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The Definitive Guide to London

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With a population of just under eight million, London is Europe's largest city, spreading across an area of more than 620 square miles from its core on the River Thames. Ethnically it's also Europe's most diverse metropolis: around two hundred languages are spoken within its confines, and more than thirty percent of the population is made up of first, second- and third-generation immigrants. Despite Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish devolution, London still dominates the national horizon, too: this is where the country's news and money are made, it's where the central government resides and, as far as its inhabitants are concerned, provincial life begins beyond the circuit of the city's orbital motorway. Londoners' sense of superiority causes enormous resentment in the regions, yet it's undeniable that the capital has a unique aura of excitement and success - in most walks of British life, if you want to get on you've got to do it in London.

For the visitor, too, London is a thrilling place - and since the beginning of the new millennium, the city has also been overtaken by an exceptionally buoyant mood. Thanks to the lottery and millennium-oriented funding frenzy of the last few years, virtually every one of London's world-class museums, galleries and institutions has been reinvented, from the Royal Opera House to the British Museum. With the completion of the Tate Modern and the London Eye, the city can now boast the world's largest modern art gallery and Ferris wheel; there's also a new tube extension and the first new bridge to cross the Thames for over a hundred years. And after sixteen years of being the only major city in the world *not* to have its own governing body, London finally has its own elected mayor and assembly.

In the meantime, London's traditional sights - Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, St Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London - continue to draw in millions of tourists every year. Monuments from the capital's more glorious past are everywhere to be seen, from medieval banqueting halls and the great churches of Sir Christopher Wren to the eclectic Victorian architecture of the triumphalist British Empire. There is also much enjoyment to be had from the city's quiet Georgian squares, the narrow alleyways of the City of London, the riverside walks, and the quirks of what is still identifiably a collection of villages. And even London's traffic pollution - one of its worst problems - is offset by surprisingly large expanses of greenery: Hyde Park, Green Park and St James's Park are all within a few minutes' walk of the West End, while, further afield, you can enjoy the more expansive parklands of Hampstead Heath and Richmond Park.

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You could spend days just shopping in London, too, hobnobbing with the upper classes in Harrods, or sampling the offbeat weekend markets of Portobello Road and Camden. The music, clubbing and gay/lesbian scenes are second to none, and mainstream arts are no less exciting, with regular opportunities to catch brilliant theatre companies, dance troupes, exhibitions and opera. Restaurants, these days, are an attraction, too. London has caught up with its European rivals, and offers a range from three-star Michelin establishments to low-cost, high-quality Indian curry houses. Meanwhile, the city's pubs have heaps of atmosphere, especially away from the centre - and an exploration of the farther-flung communities is essential to get the complete picture of this dynamic metropolis

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Introducing the City

Stretching for more than thirty miles at its broadest point, **London** is by far the largest city in Europe. The majority of its sights are situated to the north of the River Thames, which loops through the city from west to east. However, there is no single predominant focus of interest, for London has grown not through centralized planning but by a process of agglomeration - villages and urban developments that once surrounded the core are now lost within the amorphous mass of Greater London.

One of the few areas that you can easily explore on foot is **Westminster and Whitehall**, the city's royal, political and ecclesiastical power base, where you'll find the National Gallery and a host of other London landmarks, from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey and Big Ben. The grand streets and squares of **St James's**, **Mayfair and Marylebone**, to the north of Westminster, have been the playground of the rich since the Restoration, and now contain the city's busiest shopping zones.

East of Piccadilly Circus, **Soho and Covent Garden** are also easy to walk around and form the heart of the West End entertainment district, containing the largest concentration of theatres, cinemas, clubs, flashy shops, cafés and restaurants. To the north lies the university quarter of **Bloomsbury**, home to the ever-popular British Museum, and the secluded quadrangles of Holborn's Inns of Court, London's legal heartland.

The City - the City of London, to give it its full title - is at one and the same time the most ancient and the most modern part of London. Settled since Roman times, it is now one of the world's great financial centres, yet retains its share of historic sights, notably the Tower of London and a fine cache of Wren churches that includes St Paul's Cathedral. Despite creeping trendification, the **East End**, to the east of the City, is not conventional tourist territory, but to ignore it entirely is to miss out a crucial element of contemporary London. **Docklands** is the converse of the down-at-heel East End, with the Canary Wharf tower, the country's tallest building, epitomizing the pretensions of the Thatcherite dream.

Lambeth and Southwark comprise the small slice of central London that lies south of the Thames. The South Bank Centre, London's little-loved concrete culture bunker, is enjoying a new lease of life thanks to its proximity to the new Tate Gallery of Modern Art in Bankside, which is linked to the City by a new pedestrian bridge.

The largest segment of greenery in central London is Hyde Park, which separates wealthy **Kensington and Chelsea** from



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the city centre. The **museums** of South Kensington - the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Science Museum and the Natural History Museum - are a must; and if you have shopping on your agenda, you'll want to check out the hive of plush stores in the vicinity of Harrods.

The capital's most hectic weekend market takes place around Camden Lock in **North London** . Further out, in the literary suburbs of Hampstead and Highgate, there are unbeatable views across the city from half-wild Hampstead Heath, the favourite parkland of thousands of Londoners. The glory of **South London** is Greenwich, with its nautical associations, royal park and observatory (not to mention its Dome). Finally, there are plenty of rewarding day-trips along the Thames from **Chiswick to Windsor** , most notably Hampton Court Palace and Windsor Castle.

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When to go

Considering the temperateness of the English climate, it's amazing how much mileage the locals get out of the subject - a two-day cold snap is discussed as if it were the onset of a new Ice Age, and a week in the upper 70s starts rumours of drought. The fact is that English summers rarely get hot and the winters don't get very cold, though they're often wet. The bottom line is that it's impossible to say with any degree of certainty that the weather will be pleasant in any given month. May might be wet and grey one year and gloriously sunny the next, and the same goes for the autumnal months - November stands an equal chance of being crisp and clear or foggy and grim.

As far as crowds go, tourists stream into London pretty much all year round, with peak season from Easter to October, and the biggest crush in July and August, when you'll need to book your accommodation well in advance. Costs, however, are pretty uniform year-round

	°F AVERAGE DAILY	°C AVERAGE DAILY	Rainfall AVERAGE MONTHLY	
			INCHES	MILLIMETRES
January	42	5	2.1	54
February	43	6	1.6	40
March	46	8	1.5	37
April	51	11	1.5	37
May	56	14	1.8	46
June	62	17	1.8	46
July	65	18	2.2	57
August	65	18	2.3	59
September	60	16	1.9	49
October	54	12	2.2	57
November	48	9	2.5	64
December	44	6	1.9	48

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Arrival

London's international airports are all less than an hour from the city centre, and the city's train and bus terminals are all pretty central, and have tube stations close at hand.

Airports

Flying into London, you'll arrive at one of the capital's five **international airports** : Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton or City Airport.

Heathrow , twelve miles west of the city, has four terminals, and two train/tube stations: one for terminals 1, 2 and 3, and a separate one for terminal 4. The high-speed **Heathrow Express** trains travel non-stop to Paddington Station (every 15min; 15-20min) for £12 each way or £22 return. A much cheaper alternative is to take the slow Piccadilly **Underground** line into central London (every 2-5min; 50min) for £3.50. If you plan to make several sightseeing journeys on your arrival day, buy a multi-zone One-Day Travelcard for £4.70. There is also **Airbus #2**, which runs from outside all four Heathrow terminals to several destinations in the city (every 30min; 1hr) and costs £7 single, £12 return. From midnight, you'll have to take **night bus #N97** to Trafalgar Square (every 30min; 1hr 10min) for a bargain £1.50. **Taxis** are plentiful, but cost at least £35 to central London, and take around an hour (longer in the rush hour).

Gatwick , thirty miles to the south, has two terminals, North and South, connected by a monorail. The non-stop **Gatwick Express** train runs day and night between the South Terminal and Victoria Station (every 15-30min; 30min) for £9.50. Other options include the **Connex South Central** service to Victoria (every 30min; 40min) for £8.20, or **Thameslink** to King's Cross (every 15-30min; 50min) for £9.50. **Airbus #5** runs from both terminals to Victoria Coach Station (hourly; 1hr 30min) and costs £8 single, £10 return. A taxi ride into central London will set you back £50 or more, and take at least an hour.

Stansted , London's swankiest international airport, lies 34 miles northeast of the capital, and is served by the **Stansted Express** to Liverpool Street (every 15-30min; 45min), which costs £12 single, £22 return. **Airbus #6** or **#7** also runs to Victoria Coach Station (hourly; 1hr 15min), and costs £8 single, £10 return. A taxi into central London will cost £50 or more, and take at least an hour.

Luton airport (tel 01582/405100; www.london-luton.com) is roughly thirty miles north of the city centre, and mostly handles



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charter flights. Luton Airport Parkway station is connected by **rail** to King's Cross and other stations in central London, with **Thameslink** running trains every fifteen minutes, plus one or two throughout the night; the journey takes thirty to forty minutes; the single fare is £9.50, returns are £16.90. **Green Line** (tel 0870/6087261) buses run approximately every hour from Luton to Victoria Station, taking around an hour and a half, and costing £7.50 single, £12 return. A **taxi** will cost in the region of £70 and take at least an hour from central London.

London's smallest airport, **City Airport** , is situated in Docklands, nine miles east of central London. It handles European flights only, and is connected by shuttle bus with Canning Town (every 5min; 5min), and Canary Wharf (every 10min; 10min) for £2, plus Liverpool Street (every 10min; 25-35min) for £5. A taxi into central London will cost around £15 and take half an hour or so.

Train and Coach Stations

Eurostar trains arrive at **Waterloo International** , south of the river. Trains from the Channel ports arrive at **Charing Cross** or **Victoria** train stations; boat trains from Harwich arrive at **Liverpool Street** . Arriving by train from elsewhere in Britain, you'll come into one of London's numerous main-line stations, all of which have adjacent Underground stations linking into the city centre's tube network. Coaches terminate at **Victoria Coach Station** , a couple of hundred yards south down Buckingham Palace Road from the train station and Underground.

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City Transport

London's transport network is among the most complex and expensive in the world. The London Transport (LT) **travel information office**, at Piccadilly Circus tube station (daily 9am-6pm), will provide free transport maps; there are other desks at Euston Station, Heathrow (terminals 1, 2 and 3), King's Cross, Liverpool Street, Paddington and Victoria stations. There's also a 24-hour phone line for transport information (tel 020/7222 1234), and a Web site giving real-time travel news (www.londontransport.co.uk). If you can, avoid travelling during the **rush hour** (Mon-Fri 8-9.30am & 5-7pm) when tubes become unbearably crowded, and some buses become full to overflowing.

Travelcards

To get the best value out of the transport system, buy a **Travelcard**. Available from machines and booths at all tube and train stations, and at some newsagents (look for the sticker), these are valid for the bus, tube, Docklands Light Railway, and suburban rail networks.

One-Day Travelcards, valid on weekdays from 9.30am and all day at weekends, cost £3.90 (central zones 1 and 2), rising to £4.70 for all zones (1-6, including Heathrow); the respective **Weekend Travelcards**, for unlimited travel on Saturday and Sunday, cost £5.80 for zones 1-2, and £7 for zones 1-6. If you need to travel before 9.30am on a weekday, but don't need to use suburban trains, you can buy a **One-Day LT Card**, which costs from £5 (zones 1 and 2) to £7.50 (all zones). **Weekly Travelcards** are even more economical, beginning at £18.20 for zones 1 and 2; for these cards you need a **photocard**, available free of charge from tube and train stations on presentation of a passport-sized photo.

The Tube

The eleven different London Underground - or **tube** - lines cross much of the metropolis, although London south of the river is not very well covered. Each line has its own colour and name - all you need to know is which direction you're travelling in: northbound, eastbound, southbound or westbound. Services operate from around 5.30am Monday to Saturday, and from 7.30am on Sundays, and end around midnight every day; you rarely have to wait more than five minutes for a train between central stations.

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Tickets must be bought in advance from the machines or booths in station entrance halls; if you cannot produce a valid ticket, you will be charged an on-the-spot Penalty Fare of £10. A single journey in the central zone costs an unbelievable £1.50; a **Carnet** of ten tickets costs £11. If you're intending to travel about a lot, however, a Travelcard is by far your best bet.

Buses

Tickets for all bus journeys within, to or from the central zone costs a flat fare of £1; journeys outside the central zone cost 70p. Normally you pay the driver on entering, but some routes are covered by older Routemaster buses, staffed by a conductor and with an open rear platform. Note that at request stops (easily recognizable by their red sign) you must stick your arm out to hail the bus you want. In addition to the Travelcards, a **One-Day Bus Pass** is also available and can be used before 9.30am; it costs £3 for zones 1 and 2.

Regular buses run between about 6am and midnight; **night buses** (prefixed with the letter "N") operate outside this period. Night bus routes radiate out from Trafalgar Square at hourly intervals, more frequently on some routes and on Friday and Saturday nights. Fares are a flat £1.50 from central London; only weekly, monthly or yearly Travelcards are valid on these.

