

Planning a Trip to London



London is one of the best cities in the world! If you want to plan a trip here, it's bound to be the trip of a lifetime, filled with good food, British culture, world famous sights and local hidden gems. But, there's something you should know... this city is big, complicated, and often overwhelming. So, planning a London trip is really difficult, especially if you've never been here before. I'm Jess, I run Love and London, and I've helped hundreds of thousands of tourists to plan their BEST trip to London.

We'll cover things like how to find and book the perfect accommodation, British dishes you must try, and how to get your international phone working in London. We'll discuss what the deal is with getting British currency and why you shouldn't bring a ton with you. I'll also help you with your day-to-day itinerary, showing you the major sights to hit up and the local neighborhoods that you absolutely can't miss.

This PDF is a summary of the course. I recommend downloading this to your devices or printing it out to take along with you on your trip as a reference guide.

Chapter 1

Why and When to go to London

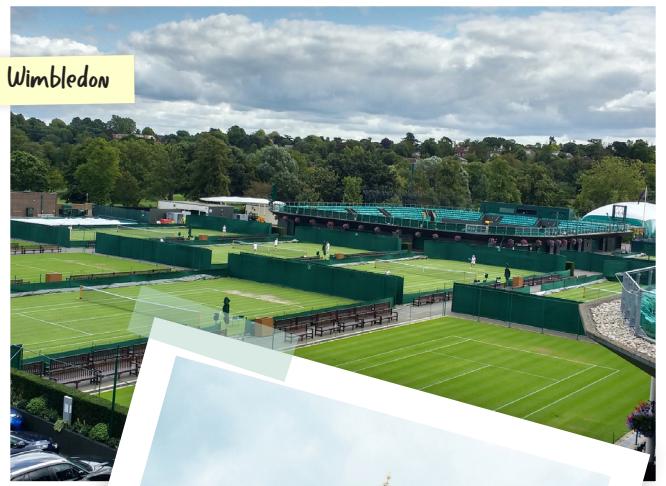
Why go to London?



1. Diversity
2. You can get ANY type of cuisine
3. The city is just very green and open!

Good planning will allow you to spend more time experiencing this incredible city.

Wimbledon



When to go to London

Price differences and crowds

Busiest times of year

- ❖ Peak times for tourism are June to August.
- ❖ Two weeks around Christmas and the New Year.
 - You can expect flight and hotel prices to be higher than normal since lots of people are going to London at these times.



If you choose to visit in early November or January, these tend to be the cheapest months for flights and hotels. Of course, the colder months are typically less desirable to visit London, so you can also find decent prices in February and March.



If you prefer warmer temps, summer in London is great.

You'll pay more for accommodation, flights and also find lots more people in central London. If you like fall or spring weather, then April-May and Sept-Oct are typically a nice balance of ok weather, mid-level prices, and manageable crowds.



Big Ben

Holidays

- ❖ If you wanted to experience Wimbledon, the world-renowned tennis tournament, plan to come in July.
- ❖ If you want to see the city's Christmas lights, they start at the end of November until early Jan.
- ❖ Click [here](#) for London's public and private holidays.

In the summer you'll get some nice weather but also lots of crowds and it'll be a bit more expensive.

In the colder months it's the opposite.

Spring and fall, you end up somewhere in the middle ground of prices and crowds.

Chapter 2

London Logistics

London Flights and Airports

Airports

Transcontinental

- ❖ Heathrow
- ❖ Gatwick

Majority domestic

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| ❖ Stansted | ❖ City |
| ❖ Luton | ❖ Southend |

Heathrow

- ❖ 15 miles (24km) from London City Center

Gatwick

- ❖ Further outside London
- ❖ If you have an early flight out of Gatwick, you'd want to stay nearby the night before so you're not making an hour and a half transfer the morning of your flight.



