. 3-pin plug.  
 Main Tourist Office: Britain Visitor Centre, 1 Lower Regent St., Piccadilly Circus, London SW1Y 4XT  
 Banks open: 10 to 3.30 pm Mon-Fri.  
 Yellow Pages: 118 247  
 Wheatear Forecasting: (+44) 08706 004 242  
 Post Offices are open from 9am -5.30 pm Mon-Fri and till 12.30 on Sat.  
 Central Post Office: 24-28 William IV St, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N  
 Royal Mail (+44) 0845 7740 740 [www.royalmail.com](http://www.royalmail.com)  
 Police, Fire, Ambulance: 999 (free toll 24/7 ONLY for real emergencies!)  
 Emergency Dentist Service: (+44) 020 7837 3646 (for children only)  
 Guy's Hospital: (+44) 020 79 55 43 17  
 Rape Crisis Federation of England and Wales: (+44) 0115 900 3560 [www.rapecrisis.co.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.co.uk)  
 Samaritans for Psychological Problems 24/7: (+44) 0845 79 09 090; [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)



[samaritans.org.uk](http://samaritans.org.uk)  
 Disabled Living Foundation: (+44) 0207289 6111  
 Royal National Institute for the Blind: (+44) 0845 766 9999 [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
 Pregnancy Advisory Service: (+44) 08457 30 40 30 [www.bpas.org](http://www.bpas.org)

## EMBASSIES / HIGH COMMISSIONS / CONSULATES

US: +44 (0)20 7499 9000 (E)  
 Canada: +44 (0)20 7258 6600 (HC)  
 Australia: +44 (0)20 7379 4334 (HC)  
 S. Africa: +44 (0)20 74517299 (E)  
 Ireland: +44 (0)20 7235 2171 (HC)  
 Germany: +44 (0)20 7824 1300 (E)  
 Spain: +44 (0)20 7235 5555 (E)  
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