Suburban Trains

Large areas of London's suburbs are best reached by the **suburban train** network (Travelcards valid). Wherever a sight can only be reached by overground train, we've indicated the nearest train station and the central terminus from which you must depart. If you're planning to use the railway network a lot, you might want to purchase a **Network Railcard**, which is valid for a year, costs £20, and gives you up to 34 percent discount on fares to destinations in and around the southeast. To find out about a particular service, phone **National Rail Enquiries** on 8457/484950.

Taxis

If you're in a group of three or more, London's metered **black cabs** can be an economical way of getting around the centre - a ride from Euston to Victoria, for example, should cost around £10. A yellow light over the windscreen tells you if the cab is available - just stick your arm out to hail it. (If you want to book one in advance, call 020/7272 0272.)

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Minicabs are less reliable than black cabs, but considerably cheaper, so you might want to take one back from a late-night club. Most minicabs are not metered, so always establish the fare beforehand. If you want to be certain of a woman driver, call Ladycabs (tel 020/7254 3501).

[Boats](#)

Boat services on the Thames still do not form part of an integrated public transport system, and Travelcards are not currently valid on the river. So for the moment at least, travelling by boat remains a leisure pastime and not really a commuting option. There are regular services between central London and Greenwich, and, in the summer, even as far upstream as Hampton Court. **Timetables and services** are complex, however; for a full list, pick up the Thames river services booklet from an LT travel information office, phone 020/7222 1234 or visit www.londontransport.co.uk.

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Eating

Cafes and Snacks

This section covers **cafés** , **coffee bars** , **ice-cream parlours** and **tearooms** , all of which you'll find open during the day for light snacks or just a drink. Some of them also provide full evening meals, and, as they make no pretence to being full-on restaurants, you can use them for an inexpensive or quick bite before going out to a theatre, cinema or club.

The listings here cover the full range, from unreconstructed workers cafés, where you can get traditional English breakfasts, fish and chips, pies and other calorific treats, to the refined salons of London's top hotels, where you can enjoy an Afternoon Tea blowout

Restaurants

London is a great place in which to **eat out** . You can sample more or less any kind of cuisine here, and, wherever you come from, you should find something new and quite possibly unique. Home to some of the best Cantonese restaurants in the whole of Europe, London is also a noted centre for Indian and Bangladeshi food, and has numerous French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Thai restaurants; and within all these cuisines, you can choose anything from simple meals to gourmet spreads. Traditional and modern British food is available all over town, and we've reviewed some of the best venues.

Another bonus is that there are plenty of places to eat around the main tourist drags of the West End: **Soho** has long been renowned for its eclectic and fashionable restaurants - and new eateries appear here every month - while **Chinatown** , on the other side of Shaftesbury Avenue, offers value-for-money eating right in the centre of town.

Many of the restaurants we've listed will be busy on most nights of the week, particularly on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and you're best advised to **reserve a table** wherever you're headed. The majority of places take major credit cards, such as Visa, MasterCard and Amex; in the listings, we've simply noted those that don't.

As for **prices** , you can pay an awful lot for a meal in London, and if you're used to North American portions, you're not going to be particularly impressed by the volume in most places. In the listings, we've quoted the minimum you can get away with

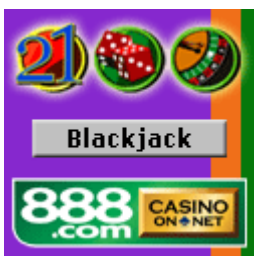
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spending (assuming you don't tip and don't drink) and the amount you can expect to pay for a full blowout.

Service is discretionary at most restaurants, but many tend to take no chances, emblazoning their bills with reminders that "Service is NOT included", or even including a ten to fifteen percent service charge on the bill (which they have to announce on the menu, by law). Normally you should, of course, pay service - it's how most of the staff make up their wages - but make sure you check you're not paying twice.

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Entertainment

Pubs and Bars

Pubs are one of England's most enduring social institutions, and have outlived the church and marketplace as the focal points of communities, with London's fringe theatre, alternative comedy and live-music scenes still largely pub-based. At their best, pubs can be as welcoming as their full name, "public house", suggests, offering a fine range of drinks and filling food. At their worst, they're dismal rooms with surly bar staff and rotten snacks. One thing you can be sure of, however, is that most pubs and bars remain smoke-filled places where drinking alcohol is the prime activity.

London's great period of pub building took place in the Victorian era, to which many pubs still pay homage; genuine Victorian interiors, however, are increasingly difficult to find, as indeed are genuinely individual pubs. **Chain pubs** can now be found all over the capital: branches of All Bar One, Pitcher & Piano and the Slug & Lettuce are the most obvious, as they all share the chain name, whereas J.D. Wetherspoon pubs and the Firkin chain do at least vary theirs.

Pub food , on the whole, is a lunchtime affair, although "gastropubs", which put more effort into their cooking, are increasingly offering meals in the evening, too. The traditional image of London pub food is dire - a pseudo "ploughman's lunch" of bread and cheese, or a murky-looking pie and chips - but the last couple of decades have seen plenty of improvements. You can get a palatable lunchtime meal at many of the pubs we've listed in this section, and at a few of them you're looking at cooking worthy of high restaurant-standard praise.

Though pubs may be constantly changing hands (and names), the quickest turnover is in **bars** , which go in and out of fashion with incredible speed. These are very different places to your average pub, catering to a somewhat cliquey, often youngish crowd, with designer interiors and drinks; they also tend to be more expensive - we've listed a fair few.

England's **licensing laws** are likely to have changed by the time you read this, as after more than a century of draconian restrictions, the government has finally caved in and liberalized English opening hours. This should allow pubs and bars to stay open way beyond the standard 11pm last orders, so the times listed may well have changed significantly.



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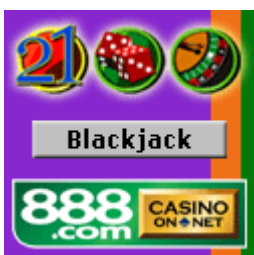
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Live Music and Clubs

Don't believe the Cool Britannia hype; London has had a bewilderingly large range of places to go after dark for the last twenty years. The **live music** scene remains extremely diverse, encompassing all variations of rock, blues, roots and world music; and although London's jazz clubs aren't on a par with those in the big American cities, there's a highly individual scene of home-based artists, supplemented by top-name visiting players.

If you're looking for **dance music** , then welcome to Europe's party capital. After dark, London is thriving, with diverse scenes championing everything from hip-hop to house, techno to trance, samba to soca and drum'n'bass to R&B on virtually any night of the week. Venues once used exclusively by performing bands now pepper the week with club nights, and you often find dance sessions starting as soon as a band has stopped playing. Bear in mind that there's sometimes an overlap between "live music venues" and "clubs" in the listings; we've indicated which places serve a double function.

The already relaxed attitude to late night bars has become more liberal in the recent years. So far, though, the main consequence of the restrictions on late night drinking laws has been the rapid growth and diversity of **club-bars** , places which are essentially bars, but cater for a clubby crowd - funky décor, DJs, late opening hours and ridiculously overpriced foreign beers.

The dance and club scene is, of course, pretty much in constant flux, with the hottest items constantly moving location, losing the plot or just cooling off. Weekly listings magazines like *Time Out*, *DJ* and *7* give up-to-date details of prices and access, plus previews and reviews.

Classical Music, Opera and Dance

With the South Bank, the Barbican and the Wigmore Hall offering year-round appearances by generally first-rank musicians and numerous smaller venues providing a stage for less established or more specialized performers, the capital should satisfy most devotees of **classical music** . What's more, in the annual Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, London has one of Europe's greatest, most democratic music festivals.

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While the English National Opera quietly continues to try and demolish the elitist stereotypes of **opera**, the Royal Opera House continues to grab the headlines. After a long, costly and painful period of rebuilding and refurbishment, the ROH finally reopened at the end of 1999. Embarrassing technical hitches meant that part of the initial programme of events had to be cancelled, and ticket prices are still far too high, but the new Floral Hall development has generally been well-received.

The more modest economics of **dance** mean that you'll often find ambitious work on offer, with several adventurous companies appearing sporadically, while fans of classicism can revel in the Royal Ballet - as accomplished a company as any in Europe.

Theatre, Comedy and Cinema

London has enjoyed a reputation for quality **theatre** since the time of Shakespeare, and despite the continuing prevalence of fail-safe blockbuster musicals and revenue-spinning star vehicles, the city still provides a platform for innovation. The **comedy** scene in London goes from strength to strength, so much so that the capital now boasts more comedy venues than any other city in the world, while comedians who have made the transition to television also stage shows in major theatres. **Cinema** is rather less healthy, for London's repertory film theatres are a dying breed, edged out by the multiscreen complexes which show mainstream Hollywood fare some months behind America. There are a few excellent independent cinemas, though, including the National Film Theatre, which is the focus of the richly varied **London Film Festival** in November.

Current details of **what's on** in all these areas can be found in a number of publications, the most comprehensive being the weekly *Time Out*. *The Guardian*'s "The Guide" section (free with the paper on Saturdays) and Friday's *Evening Standard* are other good sources.

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Kid's London

On first sight London seems a hostile place for children, with its crowds, incessant noise and intimidating traffic. English attitudes can be discouraging as well, particularly if you've experienced the more indulgent approach of the French or Italians - London's restaurateurs, for example, tend to regard children and eating out as mutually exclusive concepts. Yet if you pick your place carefully, even central London can be a delight for the pint-sized, and it needn't overly strain the parental pocket.

Covent Gardens

Covent Garden 's buskers and jugglers provide no-cost entertainment in a car-free setting, and there's always the chance of being plucked from the crowd to help out with a trick. Don't underestimate the value of London's **public transport** as a source of fun, either. The #11 double-decker from Victoria, for instance, will trundle you past the Houses of Parliament, Trafalgar Square and the Strand on its way to St Paul's Cathedral for 40p per child. The driverless Docklands Light Railway is another guaranteed source of amusement - grab a seat at the front of the train and pretend to be driver, then take a boat back to the centre of town from Greenwich.

Museums

Lots of London's **museums** will appeal to children. Below are those that are primarily geared towards entertaining and/or educating children - some are covered in the main part of our guide, and are cross-referenced accordingly. Most offer child-oriented programmes of workshops, educational story trails, special shows and suchlike during the school holidays. *Time Out* has listings of kids' events, and also produces *Kids Out*, a monthly listings magazine for those with children.

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

*Cambridge Heath Rd, E2 tel 020/8983 5200; www.vam.ac.uk.
Tube: Bethnal Green. Daily except Fri 10am-5.50pm; free.*

Best known for its collection of historic dolls' houses, the museum also has a few buttons to press, and lots of weekend/holiday events and activities.

Horniman Museum

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London Rd, SE23 tel 020/8699 1872; www.horniman.ac.uk.
Tube: Forest Hill train station, from Victoria or London Bridge.
Mon-Sat 10.30am-5.30pm, Sun 2-5.30pm; free.

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An ethnographic museum, but with lots to interest kids, including an aquarium, a natural history section and lovely grounds.

Kew Bridge Steam Museum

Green Dragon Lane, Brentford, TW8. tel 020/8568 4757;
www.kbsm.org.uk. Kew Bridge train station from Waterloo, or bus #237 or #267 from Gunnersbury tube station. Daily 11am-5pm; Mon-Fri adults £3, children £1; Sat & Sun adults £4, children £2.

Best visited at weekends, when the beam engines are in steam and the miniature steam railway is in operation.

Legoland

Windsor, Berkshire tel 0870/504 0404; www.legoland.co.uk.
Windsor & Eton Central, from Paddington (change at Slough), or Windsor & Eton Riverside, from Waterloo. Daily 10am-6pm or dusk; adults £17.50, children £14.50.

Very expensive but enjoyable and relatively tasteful theme park with gentle rides - perfect for five- to eight-year-olds.

London Aquarium

County Hall, SE1 tel 020/7967 8000;
www.londonaquarium.co.uk. Tube: Westminster or Waterloo.
Daily 10am-6pm or later; adults £8.50, children £5.

London's largest aquarium is situated on the South Bank, and is very popular with kids, especially the bit where they get to stroke the (non-sting) rays.

London Zoo

Regent's Park, NW1 tel 020/7722 3333; www.londonzoo.co.uk.
Bus #274 from Camden Town or Baker Street tube station.
Daily: March-Oct 10am-5.30pm; Nov-Feb 10am-4pm; adults £9, children £7.

Architecturally interesting inner-city zoo which has recently opened its new Web of Life building, as part of a drive to redefine itself as eco-conscious.



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Natural History Museum

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Cromwell Rd, SW7 tel 020/7942 5000; www.nhm.ac.uk. Tube: South Kensington. Mon-Sat 10am-5.50pm, Sun 11am-5.50pm; adults £7.50, children: Mon-Fri all free after 4.30pm, Sat & Sun all free after 5pm.

Dinosaurs, stuffed animals, live ants, a "rainforest", an earthquake simulator and lots of rocks, fossils, crystals and gems.

Pollock's Toy Museum



1 Scala St, W1 tel 020/7636 3452; www.pollocks.cwc.net. Tube: Goodge Street. Mon-Sat 10am-5pm; adults £3, children £1.50.