Border Control Basics

E-Passport Gates

- ❖ Instead of waiting on a long line to get interviewed by an officer, you'll instead scan your passport at a set of gates
- ❖ It will look at your face to determine it's you, and you'll get through.
- ❖ Countries that have E-Passport gates
 - USA
 - New Zealand
 - Australia
 - Singapore
 - Canada
 - South Korea
 - Japan
- ❖ If you're not from one of those countries, you'll need to fill out a landing card, which they will hand out on the plane or you can get before hopping on the line, and then wait to speak to an immigration officer.
- ❖ If you're an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen, at the time we're recording this, you can still use the e-passport gates and EU border control line,
 - However, the UK is leaving the EU and this could be changing soon.
 - Click [here](#) where you can understand the latest updates to this.



Transportation

Heathrow

✗ The Heathrow Express

- It's VERY fast
- Gets you to Paddington in under twenty minutes.
- The downside is if you're not staying near Paddington, it might not be very convenient.
- The upside is that if you book in advance you can get very cheap tickets, and kids ride free.
- The price is £5.50 one way if booked 90 days in advance, and goes up to about £22 one way when booked last minute.



✗ Bus

- The other good option is a bus, or what they call a coach here.
- The National Express bus is very cheap, getting you to Victoria Coach Station from just £6 one way.
- It can take up to 90 minutes if there's a lot of traffic.



Gatwick

✗ Train

- You can get to London Bridge, London Victoria, London Blackfriars, or Kings Cross.
- Tickets are reasonably priced at around £10 one way, and the station is right in the South Terminal.

✗ Bus

- The National Express bus is the cheapest option but will take the longest by far, up to around 90 minutes.

Note: Don't take the Gatwick Express, it's not worth the cost.



Taxi



This will be the most convenient, but will be much more expensive than public transport, and could take longer, especially from Gatwick.



Finding and Choosing Accommodation

London is huge and has lots of different neighborhoods you could stay in. there are too many options. But not to worry. I'm here to help.

Hostels

Hostels are your best bet for budget travelers. as you can pay for just a bed in a room with other people

- ❖ Not super private but very economical.
- ❖ London has lots of decent options for hostels.
- ❖ You can book London hostels on [Hostelworld](#).

Airbnbs

Airbnb is popular in London, so you can rent just a room in a Londoner's house,

- ❖ If you have more money to spend you can rent an entire flat or house.
- ❖ Renting a room would be a great way to make a Londoner friend and get a local's perspective and recommendations.
- ❖ Alternatively renting an entire flat is great for groups and families.

Serviced or Holiday Flats

Less common but still a good option for groups and families.

- ❖ These are rented through various different websites and companies, and some include daily or weekly cleaning, which you don't typically get with Airbnb.
- ❖ You can find these on sites like Booking.com and HomeAway.
- ❖ You can specifically search these sites for homes and look for the word "serviced" to get this option

Hotels

London has tons of options for all different budgets.

- ❖ There are budget options with just the bare bones. Some hotels offer rooms without windows for pretty cheap.
- ❖ There are also some of the most luxurious hotels in the world.

Central Vs. Local

The first decision is do you want to stay central or not.

- Central means in the heart of the city where all the tourist attractions are. Or a bit outside, in the more "local" areas.

Pros of Central

- Convenience
 - Convenient in terms of hitting many of the major attractions, many of which you will be able to walk to.
- Top-notch hotels
 - Some of the country's most incredible hotels are in these areas, like The Covent Garden Hotel and Sea Containers.

Cons of Central

- Expensive
 - Hotels will get you the least for your money.
 - Truly "Low budget" options don't really exist.
 - Food and drink are more expensive around central.
- Can't walk Everywhere
 - Not all attractions and neighborhoods will be within walking distance because London is a very spread out city.
- Not "local"
 - These areas are not really typical Londoner neighborhoods, because they are so centrally located in busy areas, and are very expensive to live in.
 - You can also expect more crowds of tourists in these areas during peak times of the year.