Housed above a toy shop, the museum's impressive toy collection includes a fine example of the Victorian paper theatres sold by Benjamin Pollock.

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Ragged School Museum

Copperfield Rd, E3 tel 020/8980 6405; www.ics-london.co.uk/rsm. Tube: Mile End. Wed & Thurs 10am-5pm, first Sun in month 2-5pm; free.

The reconstructed Victorian schoolroom here makes kids realize what an easy life they have these days.

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Science Museum

Exhibition Rd, SW7 tel 020/7942 4455; www.nmsi.ac.uk. Tube: South Kensington. Daily 10am-6pm; adults £6.95, children free; all free after 4.30pm.

More and more hands-on galleries aimed at kids are being introduced, and there are excellent daily demonstrations, plus a totally revamped transport wing.



Syon

Syon Park, Brentford, Middlesex tel 020/8560 7272. Bus #237 or #267 from Gunnersbury Tube.

Good place for a day out, with the Butterfly House, an Aquatic House full of fish, reptiles and amphibians, plus a miniature steam railway in the house's lovely gardens. Snakes and Ladders, an indoor childrens' play area with impressive apparatus, is also in the park (tel 020/8847 0946; daily 10am-

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6pm; adults free, under 5's £3.55, over 5's £4.65, with reductions on weekdays)

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Parks and City Farms

Central London has plenty of **green spaces** , such as Hyde Park, which has playgrounds and ample room for general mayhem, as well as a diverting array of city wildlife. If you want something more unusual than ducks and squirrels, though, head for one of London's **city farms** .



Battersea Park

Albert Bridge Rd, SW11 tel 020/8871 7540 (zoo) or 8871 6374 (playground). Battersea Park or Queenstown Road train station, from Victoria. Zoo: Easter-Sept daily 10am-5pm; Oct-Easter Sat & Sun 11am-3pm; adults £1.80, children 90p. Adventure playground: term time Tues-Fri 3.30-7pm; holidays & weekends 11am-6pm; free.

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A children's zoo with monkeys, reptiles, birds, otters and mongooses; challenging adventure playground and lots of open space. Every August, the free "Teddy Bears' Picnic" draws thousands of children and their plush pals.

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Coram's Fields

93 Guilford St, WC1 tel 020/7837 6138. Tube: Russell Square. Daily 9am-dusk/8pm; free.

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Ducks, sheep, pigs, rabbits, goats and chickens, plus a large free playground with slides and swings. Adults admitted only if accompanied by a child.

Hampstead Heath

Info centre by Lido, NW3. Wed-Fri 1-5pm Sat & Sun 10am-5pm; tel 020/7485 4491. Tube: Hampstead, or Gospel Oak or Hampstead Heath train stations. Open daily 24hr.



Nine hundred acres of grassland and woodland, with superb views of the city. Excellent kite-flying, birdwatching and swimming potential too.

Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens

W8 tel 020/7298 2100; www.royalparks.co.uk. Tube: High Street Kensington or Lancaster Gate. Daily dawn-dusk.

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Hyde Park is central London's main open space; in Kensington Gardens, adjoining its western side, you can find the famous Peter Pan statue (near the Long Water), a playground and a pond that's perfect for toy boat sailing.

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Kew Gardens

Richmond, Surrey tel 020/8332 5000; www.kew.org. Tube: Kew Gardens. Daily 9.30am to 7.30pm or dusk; adults £5, children £2.50.

You have to pay a hefty entry fee to get into the Royal Botanical Gardens, but they are fun for kids and adults. There's lots of green space, wildfowl, and some great glasshouses, one of which has an aquarium.



Mudchute City Farm

Pier St, E14 tel 020/7515 5901. Mudchute or Island Gardens DLR. Daily 9am-5pm; free.

Covering some 35 acres, this is London's largest city farm, with barnyard animals, llamas, a pets' corner and a café.

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Richmond Park

Richmond, Surrey tel 020/8948 3209; www.royalparks.co.uk. Tube: Richmond, or Richmond train station from Waterloo. Daily 8am-dusk; free.

A fabulous stretch of countryside, with opportunities for duck-feeding, deer-spotting, mushroom hunting and cycling.

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Theatre

Numerous London theatres put on **kids'** shows at the weekend - for full listings, see *Time Out* - but there are one or two venues that are almost entirely child-centred. Ticket prices hover around the £5 mark for children and adults alike, unless the show is at a West End theatre, in which case you're looking at more like £15 and upwards.

Little Angel Theatre

14 Dagmar Passage, off Cross St, N1 tel 020/7226 1787. Tube: Angel or Highbury & Islington.

London's only permanent puppet theatre, with shows on Saturdays and Sundays at 11am and 3pm; the mornings are for three- to six-year-olds, the afternoons for older kids. Additional shows during the holidays and occasionally in the evenings.

Polka Theatre

240 The Broadway, SW19 tel 020/8543 4888; www.polkatheatre.com. Tube: Wimbledon or South Wimbledon.

A specially designed junior arts centre aimed at kids aged up to around twelve, with two theatres, a playground, a café and a toy shop. Storytellers, puppeteers and mimes make regular appearances.

Puppet Theatre Barge

Little Venice, Blomfield Rd, W9 tel 020/7249 6876 or 0836/202745; www.movingstage.co.uk. Tube: Warwick Avenue.

Wonderfully imaginative marionette shows on a fifty-seater barge moored in Little Venice from November to May, then at various points along the Thames (including Richmond). Shows usually start at 3pm at weekends and in the holidays.

Unicorn Theatre

Tel 020/7700 0702; www.unicorntheatre.com.

The Unicorn is the oldest professional children's theatre in London, and is currently performing in several venues across the capital, including the Pleasance Theatre, off the Caledonian Road, N1. Shows run the gamut from mime and puppetry to traditional plays.



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Shops

Benjamin Pollock's Toy Shop

44 Covent Garden Apple Market, WC2 tel 020/7379 7866;
www.pollocks.cwc.net. Tube: Covent Garden. Mon-Sat
10.30am-6pm.

An old-fashioned outlet selling puppets, traditional teddies and dolls, as well as charming model theatres complete with cut-out sets, props and tiny actors.

Children's Book Centre

237 Kensington High St, W8 tel 020/7937 7497;
www.childrensbookcentre.co.uk. Tube: Kensington High Street.
Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat 9.30am-6.30pm, Tues 9.30am-6pm, Thurs
9.30am-7pm, Sun noon-6pm.

Immense bookshop just for kids, where classic yarns nestle with the best in contemporary adolescent fiction.

Davenport's Magic Shop

Charing Cross Shopping Arcade, WC2 tel 020/7836 0408.
Tube: Charing Cross or Embankment. Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm,
Sat 10.15am-4.30pm.

London's oldest magic shop sells tricks for the professional and the infant amateur.

Electronics Boutique

100 Oxford St, W1 tel 020/7637 7911. Tube: Tottenham Court Road. Mon-Sat 9.30am-9pm, Sun noon-6pm.

All the latest computer games to excite the goggle-eyed enthusiast, plus more traditional board games.

Eric Snook's Toyshop

32 Covent Garden Market, WC2 tel 020/7379 7681. Tube: Covent Garden. Mon-Sat 10am-7pm, Sun 11am-6pm.

Eschewing movie merchandise and cheap tat, this shop sells only the most tasteful, meticulously crafted playthings.



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Hamleys

*188 Regent St, W1 tel 020/7494 2000; www.hamleys.com.
Tube: Oxford Circus. Mon-Fri 10am-8pm, Sat 9.30am-8pm, Sun
noon-6pm.*

The most celebrated toy shop on the planet, multistorey Hamleys is bursting with childish delights - from the humble Slinky to scaled-down petrol-driven Porsches. A smaller branch in Covent Garden Piazza gives a taste of what's on offer at the real thing.



Skate Attack

*95 Highgate Rd, NW5 tel 020/7267 6961;
www.skateattack.com. Tube: Tufnell Park. Mon-Fri 9.30am-
6pm, Sat 9am-6pm, Sun 10am-1.30pm.*

Europe's largest retailer of roller skates, rollerblades and equipment. Roller rental, with protective equipment, is £10 a day, £15 a weekend or £20 a week, plus £100 deposit

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Best of London

Highgate Cemetery

The leafy and tranquil Highgate Cemetery is the ultimate Victorian Valhalla, famous as the resting-place of Karl Marx.

Kew Gardens

Without doubt the world's most perfect botanical gardens, the expansive Kew Gardens is part royal pleasure garden, part research institute. The curvaceous, dripping hot Palm House is the focal point.

Westminster Abbey

London's finest Gothic monument, Westminster Abbey, has been a coronation venue for nearly a millennium and is the burial-place of poets, politicians and royalty.

Docklands Light Railway

Take the driverless Docklands Light Railway for a bird's-eye view of the Docklands development, finishing up with a great view across the Thames to Greenwich.

Lunchtime in Chinatown

London is renowned for its multicultural cuisine. Chinatown, right at the heart of the city, has the full spectrum of restaurants and cafés. Go for dim sum at lunchtime - picking at will from trolleys piled high with mouthwatering nibbles.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Free admission is a thing of the past, but this is an applied arts collection with something for everyone: from Raphael's Cartoons to a sofa based on Mae West's lips.

Old London Double Deckers

The #11 bus will take you from the House of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, up Whitehall, round Trafalgar Square, up the Strand and down Fleet Street and deposit you outside St Paul's Cathedral.

Harrods

London's most famous department store is also the city's third biggest tourist attraction. Though you can buy most things more cheaply elsewhere if you can do without the famous green carrier bag, the food halls are a work of art, and the building itself is a landmark.



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Tower of London

Entrance charges to the Tower of London are extortionate, but there's something for everyone: the crown jewels, Beefeaters, torture instruments and a millennium's worth of blood-curdling history.

Spitalfields Market

Visit the old Spitalfields fruit and vegetable market at the edge of the East End on a Sunday and you'll find London's finest organic market, craft stalls, a miniature railway and lots of stands with delicious food.



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Information

The **London Tourist Board** (LTB; www.londontown.com) has a desk in the arrivals section of Heathrow Terminal 3 (daily 6am-11pm), and another in the Underground station concourse for Heathrow Terminals 1, 2 and 3 (daily 8am-6pm), but the **main central office** is in the forecourt of Victoria Station (Easter-April Mon-Sat 8am-7pm, Sun 8am-6pm; May Mon-Sat 8am-8pm, Sun 8am-6pm; June-Sept Mon-Sat 8am-10pm, Sun 8am-7pm; Oct-Easter daily 8am-7pm). Other centrally located offices can be found near Piccadilly Circus in the **British Visitor Centre** (www.visitbritain.com), 1 Regent St (June-Oct Mon 9.30am-6.30pm, Tues-Fri 9am-6.30pm, Sat & Sun 9am-5pm; Nov-May same times except Sat & Sun 10am-4pm), in the arrivals hall of Waterloo International (daily 8.30am-10.30pm), and in Liverpool Street Underground station (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm, Sat & Sun 8.45am-5.30pm).

Individual boroughs also run tourist offices at various prime locations. The two most central ones are on the south side of St Paul's Cathedral (April-Sept daily 9.30am-5pm, Oct-March Mon-Fri 9.30am-5pm, Sat 9.30am-12.30pm; tel 020/7332 1456; www.cityoflondon.gov.uk), and at the south end of London Bridge (Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 10.30am- 5.30pm; tel 020/7403 8299; www.southwark.gov.uk). The above offices will answer **phone enquiries** ; LTB can only offer Visitorcall (tel 0839/123456), a spread of pre-recorded phone announcements - these are a very poor service, and the calls are charged at an exorbitant rate.

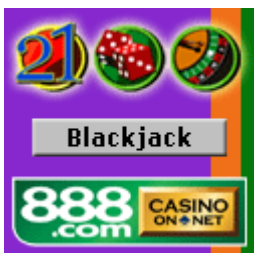
Most of the above offices hand out a useful reference **map** of central London, plus plans of the public transport systems, but to find your way around every cranny of the city you need to invest in either an *A-Z Atlas* or a *Nicholson Streetfinder*, both of which have a street index covering every street in the capital; you can get them at most bookshops and newsagents for under £5. The only comprehensive and critical weekly **listings** magazine is *Time Out*, which costs £1.95 and comes out every Tuesday afternoon. In it you'll find details of all the latest exhibitions, shows, films, music, sport, guided walks and events in and around the capital.



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The GoSee Card and London Pass

For the really serious museum addict, the **GoSee Card** gives you entry into around twenty museums and galleries, from the Design Museum and the Hayward Gallery to the National Maritime Museum and Shakespeare's Globe Museum. The three-day card costs £16 (though this gives you too little time to visit all the above); the seven-day card costs £26. Even better value is the Family Card, which covers two adults and up to four children and costs £32 for three days or £50 for seven. The cards are available from any of the above museums or galleries, and at LTB and LT offices; for more information, phone 020/7923 0807 or visit www.london-gosee.com.

Holidays To London

An alternative to the GoSee Card is the new **London Pass**, which not only gives you entry to a whole range of attractions from the London Aquarium and Buckingham Palace to St Paul's Cathedral and Windsor Castle, but also throws in an all-zone Travelcard, £5 worth of free phone calls and various other perks and incentives. The pass costs £22 for one day, £49 for three days, and £79 for six days. However, the London Pass is currently in its infancy, more sights need to be added to its portfolio if it's going to compete for value with the GoSee Card. The London Pass can be bought over the phone (tel 0870/242 9988) or on the Internet (www.londonpass.com).

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Guided Tours

Bus Tours

Sightseeing **bus tours** are run by several rival companies, their open-top double-deckers setting off every thirty minutes from Victoria station, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly, and other tourist spots. Tours take roughly ninety minutes (though you can hop on and off as often as you like) and cost around £12. Alternatively, you can hop aboard one of the bright yellow World War II amphibious vehicles used by Frog Tours (tel 20/7928 3132; www.frogtours.com) for a combined **bus and boat tour**. After fifty minutes driving round the usual sights, you plunge into the river and go on a half-hour cruise. Tours set off every half-hour from behind County Hall, from 10am to dusk, with tickets costing £13. Another money-saving option is to skip the commentary by hopping on a real London bus - the #11 from Victoria will take you past Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, up Whitehall, round Trafalgar Square, along the Strand and on to St Paul's Cathedral.

Walking Tours

Walking tours are infinitely more appealing, mixing solid historical facts with juicy anecdotes in the company of a local specialist. Walks on offer range from a literary pub crawl round Bloomsbury to a tour of places associated with the Beatles. Tours tend to cost £4-5 and usually take two hours. To find out what's on offer for the week, check in the "Around Town" section of *Time Out*. The widest range of walks on offer are run by Original London (tel 020/7624 3978).

London By Balloon

If the London Eye hasn't given you enough of a lift, you can go even higher, to over 500ft (weather permitting) in the **hot-air balloon** situated behind Vauxhall tube station in Spring Gardens. Though the Skyview Balloon (daily 10am-dusk; £9.95; www.skyviewballooning.com) is the largest tethered helium balloon in the world, it remains to be seen whether it can withstand the competition from the wheel.



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Galleries

The vast **permanent collections** of the National Gallery and the two Tates, the fascinating miscellanies of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the select holdings of such institutions as the Courtauld and the Wallace Collection make London one of the world's great repositories of Western art. However, the city is also a dynamic creative centre, with young British artists such as Rachel Whiteread, Sarah Lucas and Steve McQueen maintaining the momentum established by the likes of Hockney, Caro, Auerbach and Freud.

In the environs of Cork Street, behind the Royal Academy, you'll find various **commercial galleries** showing the best of what's being produced in the studios of Britain and further afield, while numerous other private showcases are scattered all over London, from the superb Saatchi Gallery in St John's Wood to the consistently challenging space run by Flowers East over in the East End.

London fails to compete with Berlin, Paris and New York in only one respect - it doesn't have a designated **exhibition space** good enough to handle the blockbuster shows. Nevertheless, at any time of the year, London's public galleries will be offering at least one absorbing exhibition, on anything from the art of the apocalypse to Soviet supremacists.

Annual fixtures include the **Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition**, when hordes of amateur artists enter their efforts for sale, and November's controversial **Turner Prize**, devoted to new British work, which is preceded by a month-long display of work by the shortlisted artists at the Tate. More exciting than these, however, are the art school **degree shows** in late May and June, when the current crop of student talent puts its work on display. Pick up a copy of *Time Out* in mid-May for the times and locations of the student shows.

Permanent Collections

Below is a list of London's principal permanent art collections, with a brief summary of their strengths.

British Museum

Great Russell St, WC1 tel 020/7636 1555; www.british-museum.ac.uk. Tube: Russell Square or Tottenham Court Road.



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The BM owns a stupendous collection of drawings and prints, a small sample of which is always on show in room 90; it also stages excellent one-off exhibitions, sometimes with free entry.

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Courtauld Institute

*Somerset House, Strand, WC2 tel 020/7848 2526;
www.courtauld.ac.uk. Tube: Covent Garden or Temple (Mon-Sat only).*

Excellent collection of Impressionists and post-Impressionists, with several masterpieces by Manet, Cézanne, Renoir, Gauguin and Van Gogh.

Dulwich Picture Gallery

*College Rd, SE21 tel 020/8693 5254;
www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk. West Dulwich train station from Victoria.*

London's oldest public art gallery has recently been refurbished, and houses a small but high-quality selection of work ranging from Poussin and Gainsborough to Rembrandt.

Estorick Collection

*39a Canonbury Square, N1 tel 020/7704 9522;
www.estorickcollection.com. Tube: Highbury & Islington.*

Georgian mansion with a small but interesting collection of twentieth-century Italian art, including Modigliani, di Chirico and the Futurists.

Guildhall Art Gallery

*Gresham St, EC2. tel 020/7332 1632; www.cityoflondon.gov.uk.
Tube: Bank or St Paul's.*

New purpose-built gallery housing the Corporation of London's collection, which contains one or two exceptional Pre-Raphaelite works by the likes of Rossetti and Holman Hunt.

Iveagh Bequest

*Kenwood House, Hampstead Lane, NW3 tel 020/8348 1286.
Bus #210 from Archway Tube; or walk from Hampstead or Archway tube station.*



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Stately home overlooking Hampstead Heath, that's best known for its pictures by Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Reynolds and Vermeer. Free entry.

Leighton House

12 Holland Park Rd, W14 tel 020/7602 3316. Tube: High Street Kensington.

The house itself is a work of art, but it also contains several works by Lord Leighton himself and his Pre-Raphaelite chums.

Lothbury

41 Lothbury, EC2 tel 020/7762 1642. Bank.

Changing exhibitions from NatWest bank's vast art collection, which is especially strong on twentieth-century British art. Free entry.

National Gallery

Trafalgar Square, WC2 tel 020/7306 0055; www.nationalgallery.org.uk. Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Square.

The country's premier collection; it's difficult to think of a major artist born between 1300 and 1850 whose work isn't on show here.

National Portrait Gallery

2 St Martin's Place, WC2 tel 020/7306 0055; www.npg.org.uk. Tube: Leicester Square or Charing Cross.

Interesting faces, but only a few works of art of a quality to match those on display in the neighbouring National Gallery, despite the NPGs snazzy redevelopment.

Tate Britain

Millbank, SW1 tel 020/7887 8000; www.tate.org.uk. Tube: Pimlico.

The old Tate is now devoted to British art from the sixteenth century onwards (the British tag is fairly loosely applied), with several galleries permanently given over to Turner.

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Tate Modern

Bankside, SE1 tel 020/7887 8000; www.tate.org.uk. Tube: Southwark.

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Housed in a spectacularly converted power station on the South Bank, the new Tate is the largest modern-art gallery in the world, and displays the cream of the international modern art collection.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Cromwell Rd, SW7 tel 020/7942 2000; www.vam.ac.uk. Tube: South Kensington.



The city's principal applied arts museum boasts a scattering of European painting and sculpture, a fine collection of English statuary, two remarkable rooms of casts, Raphael's famous tapestry cartoons, works by Constable, Turner and Rodin, and a photography gallery.

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Wallace Collection

Hertford House, Manchester Square, W1 tel 020/7935 0687; www.wallace-collection.org.uk. Tube: Bond Street.

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A country mansion just off Oxford Street, with a small, eclectic collection, including fine paintings by Rembrandt, Velázquez, Hals, Gainsborough and Delacroix.

William Morris Gallery

Forest Rd, E17 tel 020/8527 3782; www.lbwf.gov.uk/wmg. Tube: Walthamstow Central.

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Covers every aspect of Morris & Co's work, and there's a small gallery of Pre-Raphaelite work by Morris and his colleagues' upstairs



Major Galleries and Exhibition Spaces

Expect to pay around £7 for entry to one of the big exhibitions at the Barbican or Hayward. Similar prices are charged for special shows at the National Gallery, the Tates and V&A and at the Royal Academy. Students, senior citizens and the unemployed are eligible for concessionary rates. Hours vary so it's always best to check *Time Out* or ring the gallery before setting off.

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Barbican Art Gallery

*Barbican Centre, Silk St, EC2 tel 020/7638 8891;
www.barbican.org.uk. Tube: Barbican or Moorgate.*

The Barbican's two-floor gallery is badly designed, but its thematic exhibitions - ranging from African bush art to the latest photography - are often well worth the entrance fee.

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Hayward Gallery

*South Bank Centre, Belvedere Rd, SE1 tel 020/7960 5226;
www.hayward-gallery.org.uk. Tube: Waterloo.*

Part of the huge South Bank arts complex, the Hayward is one of London's most prestigious venues for major touring exhibitions, with the bias towards twentieth-century work.

ICA Gallery

*Nash House, The Mall, SW1 tel 020/7930 3647;
www.ica.org.uk. Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Charing Cross.*

The Institute of Contemporary Arts has two gallery spaces, in which it displays works that are invariably characterized as "challenging" or "provocative" - occasionally, they are. To visit, you must be a member of the ICA; a day's membership costs £1.50 (Mon-Fri) or £2.50 (Sat & Sun).

Royal Academy of Arts

*Burlington House, Piccadilly, W1 tel 020/7300 8000;
www.royalacademy.org.uk. Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus.*

The Royal Academy is best known for its one-off exhibitions - its recent Monet extravaganza was the most popular art exhibition of all time. From early June to mid-August, the RA also stages its Summer Exhibition, when the public can submit work to be displayed (and sold) alongside the work of Academicians. Tasteful landscapes, interiors and nudes tend to predominate, but there's the odd splash of experimentation. For the most popular shows here, you're best advised to pre-book a ticket.

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

66 Portland Place, W1 tel 020/7307 3770; www.riba.net. Tube: Oxford Circus.



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Regular architectural exhibitions by the leading lights, housed in a beautiful 1930s building, with an excellent café.

Saatchi

98a Boundary Rd, NW8 tel 020/7624 8299. Tube: Swiss Cottage.



First-rate exhibition space owned by Charles Saatchi, the Mr Big of Britain's art world who made his money in advertising. Shows change twice-yearly, and a couple of Saatchi's youngsters usually hit the headlines straight after the opening.

Serpentine Gallery

Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, W2 tel 020/7402 6075; www.serpentinegallery.org. Tube: Lancaster Gate.



This fine gallery displays dynamic work by new and established modern artists, as well as hosting interesting Sunday afternoon lectures, and a performance-art festival in the summer. It's free, too.

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Whitechapel Gallery

Whitechapel High St, E1 tel 020/7522 7888. Tube: Aldgate East.

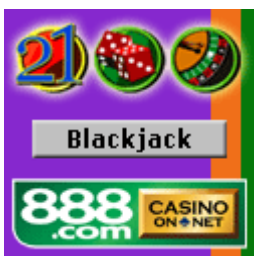
The Whitechapel is a consistently excellent champion of contemporary art, housing major shows by living or not-long-dead artists. It's also the focal point of the Whitechapel Open, a biennial summer survey (the next one is in 2002) of the work of artists living in the vicinity of the gallery; the show spreads into several local studios too

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Commercial Galleries

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The galleries listed below are at the hub of London's modern-art market. Most are open Monday to Friday 10am to 6pm, plus a few hours on Saturday morning, and many are closed throughout August, but you'd be best advised to ring to check the latest hours, as rehanging or private viewings often interrupt the normal pattern of business. Some of these places can seem as intimidating as designer clothes shops, but all at least are free.



Annely Juda

23 Dering St, W1 tel 020/7629 7578; www.annelyjudafineart.co.uk. Tube: Oxford Circus or Bond Street.

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One of the city's best modernist galleries; specializing in early twentieth-century avant-garde works, but equally strong on contemporary painting and sculpture.

Anthony d'Offay

Dering St and Haunch of Venison Yard, W1 tel 020/7499 4100; www.doffay.com. Tube: Oxford Circus or Bond Street.

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Several galleries on Dering Street, and a new one round the corner in the delightfully named Haunch of Venison Yard, all run by one of the real powerbrokers in the world of art politics. Works exhibited here range from recently dead greats of Pop Art, to pieces by leading contemporary artists such as Rachel Whiteread.

Entwistle

6 Cork St, W1 tel 020/7734 6440. Tube: Green Park.

Box-like space often featuring small shows by major figures in the contemporary British and American art scenes.

Flowers East

199-205 and 282 Richmond Rd, E8 tel 020/8985 3333; www.flowerseast.com. London Fields train station, from Liverpool Street.

This outstanding, ever-expanding East End gallery complex shows a huge variety of work, generally by young British artists.

Helly Nahmad

2 Cork St, W1 tel 020/7494 3200. Tube: Green Park.

A gallery where you're guaranteed a glimpse at some very expensive works by very famous artists, from Monet to Picasso.

Lisson

52-54 Bell St, NW1 tel 020/7724 2739; www.lisson.co.uk. Tube: Edgware Road.