Central area to book in

- If you want to sit centrally, I would recommend Covent Garden (more family-friendly) and Soho.
 - These areas are buzzing all of the time, and are pretty much the dead center of the city.
 - You'll find tons of hot restaurants and bars.
 - Walking distance of many sights like
 - Piccadilly Circus
 - Chinatown
- Southbank
 - Southbank connects Westminster Bridge, the London Eye, Tower Bridge, and a few other popular tourist attractions.
 - Staying in Bankside or Southwark puts you within walking distance of all of the Southbank area

Pros of Local

- Neighborhood feel
 - The pace will be a little calmer, you'll find cute cafes and pubs that locals frequent.
 - You'll probably just feel a little more like you're at home.
- Meet Locals
 - Hang out in a local cafe or pub and maybe you'll make a Londoner friend that lives nearby.
- Cheaper
 - Generally speaking, you'll get a little more for your money on everything outside of central London and in these neighborhoods.

Cons of Local

- More transport
 - You'll be a bit farther from most of the major attractions so you'll likely need to hop on the tube a bit if you want to hit those up.
- Quiet evenings
 - Some, not all, of these types of areas, tend to have quieter evenings, so they're not great for nightlife.

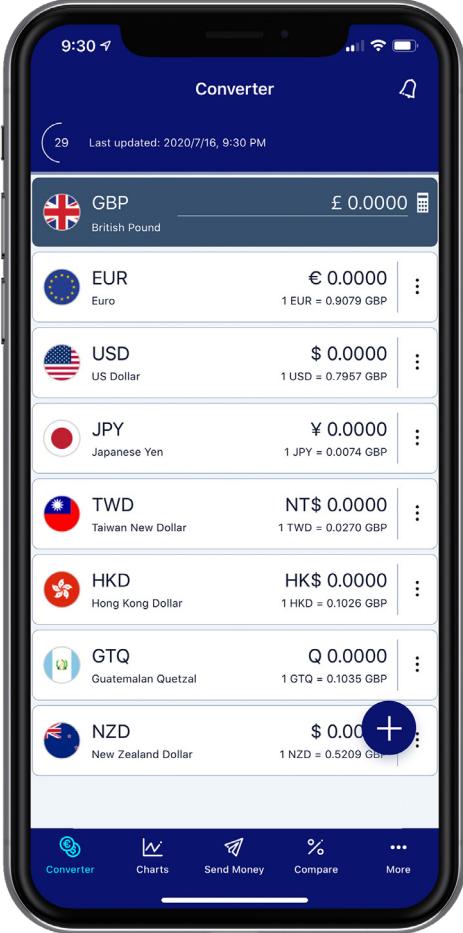
Local area to book in

- Kensington
 - Encompasses South Kensington, Sloane Square, Kensington roughly.
 - These areas are safe, high-end neighborhoods, where you can find beautiful hotels and flats, and a local feel.
 - Not too far from the Museum Mile where you'll find the Science Museum NHS and V&A.
- Notting Hill
 - It's one of the loveliest areas in the city.
 - Though it's very famous, it still has a very local feel as long as you venture off Portobello Road.
 - This area and Kensington are very family-friendly.
- East London
 - This is the quirky, hipster side of London.
 - Areas like Shoreditch, Old Street, and Hoxton are convenient to get to the tourist attractions. They have so much character that you don't even need to venture far to discover great restaurants, cafes, and street art.
 - This is a great area to stay if you want to be near the nightlife.

Guide to the British Pound

Here we use pounds, also known as pounds sterling, or GBP when listed on currency conversion apps. Currency valuations vary daily so you need to look it up online when it gets close to your trip for a more accurate conversion. At the time we're recording this, \$1 = .77, which means if something costs £10, it's \$12.98 at the current conversion rate.