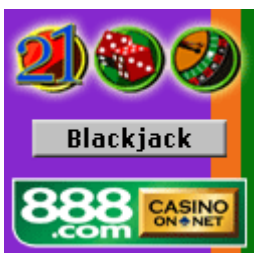
An extremely important gallery whose regularly exhibited sculptors - among them Anish Kapoor and Richard Deacon - are hugely respected on the international circuit.



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Marlborough Fine Art

6 Albemarle St, W1 tel 020/7629 5161;
www.marlboroughfineart.com. Tube: Green Park.

This is where you'll find the latest work of many of Britain's most celebrated artists, many in one-person shows. Essential viewing for anyone interested in modern British art.

Waddington's

11, 12 and 34 Cork St, W1 tel 020/7437 8611;
www.waddington-galleries.com. Tube: Green Park.

No. 11 is the largest of three Cork Street premises owned by Leslie Waddington, and tends to concentrate on the established greats of the twentieth century. At the others you'll find newer international stars and younger upcoming artists.

White Cube

44 Duke St, W1 tel 020/7930 5373; www.whitecube.com. Tube: Green Park.

Open Friday and Saturday only, this is a gallery that likes to grab the headlines, with the latest YBAs (Young British Artists). Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin and various other Turner Prize artists display here.

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Shops and Markets

Whether it's time or money you've got to burn, London is one big shopper's playground. And although chains and superstores predominate along the high streets, you're still never too far from the kind of oddball, one-off establishment that makes shopping an adventure rather than a chore. From the *folie de grandeur* that is Harrods to the frantic street markets of the East End, there's nothing you can't find in some corner of the capital.



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In the centre of town, **Oxford Street** is the city's most frantic chain store mecca, and together with **Regent Street**, which crosses it halfway, offers pretty much every mainstream clothing label you could wish for. Just off Oxford Street, high-end designer outlets line **St. Christopher's Place** and **South Molton Street**, and you'll find even pricier designers and jewellers along the very chic **Bond Street**.

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Tottenham Court Road, which heads north from the east end of Oxford Street, is the place to go for electrical goods and furniture and design shops. **Charing Cross Road**, heading south, is the centre of London's book trade, both new and secondhand. At its north end, and particularly on **Denmark Street**, you can find music shops selling everything from instruments to sound equipment and sheet music. **Soho** offers an offbeat mix of sex boutiques, records and silks, while the streets surrounding **Covent Garden** yield art and design shops, mainstream fashion stores and designer wear.

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Just off Piccadilly, **St James's** is the natural habitat of the quintessential English gentleman, with **Jermyn Street** in particular harbouring shops dedicated to his grooming. **Knightsbridge**, further west, is home to Harrods, and the big-name fashion stores of **Sloane Street** and **Brompton Road**.

Opening Hours

Opening hours for central London shops are generally Monday to Saturday 9.30am to 6pm, although some stay open later, especially on Thursdays. Many are now open on Sundays, although hours tend to be shorter, from around noon to 5pm. The cheapest time to shop is during one of the two annual **sale seasons**, centred on January and July, when prices can be slashed by up to fifty percent. **Credit cards** are almost universally accepted by shops. Always keep your receipts: whatever the shop may tell you, the law allows a full refund or replacement on purchases which turn out to be faulty.



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Department Stores

Fortnum & Mason

181 Piccadilly, W1 tel 020/7734 8040. Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus.

Beautiful and eccentric store featuring heavenly ceiling murals, gilded cherubs, chandeliers and fountains as a backdrop to its perfectly English offerings. Justly famed for its fabulous, gorgeously presented and pricey food, plus upmarket clothes, furniture and stationery.

Harrods

*Knightsbridge, SW1 tel 020/7730 1234; www.harrods.com.
Tube: Knightsbridge.*

Put an afternoon aside to visit this enduring landmark of quirks and pretensions, most notable for its fantastic Art Nouveau tiled food hall, obscenely huge toy department, and supremely tasteless memorial to Diana and Dodi in the basement. Wear jeans and you may fail the rigorous dress code for entry.

Harvey Nichols

109-125 Knightsbridge, SW1 tel 020/7235 5000. Tube: Knightsbridge.

All the latest designer collections on the scarily fashionable first floor, where the shop assistants look better dressed than most of the customers. The cosmetics department is equally essential, while the food hall offers famously frivolous and pricey luxuries.

John Lewis

*278-306 Oxford St, W1 020/7629 7711; www.johnlewis.com.
Tube: Oxford Circus.*

Famous for being "never knowingly undersold", this reliable institution can't be beaten for basics, from buttons to stockings to rugs, along with reasonably priced and well-made clothes, furniture and household goods. The staff are knowledgeable and friendly, too.

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Liberty

210-220 Regent St, W1 tel 020/7734 1234; www.liberty-of-london.com. Tube: Oxford Circus.

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This fabulous and rather regal emporium of luxury is most famous for its fabrics and accessories, but is also building an excellent reputation for both mainstream and new fashion. The perfume, cosmetics and household departments are good, too.

Marks & Spencer

458 Oxford St, W1 tel 020/7935 7954. Tube: Marble Arch.



The flagship store of this British institution offers a huge range of well-made own-brand clothes (the lingerie selection is fancier than in local branches), food, homeware and furnishings.

Selfridges

400 Oxford St, W1 tel 020/7629 1234. Tube: Bond Street.

This huge, airy mecca of clothes, food and furnishings was London's first great department store, and remains one of its best, with a fashionable menswear department and a solid womenswear floor; the food hall is impressive, too

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Clothes and Accessories

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Our listings concentrate on the home-grown rather than the ubiquitous international names, but if you're after designer wear, bear in mind that nearly all of the department stores we've listed stock lines from both major and up-and-coming designers. For designer-style fashion at lower prices, try the more upmarket high street chains: there are branches of Gap, French Connection, Karen Millen, Jigsaw, Monsoon, Kookai, Warehouse, Hobbs and Whistles all over the capital. Marks & Spencer and BHS are a good bet for even cheaper versions of the same styles. For street, clubwear, secondhand and vintage gear, London's markets also have plenty to offer

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Bookshops

As well as the big-name **chain bookstores** , most of which have branches throughout the city, London is blessed with a wealth of **local , independent and specialist bookshops** , many of which are located on or around Charing Cross Road. They may not have everything stocked by the chains, but they will almost certainly be more interesting to browse around, and may well have some hidden jewels on their shelves.

Any Amount of Books

*56 and 62 Charing Cross Rd, WC2 tel 020/7240 8140;
www.anyamountofbooks.com. Tube: Leicester Square.*

Sprawling secondhand bookshop spread over two neighbouring sites, stocking everything from obscure 50p bargains to rare and expensive first editions. Especially strong on fiction, the arts and literary biography.

Arthur Probsthain Oriental & African Bookseller

41 Great Russell St, WC1 tel 020/7636 1096. Tube: Tottenham Court Road.

Connected to the nearby School of Oriental and African Studies, this impressive academic store covers all relevant aspects of art, history, science and culture.

Atlantis Bookshop

*49a Museum St, WC1 tel 020/7405 2120;
www.atlantisbookshop.demon.co.uk. Tube: Tottenham Court Road.*

Splendid occult-oriented place with the perfect ambience for browsing through books and magazines covering spirituality, psychic phenomena, witchcraft and so on.

Blackwell's

100 Charing Cross Road, WC2 tel 020/7292 5100 (and other branches); www.bookshop.blackwell.co.uk. Tube: Tottenham Court Road or Leicester Square.

The London flagship of Oxford's best academic bookshop has a wider range than you might expect; academic stock is unsurprisingly excellent, but so is the range of recent computing, travel and fiction titles.

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Books for Cooks

4 Blenheim Crescent, W11 tel 020/7221 1992. Tube: Ladbroke Grove.

Anything and everything to do with food can be found on the drooling shelves of this wonderful new and second-hand bookshop, which also has a tiny café offering cookery demonstrations, coffee for browsers, and lunch.

Books Etc

120 Charing Cross Rd, WC2 tel 020/7379 6838 (and other branches). Tube: Tottenham Court Road.

Large, laid-back and user-friendly, with an on-site coffee shop and a wide and well-stocked range of mainstream and specialist titles, and especially good on contemporary fiction.

Borders Books & Music

203-207 Oxford St, W1 (and other branches) tel 020/7292 1600; www.borders.com. Tube: Oxford Circus or Tottenham Court Road.

Enormous London flagship of the American import, boasting four floors of book, music and CD titles alongside a huge range of magazines and a coffee bar. Good range of titles, with staff recommendations and reviews, and a solid children's section.

Cinema Bookshop

13-14 Great Russell St, WC1 tel 020/7637 0206. Tube: Tottenham Court Road.

Close to the British Museum and in the heart of Bloomsbury, this small outlet has every new and second-hand cinema title you might want somewhere on its towering shelves.

Daunt Books

83 Marylebone High St, W1 tel 020/7224 2295 (and other branches). Tube: Bond Street or Baker Street.

Wide and varied range of travel literature as well as the usual guidebooks, presented by expert staff in the beautiful, galleried interior of this famous shop.

Forbidden Planet

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71-75 New Oxford St, WC1 tel 020/7836 4179. Tube:
Tottenham Court Road.

Two permanently-packed floors of all things science-fiction and fantasy-related, ranging from books and comics to games and ephemera.

Foyles

113-119 Charing Cross Rd, WC2 tel 020/7437 5660. Tube:
Tottenham Court Road.

Endearingly (sometimes irritatingly) antiquated, this huge and famous London bookshop is best avoided if you're short of time. Pretty much everything you might want is here, but finding it is one adventure, and paying for it another; you queue once to part with your money, and again to pick up the book.

Gay's the Word

66 Marchmont St, WC1 tel 020/7278 7654;
www.gaystheword.co.uk. Tube: Russell Square.

Extensive collection of lesbian and gay classics, pulps, contemporary fiction and non-fiction, plus cards, calendars, magazines and more. Known for the weekly lesbian discussion groups and readings held in the back of the shop.

Gosh!

39 Great Russell St, WC1 tel 020/7636 1011. Tube: Tottenham Court Road.

All kinds of comics for all kinds of readers, whether you're the casually curious or the serious collector. Check out the Cartoon Gallery in the basement.

Politico's

8 Artillery Row, SW1 tel 020/7828 0010; www.politicos.co.uk.
Tube: St James's Park.

Mainstream political fare, new and secondhand, with plenty of big biographies. A cosy café, board games and irreverent window displays give it a more frivolous edge.

Silver Moon Women's Bookshop

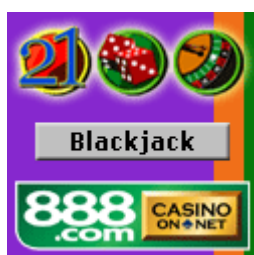
64-68 Charing Cross Rd, NW1 tel 020/7836 7906;
www.silvermoonbookshop.co.uk. Tube: Leicester Square.



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Large, well-stocked and spread over two floors, boasting the biggest lesbian department in the country and knowledgeable staff. Good selection of magazines, periodicals, cards, T-shirts, etc too.

Souls of Black Folks

407 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 tel 020/7738 4141. Tube: Brixton.

Dedicated black bookshop specializing in African, Caribbean and African-American literature, with regular readings, a buzzing café and late opening hours.

Stanford's Map and Travel Bookshop

12-14 Long Acre, WC2 tel 020/7836 1321. Tube: Leicester Square or Charing Cross.

The world's largest specialist travel bookshop, this features pretty much any map of anywhere, plus a huge range of travel books and guides.

Unsworths Booksellers

12 Bloomsbury St, WC1 tel 020/7436 9836. Tube: Tottenham Court Road.

Good for bargains, including recent and just-out-of-print novels and academic titles. Specializes in the humanities, and features an interesting antiquarian selection.

Waterstone's

121-123 Charing Cross Rd, WC2, tel 020/7434 4291 (and other branches). Tube: Tottenham Court Road.

Flagship store of the huge, quality book chain, with technical and travel titles as well as fiction. The Waterstone's Arts store, at 8 Long Acre, WC2 (tel 020/7836 1359; Tube: Leicester Square or Covent Garden) covers all aspects of the graphic and fine arts, media and music.

Zwemmer Media Arts

80 Charing Cross Rd, WC2 tel 020/7240 4157 (and other branches); www.zwemmer.com. Tube: Leicester Square.

Specialist art bookstore with a fantastic and expert selection across several neighbouring branches. This branch specializes in film, design and photography

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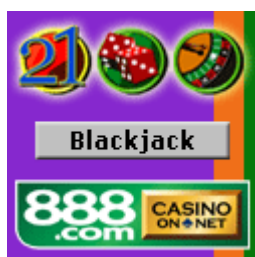
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Markets

Bermondsey (New Caledonian) Market

Bermondsey Square, SE1. Tube: Borough or London Bridge. Fri 5am-2pm.

Huge, unglamorous but highly regarded antique market offering everything from obscure nautical instruments to attractive but pricey furniture. As the real collectors arrive at dawn to pick up the bargains, you should get here before midday.

Camden

Camden High St to Chalk Farm Rd, NW1. Tube: Camden Town. Mainly Thurs-Sun 9.30am-5.30pm.

On the high street, Camden Market (Thurs-Sun 9.30am-5.30pm) offers a good mix of new and second-hand clothes and records, while the Electric Market (Sun 9am-5.30pm) and Camden Canal Market (Sat & Sun 10am-6pm) has cheap fashion, hippywear and souvenirs. Camden Lock, off Chalk Farm Road (Sat & Sun 10am-6pm) offers arts, crafts and clothes, with some shops (Wed-Sun, 10am-6pm) adding a few hip designers, antique dealers and booksellers to the mix. Leading off from Camden Lock, the Stables Yard (Sat & Sun 10am-6pm) is a sprawling adventure of clubwear, young designers, furniture, trinkets and antiques.

Covent Garden

Apple Market and Jubilee Market, off Southampton St, WC2. Tube: Covent Garden. Daily 9am-5pm.

The Apple Market has rather twee handmade craft most days, while Jubilee offers endless cheap T-shirts, jewellery, souvenirs and so on - the Jubilee antiques market on a Monday is more enjoyable. Street performers are found in the piazza every day, and it's an amiable area to wander about in.

Greenwich

Greenwich High Rd, Stockwell St, and College Approach, SE10. Tube: Greenwich or train, or Cutty Sark DLR. Mainly Thurs-Sun, 9.30am-5pm.

The covered College Approach section sells mostly twentieth-century antiques on a Thursday (7.30am-5pm), and handmade goods and clothes from Friday to Sunday (9.30am-5.30pm), while the Central Market off Stockwell Street has funky second-

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hand clothes, bric-a-brac and furniture. Shops inside the covered market and in the surrounding streets offer obscure maritime devices.

Portobello Road

Portobello Rd, W10, and Golborne Rd, W11. Tube: Ladbroke Grove or Notting Hill Gate. Antique market Sat 7.30am-6.30pm; general market Mon-Wed 8am-6pm, Thurs 9am-1pm & Fri-Sat 7am-7pm; organic market Thurs 11am-6pm. Golborne Rd market Mon-Sat 9am-5pm.

Start at the Notting Hill end and make your way through the antiques and bric-a-brac down to the fruit and veg stalls, and then under the Westway to the seriously hip new and secondhand clothes stalls and shops around which local style vultures circle and swoop. The Golborne Road market is cheaper and less crowded, with some very attractive antiques and retro furniture

Miscellaneous

Anything Left-Handed

57 Brewer St, W1 tel 020/7437 3910; www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

The place to go for left-handed tools, implements and gifts.

Davenport's Magic Shop

7 Charing Cross Tube Arcade, Strand WC2 tel 020/7836 0408. Tube: Charing Cross or Embankment.

The world's oldest family-run magic business, stocking marvellous tricks for both amateurs and professionals.

Flying Duck Enterprises

320-322 Creek Rd, SE10 tel 020/8858 1964. Tube: Greenwich or train, or Cutty Sark DLR.

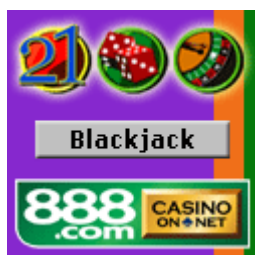
Kitsch aplenty, whether you're after tacky 1970s board games, Elvis soap or a 1950s polka-dotted dinner service.



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Neal Street East

5 Neal St, WC2 tel 020/7240 0135. Tube: Covent Garden.

Beautiful crafts, jewellery, books, clothes, puppets and knick-knacks from a loosely defined Orient.

Radio Days

87 Lower Marsh, SE1 tel 020/7928 0800. Tube: Waterloo.

A fantastic collection of memorabilia and accessories from the 1930s to the 1970s, including shoes, shot glasses, cosmetics and vintage magazines, plus a huge stock of well-kept ladies' and menswear from the same period

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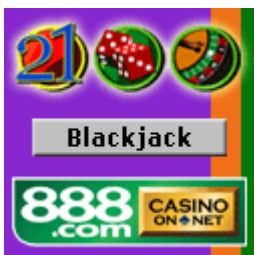
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As a quick glance at the national press will tell you, **sport** in Britain is a serious matter, with each international defeat being taken as an index of the country's slide down the scale of world powers. Many of the crucial domestic and international fixtures of the **football** , **rugby** and **cricket** seasons take place in the capital, and London also hosts one of the world's greatest tennis tournaments, the **Wimbledon** championships.

For **up-to-the-minute details** of sporting events in London, check the *Evening Standard* or *Time Out*, or ring the London Sportsline on 020/7222 8000.

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Football (Soccer)

English **football** (or soccer) is passionate, and if you have the slightest interest in the game, then catching a league or FA Cup fixture is a must. The season runs from mid-August to early May, when the **FA Cup Final** at Wembley rounds things off. There are four league divisions: one, two, three, and, at the top of the pyramid, the twenty-club **Premier League** . There are London clubs in every division, with around five or six in the Premiership at any one time.

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The highlights of the day's best games are shown on BBC TV's **Match of the Day** , on Saturday nights. Most Premiership fixtures kick off at 3pm on Saturday, though there are always a few midweek games (usually 7.30pm on Wednesday), and one or two each Sunday (kick-off between 2 and 4pm) and Monday (kick-off around 8pm), broadcast live on Sky TV.

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London's top club at the moment is **Arsenal** (tel 020/7704 4000; www.arsenal.co.uk), who won the double (league and FA Cup) in the 1997-98 season. Meanwhile, in west London, **Chelsea** (tel 020/7386 7799; www.chelseafc.co.uk) waltzed away with the last-ever European Cup Winners' Cup. It's reasonably easy to get **tickets** , if booked in advance, for most London Premier League games, unless two London sides are playing each other. The biggest of these "derby" fixtures are the meetings of North London rivals Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur (tel 020/8365 5000; www.spurs.co.uk). Tickets for Premiership matches don't come cheap, however, with most charging a minimum of £15-20.

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Cricket

In the days of the Empire, the English took **cricket** to the colonies as a means of instilling the gentlemanly values of fair play while administering a sound thrashing to the natives. These days, the former colonies - such as Australia, the West Indies and India - all beat England on a regular basis, and to see the game at its best you should try to get into one of the **Test matches** between England and the summer's touring team. These international fixtures are played in the middle of the cricket season, which runs from April to September. Two of the matches are played in London: one at **Lord's** (tel 020/7289 1611; www.lords.org), the home of English cricket, in St John's Wood, the other at **The Oval** (tel 020/7582 6660; www.surreyccc.co.uk), in Kennington. In tandem with the full-blown five-day Tests, there's also a series of one-day internationals, two of which are usually held in London.

Getting to see England play one of the big teams can be difficult unless you book months in advance. If you can't wangle your way into a Test, you could watch it live on television, or settle down to an inter-county match, either in the **county championship** (these are four-day games) or in one of the three fast and furious one-day competitions. Two county teams are based in London - **Middlesex** , who play at Lord's, and **Surrey** , who play at The Oval.

Rugby

Rugby gets its name from Rugby public school, where the game mutated from football (soccer) in the nineteenth century. A rugby match may at times look like a bunch of weightlifters grappling each other in the mud - as the old joke goes, rugby is a hooligan's game played by gentlemen, while football is a gentleman's game played by hooligans - but it is in reality a highly tactical and athletic game. England's rugby team tends to represent the country with rather more success than the cricket squad, though they can't quite match the power and attacking panache of the sides from the Southern Hemisphere.

There are two types of rugby played in Britain: fifteen-a-side **Rugby Union** , which has upper-class associations (though the game is also very strong in working-class Wales) and only became a professional sport in 1995; and thirteen-a-side **Rugby League** , which has long been a professional game played almost exclusively in the north of England (though the final of one of its knock-out trophies is traditionally played at Wembley), and which has moved into a new era with the formation of Super

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League, featuring the big name northern clubs and one London club, the **London Broncos** (tel 020/8410 5000; www.londonbronzos.co.uk), which shares a ground with Charlton football club. Games traditionally take place on Sundays at 3pm, but there are also matches on Friday and Saturday nights. The season runs from March to September, thus enabling players to play Union in the winter.

In London, virtually all rugby clubs play Rugby Union, with the two biggest teams being **Harlequins** (tel 020/8410 6000; www.quins.co.uk) and **London Wasps** (tel 020/8902 4220; www.wasps.co.uk). The season runs from September until May, finishing off with the **Tetley Bitter Cup**, rugby's equivalent of the FA Cup. The cup final and international matches are played at **Twickenham** (tel 020/8892 2000; www.rfu.com), in southwest London. Unless you are affiliated to one of the 2000 clubs of the Rugby Union, or willing to pay well over the odds at a ticket agency, it is tough to get a ticket for one of these big Twickenham games. A better bet is to go and see a Harlequins or Wasps league game, where there's bound to be an international player or two on display - you can usually get in for around £12.

Tennis

Tennis in England is synonymous with **Wimbledon** (tel 020/8946 2244; www.wimbledon.com), the only Grand Slam tournament in the world to be played on grass, and for many players the ultimate goal of their careers. The Wimbledon championships last a fortnight, and are always held during the last week of June and the first week of July. Most of the **tickets**, especially seats for the main show courts (Centre and No. 1), are allocated in advance to the Wimbledon tennis club's members, other clubs and corporate "sponsors" - as well as by public ballot - and once these have taken their slice there's not a lot left for the general public.

On tournament days, queues start to form around dawn - if you arrive by around 7am, you have a reasonable chance of securing one of the limited number of Centre and No. 1 court tickets held back for sale on the day. If you're there by around 9am, you should get admission to the outside courts (where you'll catch some top players in the first week of the tournament). Either way, you then have a long wait until play commences at noon - and if it rains you don't get your money back.

If you want to see big-name players in London, an easier opportunity is the Stella Artois men's championship at **Queen's Club** (tel 020/7385 3421) in Hammersmith, which finishes a

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week before Wimbledon. Many of the male tennis stars use this tournament to acclimatize themselves to British grass-court conditions. As with Wimbledon, you have to apply for tickets in advance, although there are a limited number of returns on sale at 10am each day.

For the unlucky, there's the consolation of TV coverage, which is pretty all-consuming for Wimbledon

Horse Racing

There are five **horse racecourses** within easy reach of London: **Kempton Park** (tel 01932/782292; www.kempton.co.uk), near Sunbury-on-Thames; **Sandown Park** (tel 01372/463072; www.sandown.co.uk), near Esher in Surrey; and **Windsor** (tel 01753/865234; www.windsorracing.co.uk), in Berkshire, which hold top-quality races on the flat (April-Sept) and over jumps (Aug-March). There's also **Ascot** (tel 01344/622211; www.ascot.co.uk), in Berkshire, and **Epsom** (tel 01372/726311; www.epsomderby.co.uk) in Surrey, which are the real glamour courses, hosting major races of the flat-racing season every June.

Thousands of Londoners have a day out at Epsom on Derby Day, which takes place on the first or second Saturday in June. **The Derby**, a mile-and-a-half race for three-year-old thoroughbreds, is the most prestigious of the five classics of the April to September English flat season, and is preceded by another classic, **the Oaks**, which is for fillies only. The three-day Derby meeting is as much a social ritual as a sporting event, but for sheer snobbery, nothing can match the **Royal Ascot** week in mid-June, when the Queen and selected members of the royal family are in attendance, along with half the nation's bluebloods. The best seats are the preserve of the gentry, who get dressed up to the nines for the day; but, as is the case at most racecourses, the rabble are allowed into the public enclosure for a mere £5.

Greyhound Racing

A night out at the **dogs** is still a popular pursuit in London. It's an inexpensive, cheerful and comfortable spectacle: a grandstand seat costs less than £5 and all six London stadiums have one or more restaurants, some surprisingly good. Indeed, the sport has become so popular that you'd be best advised to book in advance if you want to watch the races from a restaurant table, particularly around Christmas. Meetings usually start around 7.30pm and finish at 10.30pm, and usually include around a dozen races. The two easiest stadiums to get to are in South



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London: **Catford** (tel 020/8690 8000; www.thedogs.co.uk) and **Wimbledon** (tel 020/8946 8000; www.wimbledondogs.co.uk).

Ice Skating

London has just one centrally located indoor ice rink, plus the outdoor Broadgate rink - located in the heart of the City near Liverpool Street station. Session times tend to vary quite a lot, but generally last for around two to three hours.

Broadgate Ice Rink

Broadgate Circus, Eldon St, EC2 tel 020/7505 4068; www.broadgatestates.co.uk/ice/frameset.htm. Tube: Liverpool Street.

A little circle of ice open from October to March. It's fun (in fine weather), but can get crowded during the weekend. Mon-Wed evenings are for "broomball" matches. Admission £5; skate rental £2.

Leisurebox

17 Queensway, W2 tel 020/7229 0172. Tube: Queensway or Bayswater.

The whole family can skate at this rink, which has ice-discos on Fri & Sat evenings. Admission £5; skate rental £1

Pool and Snooker

Pool has replaced darts as the most popular pub sport in London. There are scores of pubs offering small-scale pool tables, even in the centre of the city, where space is at a premium. Real **American pool**, played on a larger table than pub pool, is also moving into halls once dedicated to **snooker**, the equivalent British game.