- ☛ Download the XE Currency app for easy conversions on the go.
- ☛ London is a city that doesn't require a lot of cash.
- ☛ Credit and debit cards are accepted almost everywhere, even at most market stalls, and ATMs, aka Cash Machines, are very easy to come by.
- ☛ I recommend taking around £50 of cash per person with you on your trip, as a just in case, but that should be absolutely plenty.
- ☛ If you're worried your bank card won't work in the UK or you just want to have British cash in your wallet before you land, you can order pounds online from your bank or a currency company like Travelex at least a couple of weeks before your trip.
- They charge shipping and usually work a fee into the conversion rate, but that's better than bringing your country's cash to London and exchanging it at a foreign exchange desk which takes time and charges big fees.



Things to know

- ☛ Cards are taken almost everywhere.
- ☛ Remember to tell your bank ahead of time that you'll be using your card internationally so they can put a note on your account.
- ☛ Also, ask what the fees are for using the card abroad. This also prevents your account from being frozen due to a suspected fraud incident.
- ☛ Many credit cards have a 2% or more international transaction fee.
 - If that's the case with your card, look into getting a no-fee card, like a Chase Sapphire credit card or a Travelex Prepaid Card.
 - If you're in London for a few days, all of the things you pay for will really start to accumulate a large number of fees.

Make sure your credit card has a chip like this when you're paying. Vendors might be a little surprised that you actually have to sign a receipt for them which is something only American cards require.

If your card doesn't have a chip, then call your bank and ask if they are able to give you a version with a chip.

Prices in London

Compared to other European cities, London is on the more expensive side

- ☛ The cost of an average loaf of bread is £1.09 or around \$1.41 USD at the time of filming.
- ☛ The cost of a pint of beer is £5 or \$6.49
- ☛ The cost of a casual lunch in the city is £15 or \$19.49
- ☛ The further you venture away from the city center, the cheaper these prices get but overall you should budget with this knowledge in mind.



How to use your phone in London

If you're coming from the US, here are your best options.

Contact your mobile phone provider and ask what they charge for you to use your phone in the UK.

- ☛ It might be that for just a few extra dollars a day, you can use a certain amount of data.
- ☛ This is the easiest option because you don't have to worry about switching sim cards or changing phone numbers.

If that's not an option, the second best one is to get a UK SIM card.

- ☛ You can use your phone at local rates.
- ☛ To get a sim card look for this signage in the airport or in a convenience store throughout the city.
- ☛ You can also get one sent to you at home via [GiffGaff](#), we have a link in the PDF to where you can get that from.

Finally, there's always the option to just find wifi as and when you need it.

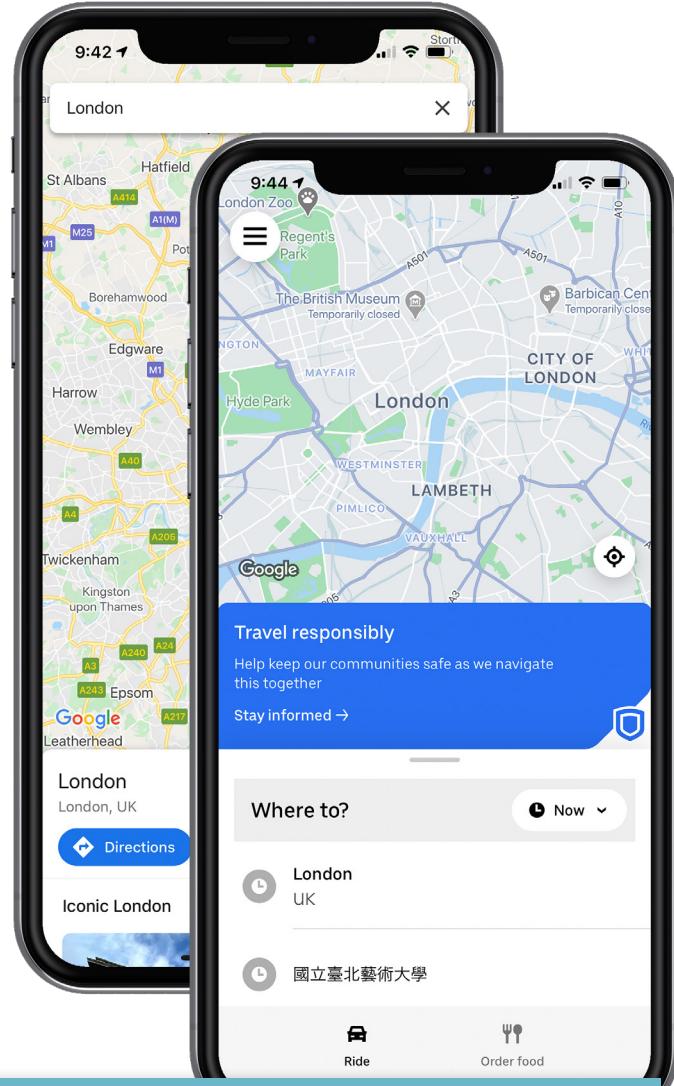
- ☛ London's not great for free wifi, so unless you're happy to not be connected much of the day, then go with the first two options.