Elbow Room

103 Westbourne Grove, W2 tel 020/7221 5211; www.elbow-room.co.uk. Tube: Bayswater or Notting Hill Gate. Mon-Sat noon-11pm, Sun noon-10.30pm.

The capital's trendiest pool club by far, with designer décor, purple-felt American pool tables, and better-than-average grilled fast-food and beer. No membership fee; you simply pay £6-9 per hour for use of the tables, depending on the time of day.

Ritzy's Pool Shack

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16 Semley House, Semley Place, SW1 tel 020/7823 5817.
Tube: Victoria. Mon-Sat 11am-11pm, Sun noon-10.30pm.

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Situated behind Victoria coach station, Ritzy's was exclusively a snooker hall but has now added 17 pool tables to its facilities. It's now another of the city's trendier pool clubs, with a cocktail bar and American-style diner. Day membership for the downstairs snooker club is £5; for pool you just pay the £6-9 fee per table per hour - the later the hour the pricier it gets

Swimming, Gyms and Fitness Centres

Below is a selection of the best-equipped, most central of London's multipurpose **fitness centres** . We haven't given the addresses of the city's many council-run swimming pools, virtually all of which now have fitness classes and gyms. Wherever you go, however, a swim will usually cost you around £2.50.

If you fancy an alfresco dip, then the Serpentine Lido in Hyde Park, or the **open-air pools** on Hampstead Heath are your best bet.

Ironmonger Row Baths

*Ironmonger Row, EC1 tel 020/7253 4011. Tube: Old Street.
Men: Tues & Thurs 9am-9.30pm, Sat 9am-6pm. Women: Mon, Wed & Fri 9am-9.30pm, Sun 10am-6pm.*

An old-fashioned kind of place that attracts all classes, with a steam room, sauna, small plunge pool, masseurs, a lounge area with beds, and a large pool. Admission for a three-hour session is a bargain at £10.

Oasis Sports Centre

*32 Endell St, WC2 tel 020/7831 1804. Tube: Covent Garden.
Indoor pool: Mon-Fri 6.30am-5pm, Sat & Sun 6.30am-4.30pm.
Outdoor pool: Mon-Fri 7.30am-9pm, Sat & Sun 7.30am-4.30pm.*

The Oasis has two pools, one of which is the only heated outdoor pool in central London. Other facilities include a gym, a health suite with sauna and sunbed, massage, and badminton and squash courts.

Porchester Spa

225 Queensway, W2 tel 020/7792 3980. Tube: Bayswater or Queensway. Men: Mon, Wed & Sat 10am-10pm. Women: Tues, Thurs & Fri 10am-10pm, Sun 10am-4pm. Mixed: Sun 4-10pm.



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Built in 1926, the Porchester is one of only two Turkish baths in central London, and is well worth a visit for the Art Deco tiling alone. Admission is around £20 and entitles you to use the saunas, steam rooms, plunge pool, jacuzzi and swimming pool.

The Sanctuary

11-12 Floral St, WC2 tel 08700/630300;
www.thesanctuary.co.uk. Tube: Covent Garden. Non-members:
Mon, Tues & Sun 10am-6pm, Wed-Fri 9.30am-6pm, Sat 10am-8pm.



For a serious day of self-indulgence, this women-only club in Covent Garden is a real treat: the interior is filled with lush tropical plants and you can swim naked in the pool. It's a serious investment at around £50, but your money gets you unlimited use of the pool, jacuzzi, sauna and steam room, plus one sunbed session

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Festivals and Special Events

This is simply a rundown of the principal **festivals and annual events** in the capital, ranging from the upper-caste rituals of Royal Ascot to the sassy street party of the Notting Hill Carnival, plus a few oddities like Horseman's Sunday. Our listings cover a pretty wide spread of interests, but they are by no means exhaustive; London has an almost endless roll-call of ceremonials and special shows, and for daily information, as always, it's well worth checking *Time Out* or the *Evening Standard*.

JANUARY 1

London Parade To kick off the new year, a procession of floats, marching bands, clowns, American cheerleaders and classic cars wends its way from Parliament Square at noon, through the centre of London, to Berkeley Square, collecting money for charity from around one million spectators en route. Information tel 020/8566 8586; www.londonparade.co.uk. Admission charge for grandstand seats in Piccadilly, otherwise free.

LATE JANUARY

London International Mime Festival Annual mime festival which takes place in the last two weeks of January on the South Bank, and in other funky venues throughout London. It pulls in some very big names in mime, animation and puppetry. Information tel 020/7637 5661; www.mimefest.co.uk.

LATE JANUARY/EARLY FEBRUARY

Chinese New Year Celebrations The streets of Soho's Chinatown explode in a riot of dancing dragons and firecrackers on the night of this vibrant annual celebration, and the streets and restaurants are packed to capacity.

MARCH

Head of the River Race Less well known than the Oxford and Cambridge race, but much more fun; there are over 400 crews setting off at ten-second intervals and chasing each other from Mortlake to Putney. Information tel 01932/220401; www.horr.co.uk.

LATE MARCH/EARLY APRIL

Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race Since 1845, the rowing teams of Oxford and Cambridge universities have battled it out

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on a four-mile, upstream course on the Thames from Putney to Mortlake. It's as much a social as sporting event, and the pubs at prime vantage points pack out early. Alternatively you can catch it on TV. Best source of information is the current sponsor's Web site: www.aberdeen-asset.com.

THIRD SUNDAY IN APRIL



London Marathon The world's most popular city marathon, with some 35,000 runners sweating the 26.2 miles from Greenwich Park to Westminster Bridge. Only a handful of world-class athletes enter each year; most of the competitors are club runners or obsessive flab-fighters. There's always someone dressed up as a gorilla, and you can generally spot a fundraising celebrity or two. Information tel 020/7620 4117; www.london-marathon.co.uk.

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MAY BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND

IWA Canal Cavalcade Lively celebration of the city's inland waterways held at Little Venice (near Warwick Avenue), with scores of decorated narrowboats, Morris dancers and lots of children's activities. Information tel 020/8874 2787.

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SUNDAY NEAREST TO MAY 9

May Fayre and Puppet Festival The garden of St Paul's church in Covent Garden is taken over by puppet booths to commemorate the first recorded sighting of a Punch and Judy show, by diarist Samuel Pepys in 1662. Information tel 020/7375 0441.

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MID-MAY



FA Cup Final This is the culmination of the football (soccer) year: the premier domestic knock-out competition, played to a packed house at Wembley Stadium. Tickets are pretty much impossible to obtain if you're not an affiliated supporter of one of the two competing clubs, though they are often available at inflated prices on the black market. The game is also shown live on television. Information tel 020/8902 0902.

THIRD OR FOURTH WEEK IN MAY

Chelsea Flower Show Run by the Royal Horticultural Society, the world's finest horticultural event transforms the normally tranquil grounds of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea for four days, with a daily inundation of up to 50,000 gardening gurus and amateurs (the general public are allowed in on the last two days only). It's a solidly bourgeois event, with the public admitted only

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for the closing stages, and charging an exorbitant fee for the privilege. Information tel 020/7834 4333; www.rhs.org.uk.

MAY 29

Oak Apple Day The Chelsea Pensioners of the Royal Hospital honour their founder, Charles II, by wearing their posh uniforms and decorating his statue with oak leaves, in memory of the oak tree in which the king hid after the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Information tel 020/7730 5282.

LATE MAY/EARLY JUNE

Beating of the Retreat This annual display takes place on Horse Guards' Parade over three evenings, and marks the old military custom of drumming the troops back to base at dusk. Soldiers on foot and horseback provide a colourful, very British ceremony which precedes a floodlit performance by the Mased Bands of the Queen's Household Cavalry. Information tel 020/7739 5323.

FIRST OR SECOND SATURDAY IN JUNE

Derby Day Run at the Epsom racecourse in Surrey, the Derby is the country's premier flat race - the beast that gets its snout over the line first is instantly worth millions. Admission prices reflect proximity to the horses and to the watching nobility. The race is always shown live on TV. Information tel 01372/726311; www.epsomderby.co.uk.

EARLY JUNE TO MID-AUGUST

Royal Academy Summer Exhibition Thousands of prints, paintings, sculptures and sketches, most by amateurs and nearly all of them for sale, are displayed at one of the city's finest galleries. Information tel 020/7300 8000; www.royalacademy.org.uk.

JUNE

Fleadh Pronounced "flaa", this is a raucous (by no means exclusively) Irish music festival in Finsbury Park, North London. Van Morrison has pitched up here on more than a few occasions, but then so too have Bob Dylan and the briefly reformed Sex Pistols. Information tel 020/8963 0940; www.meanfiddler.com.



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JUNE

Spitalfields Festival Classical music recitals in Hawksmoor's Christ Church, the parish church of Spitalfields, and other events in and around the old Spitalfields Market for a fortnight or so in June. Information tel 020/7377 0287; www.spitalfieldsfestival.org.uk.

SECOND SATURDAY IN JUNE

Trooping of the Colour This celebration of the Queen's official birthday (her real one is on April 21) features massed bands, gun salutes, fly-pasts and crowds of tourists and patriotic Britons paying homage. Tickets for the ceremony itself (limited to two per person) must be applied for well in advance; phone 020/7414 2479. Otherwise, the royal procession along the Mall lets you glimpse the nobility for free, and there are rehearsals (minus Her Majesty) on the two preceding Saturdays.

MID-JUNE

Royal Ascot A highlight of the society year, held at the Ascot racecourse in Berkshire, this high-profile meeting has the Queen and sundry royals completing a crowd-pleasing lap of the track in open carriages prior to the opening races. The event is otherwise famed for its fashion statements, and there's TV coverage of both the races and the more extravagant headgear of the female racegoers. Information tel 01344/622211; www.ascot.co.uk.

LAST WEEK OF JUNE AND FIRST WEEK OF JULY

Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships This Grand Slam tournament attracts the cream of the world's professionals and is one of the highlights of the sporting and social calendar. Tickets are hard to get hold of, but as they are valid for the whole day you could always hang around outside in the hope of gleaning an early leaver's cast-off. Don't buy from touts, even if you can afford to, as the tickets may well be fakes. Information tel 020/8946 2244; www.wimbledon.org.

LATE JUNE TO MID-JULY

City of London Festival For nearly a month, churches (including St Paul's Cathedral), livery halls and corporate buildings around the City play host to classical and jazz musicians, theatre companies and other guest performers. Information tel 020/7377 0540; www.colf.org.



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MID-JULY

Greenwich & Docklands Festival Ten-day festival of fireworks, music, dance, theatre, art and spectacles at venues on both sides of the river, plus a village fayre in neighbouring Blackheath. Information tel 020/8305 1818; www.festival.org.

MID-JULY TO MID-SEPTEMBER

BBC Henry Wood Promenade Concerts Commonly known as the Proms, this series of nightly classical concerts at the Royal Albert Hall is a well-loved British institution. Information tel 020/7765 5575; www.bbc.co.uk/proms.

MID-JULY

Doggett's Coat and Badge Race The world's oldest rowing race, from London Bridge to Chelsea, established by Thomas Doggett, an eighteenth-century Irish comedian, to commemorate George I's accession to the throne. The winner receives a Hanoverian costume and silver badge. Information tel 020/7626 3531.

MID-JULY

Mardi Gras Gay and lesbian march through the city followed by a huge (ticketed) party in the park.

THIRD WEEK OF JULY

Swan Upping Five-day scramble up the Thames, from Sunbury to Pangbourne, during which liveried rowers search for swans, marking them (on the bill) as belonging to either the Queen, the Dyers' or the Vintners' City liveries. At Windsor, all the oarsmen stand to attention in their boats and salute the Queen. Information tel 020/7236 1863.

MID-AUGUST

Summer Rites Relaxed annual gay and lesbian festival.

LAST BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND IN AUGUST

Notting Hill Carnival The two-day free festival in Notting Hill Gate is the longest-running, best-known and biggest street party in Europe. Dating back 35 years, Carnival is a tumult of imaginatively decorated floats, eye-catching costumes, thumping sound systems, live bands, irresistible food and huge crowds. Information tel 020/8964 0544; www.nottinghillcarnival.net.uk.

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SATURDAY IN EARLY SEPTEMBER

Great River Race Hundreds of boats are rowed or paddled from Ham House, Richmond, down to Island Gardens on the Isle of Dogs. Starts are staggered and there are any number of weird and wonderful vessels taking part. Information tel 020/8398 9057.

THIRD SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER

Horseman's Sunday In an eccentric 11.30am ceremony at the Hyde Park church of St John & St Michael, a vicar on horseback blesses a hundred or so horses; the newly consecrated beasts then parade around the neighbourhood before galloping off through the park, and later taking part in show jumping. Information tel 020/7262 1732.



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THIRD WEEKEND IN SEPTEMBER

Open House A once-a-year opportunity to peek inside over 400 buildings around London, many of which don't normally open their doors to the public. You'll need to book in advance for some of the more popular places. Information tel 0891/600061; www.londonopenhouse.org.

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LATE SEPTEMBER/EARLY OCTOBER

Soho Jazz Festival Headed by *Ronnie Scott's*, this is a week-long celebration of one of Soho's most famous attributes - its jazz culture. Information tel 020/7437 6437.

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FIRST SUNDAY IN OCTOBER

Costermongers' Pearly Harvest Festival Service Cockney fruit and vegetable festival at St Martin-in-the-Fields Church. Of most interest to the onlooker are the Pearly Kings and Queens who gather at around 3pm in their traditional pearl-button studded outfits. Information tel 020/7930 0089.



LATE OCTOBER/EARLY NOVEMBER

State Opening of Parliament The Queen arrives by coach at the Houses of Parliament at 11am accompanied by the Household Cavalry and gun salutes. The ceremony itself takes place inside the House of Lords and is televised; it also takes place whenever a new government is sworn in. Information tel 020/7219 3000; www.parliament.uk.

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NOVEMBER

London Film Festival A three-week cinematic season with scores of new international films screened at the National Film Theatre and some West End venues. Information tel 020/7928 3232; www.bfi.org.uk or (nearer the time) www.lff.org.uk.

EARLY NOVEMBER

London Jazz Festival Big ten-day jazz fest held in all London's jazz venues, large and small. Information tel 020/7405 5974.

FIRST SUNDAY IN NOVEMBER

London to Brighton Veteran Car Run In 1896 Parliament abolished the Act that required all cars to crawl along at 2mph behind someone waving a red flag. Such was the euphoria in the motoring community that a rally was promptly set up to mark the occasion, and a century later it's still going strong. Classic cars built before 1905 set off from Hyde Park at 7.30am and travel the 58 miles to Brighton along the A23 at the heady maximum speed of 20mph. Information tel 01753/681736.

NOVEMBER 5

Bonfire Night In memory of Guy Fawkes - executed for his role in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot to blow up King James I and the Houses of Parliament - effigies of the hapless Mr Fawkes are burned on bonfires all over Britain. There are also council-run fires and fireworks displays right across the capital; Parliament Hill in Hampstead provides a good vantage point from which to take in several displays at once. Information tel 020/7971 0026.

SECOND SATURDAY IN NOVEMBER

Lord Mayor's Show The newly appointed Lord Mayor begins his or her day of investiture at Westminster, leaving there at around 9am for Guildhall. At 11.10am, the vast ceremonial procession, headed by the 1756 State Coach, begins its journey from Guildhall to the Law Courts in the Strand, where the oath of office is taken at 11.50am. From there the coach and its train of 140-odd floats make their way back towards Guildhall, arriving at 2.20pm. Later in the day there's a fireworks display from a barge tethered between Waterloo and Blackfriars bridges, and a small funfair on Paternoster Square, by St Paul's Cathedral. Information tel 020/7606 3030; www.corpoflondon.gov.uk.

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NEAREST SUNDAY TO NOVEMBER 11

Remembrance Sunday A day of nationwide commemorative ceremonies for the dead and wounded of the two world wars and other conflicts. The principal ceremony, attended by the Queen, various other royals and the Prime Minister, takes place at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, beginning with a march-past of veterans and building to a one-minute silence at the stroke of 11am.

CHRISTMAS

Each year since the end of World War II, Norway has acknowledged its gratitude to the country that helped liberate it from the Nazis with the gift of a mighty spruce tree that appears in Trafalgar Square in early December. Decorated with lights, it becomes the focus for carol singing versus traffic noise each evening until Christmas Eve.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

The New Year is welcomed en masse in Trafalgar Square as thousands of inebriated revellers stagger about and slur to Auld Lang Syne at midnight. For the millennium, there was a big firework display along the Thames, and it remains to be seen whether the show will be repeated or if the crowds will once more return to their traditional haunt. Whatever happens, London Transport runs free public transport all night, sponsored by various public-spirited breweries

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AIDS HELPLINE tel 0800/567123.

AIRLINES Aer Lingus tel 0645/737747 (www.aerlingus.ie); Aeroflot tel 020/7355 2233 (www.aeroflot.co.uk); Air France tel 0845/084 5111 (www.airfrance.com); Alitalia tel 0870/544 8259 (www.alitalia.co.uk); American Airlines tel 08457/789789 (www.aa.com); British Airways tel 08457/222111 (www.britishairways.com); Buzz tel 0870/240 7070 (www.buzzaway.com); Canadian Airlines tel 020/8577 7722 (www.cdnair.ca); Delta tel 0800/414767 (www.delta-air.com); EasyJet tel 0870/600 0000 (www.easyjet.com); Go tel 0845/605 4321 (www.go-fly.com); KLM tel 0870/575 0900 (www.klm.com); Lufthansa tel 08457/737747 (www.lufthansa.co.uk); Qantas 08457/747767 (www.qantas.com); Ryanair tel 0541/569569 (www.ryanair.com); United Airlines tel 0845/844 4777 (www.ual.com); Virgin tel 01293/747747 (www.fly.virgin.com).



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AIRPORT ENQUIRIES Gatwick tel 01293/535353 (www.baa.co.uk); Heathrow tel 0870/000 0123 (www.baa.co.uk); London City Airport tel 020/7646 0000 (www.londoncityairport.com); Luton tel 01582/405100 (www.london-luton.com); Stansted tel 01279/680500 (www.baa.co.uk).

AMERICAN EXPRESS 30-31 Haymarket, SW1 tel 020/7484 9600; www.americanexpress.com. Mon-Sat 9am-6.30pm, Sun 10am-5pm. Piccadilly Circus.

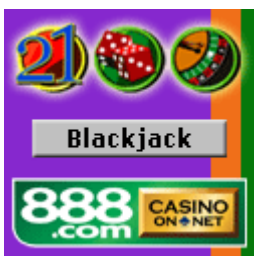
BANKS Opening hours for most banks are Mon-Fri 9.30am-4.30pm, with some staying open half an hour later, and some high street branches opening on Saturday mornings.

BIKE RENTAL Bikepark, 14 Stukeley St tel 020/7430 0083; www.bikepark.co.uk. Mon-Fri 8.30am-7pm, Sat 10am-6pm Covent Garden. There's also a branch at 151 Sydney St, SW3 (tel 020/7565 0777), which is open on Sundays.

CAR RENTAL Avis tel 0870/606 0100 (www.avis.com); Global Leisure Cars tel 0870/241 1986 (www.globalleisurecars.com); Hertz tel 0870/599 6699 (www.hertz.com); Holiday Autos tel 0870/530 0400 (www.holidayautos.com).

CONSULATES AND EMBASSIES Australia, Australia House, Strand, WC2 tel 020/7379 4334 (www.australia.org.uk); Canada, MacDonald House, 1 Grosvenor Square, W1 tel 020/7258 6600 (www.canada.org.uk); Ireland, 17 Grosvenor Place, SW1 tel 020/7235 2171; New Zealand, New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, SW1 tel 020/7930 8422 (www.newzealandhc.org.uk); South Africa,

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South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, WC2 tel 020/7451 7299 (www.southafricahouse.com); USA, 24 Grosvenor Square, W1 tel 020/7499 9000 (www.usembassy.org.uk).

CULTURAL INSTITUTES French Institute, 17 Queensberry Place, SW7 tel 020/7838 2144 (www.institut.ambafrance.org.uk); Goethe Institute, Princes Gate, Exhibition Rd, SW7 tel 020/7596 4000 (www.goethe.de/london); Italian Cultural Institute, 39 Belgrave Square, SW1 tel 020/7235 1461 (www.italcultur.org.uk).

DENTISTS Emergency treatment: Guy's Hospital, St Thomas St, SE1 tel 020/7955 4317 (Mon-Fri 8.45am-3.30pm).

ELECTRICITY Electricity supply in London conforms to the EU standard of approximately 230V.

EMERGENCIES For police, fire and ambulance services, call 999.

HOSPITAL For 24hr accident and emergency: Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Rd, W6 tel 020/8846 1234; Chelsea & Westminster Hospital, 369 Fulham Rd, SW10 tel 020/8746 8000; Royal Free Hospital, Pond St, NW3 tel 020/7794 0500; Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Rd, E1 tel 020/7377 7000; St Mary's Hospital, Praed St, W2 tel 020/7886 6666; University College Hospital, Grafton Way, WC1 tel 020/7387 9300; Whittington Hospital, Highgate Hill, N19 tel 020/7272 3070.

LAUNDRY There are self-service laundrettes all over London. Duds'n'Suds is a good central outfit with TV, pool and pinball: 49-51 Brunswick Shopping Centre, WC1 tel 020/7837 1122 (Mon-Fri 8am-9pm, Sat & Sun 8am-8pm; Russell Square).

LEFT LUGGAGE AIRPORTS Gatwick: North Terminal tel 01293/502013 (daily 6am-10pm); South Terminal tel 01293/502014 (24hr). Heathrow: Terminal 1 tel 020/8745 5301 (daily 6am-11pm); Terminal 2 tel 020/8745 4599 (daily 6am-10.30pm); Terminal 3 tel 020/8759 3344 (daily 5.30am-10.30pm); Terminal 4 tel 020/8745 7460 (daily 5.30am-11pm). London City Airport tel 020/7646 0000 (daily 6.30am-10pm). Stansted Airport tel 01279/680500 (24hr).
TRAIN STATIONS Charing Cross tel 020/7839 4282 (daily 7am-11pm); Euston tel 020/7320 0528 (Mon-Sat 6.45am-11.15pm, Sun 7.15am-11pm); Victoria tel 020/7928 5151 ext 27523 (daily 7am-10.15pm, plus lockers); Waterloo International tel 020/7928 5151 (Mon-Fri 4am-11pm, Sat & Sun 6am-11pm).

LOST PROPERTY AIRPORTS Gatwick tel 01293/503162 (daily 7.30am-5.30pm); Heathrow tel 020/8745 7727 (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm, Sat & Sun 8am-4pm); London City Airport tel 020/7646 0000 (Mon-Fri 6am-9.30pm, Sat 6am-1am, Sun 10.30am-9.30pm); Stansted tel 01279/680500 (daily 5.30am-11pm). **BUSES** tel 020/7222 1234.



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HEATHROW EXPRESS tel 020/8745 7727. TAXIS (black cabs only) tel 020/7833 0996. TRAIN STATIONS Euston tel 020/7922 6477 (Mon-Sat 6.45am-11pm, Sun 7.15am-11pm); King's Cross tel 020/7922 9081 (daily 8am-7.45pm); Liverpool Street tel 020/7928 9158 (Mon-Fri 7am-7pm, Sat & Sun 7am-2pm); Paddington tel 020/7313 1514 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm); Victoria tel 020/7922 9887 (Mon-Fri 7.30am-10pm); Waterloo tel 020/7401 7861 (Mon-Fri 7.30am-8pm). TUBE TRAINS London Regional Transport tel 020/7486 2496.

MOTORBIKE RENTAL Scootabout, 1-3 Leeke St, WC1 tel 020/7833 4607; www.hgbmotorcycles.co.uk. Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-1pm.

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POLICE Central police stations include: Charing Cross, Agar St, WC2 tel 020/7240 1212; Holborn, 70 Theobalds Rd, WC1 tel 020/7404 1212; King's Cross, 76 King's Cross Rd, WC1 tel 020/7704 1212; Tottenham Court Road, 56 Tottenham Court Rd, W1 tel 020/7637 1212; West End Central, 10 Vine St, W1 tel 020/7437 1212. City of London Police, Bishopsgate, EC2 tel 020/7601 2222.

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POSTAL SERVICES The only late-opening post office is the Trafalgar Square branch at 24-28 William IV St, WC2 4DL tel 020/7484 9304 (Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 9am-8pm); it's also the city's poste restante collection point. For general postal enquiries phone 08457/740740, or visit the Web site: www.royalmail.co.uk

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POLICE HOLIDAYS January 1, Good Friday, Easter Monday, First Monday in May, Last Monday in May, Last Monday in August, December 25, December 26; if January 1, December 25 or 26 fall on a Saturday or Sunday, the holiday falls on the following weekday.



TELEPHONES A variety of companies have public payphones on the street, the largest one being British Telecom (BT). Most phones take all coins from 10p upwards, though some only take phonecards, available from post offices and newsagents, and/or credit cards. International calls can be made from any phonebox, by dialling 00, then the country code; to reach the operator, phone 100, or for the international operator phone 155. London phone codes changed in 2000, and all London numbers are now prefixed by the new area code 020. The old 0171 numbers are now prefixed with a 7, while 0181 numbers have an 8 in front of them.

TIME Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is used from October to March; for the rest of the year the country switches to British Summer Time (BST), one hour ahead of GMT.

TRAIN ENQUIRIES For national train enquiries, call 08457/484950.

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TRAVEL AGENTS Campus Travel, 52 Grosvenor Gardens, SW1 tel 0870/240 1010 (www.usitcampus.co.uk); Council Travel, 28a Poland St, W1 tel 020/7437 7767 (www.destination-group.com); STA Travel, 86 Old Brompton Rd, SW7 tel 020/7361 6161 (www.statravel.co.uk); Trailfinders, 42-50 Earl's Court Rd, SW5 tel 020/7938 3366 (www.trailfinders.co.uk).



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