While we're talking about phones, I'd also recommend downloading Whatsapp before your trip

- ☛ Most of the UK uses it for texting since less people have iPhones here and don't use iMessage.
- ☛ Make sure you set it up before you arrive in the UK, as you'll need to get a text verification to complete set up.



Shoreditch, London



The same goes for Uber if you plan on using it in London and have never used it anywhere in the world before.

You might also go onto Google Maps and download all of London to your phone so you don't need to use data to access it.

What to Pack

Clothing

London's weather is unpredictable. First, a couple of months before your trip, look up the weather averages for the month you're visiting. A couple of days before your trip, check the forecast, and pack according to that. You'll also want to have some back ups in case there's a sudden change and temps go up or down.

[London weather guide](#)

General things to pack

Jacket

- The forecast will indicate how heavy of a jacket.
- Even on the warmest summer days, the evenings tend to be fairly cool and you might need a light jacket.

Layers

- Pack outfits that enable you to add more layers when it gets colder.
- If visiting in the winter, you'll be able to remove layers on the very warm tube, or simply for when you go inside to museums, restaurants, etc.
- I recommend thermal layers if you'll have some very cold temps.
- In the summer, you'll be VERY warm on the tube, and chilly in places that have air conditioning.
- Light clothing with sweaters or jackets on top will work great.

Dressier options

- Londoners tend to dress up a bit more than most cultures, so if you plan on having a couple of nice dinners or afternoon teas.
- This simply means for men to go for shoes that aren't trainers and perhaps a collared shirt or nice sweater.
- For women, again non-trainer shoes and a nicer top.



Good walking shoes

- Able-bodied visitors to London will find themselves not just walking to get around but walking to enjoy the city as well.
- A good pair of walking shoes can make this a much more enjoyable experience.

Non-clothing items you want to be sure to bring, here's the list:

Power adapter

- The UK has pretty unique outlets, different from the rest of Europe.
- You'll want to make sure to pick up a few adapters.

Umbrella

It doesn't rain as much here as everyone thinks, but, it's still wise to bring one.

Refillable coffee cup

If you like having coffee or tea on the go, a lot of London coffee shops actually give you a discount on your drink if you bring a refillable cup.

Reusable bag

In the UK you have to pay for bags at the supermarket and at some retail shops, so if you bring your own plastic or canvas bag, you can save money and classic.



Apple 5W Power Adapter

Chapter 3

Planning your Itinerary

Mapping the Major Sights



Sight One

Buckingham Palace

- ☛ The Queen's main residence.
- ☛ Most people love to see the very grand palace from out front through its gates.
- ☛ You can also experience the tradition of Changing the Guard at 11am most days.
- ☛ During the summer, the Queen leaves the Palace for Windsor, so it's opened up for a special summer tour and exhibition.
- You can get tickets directly on the [Royal Collection Trust's website](#).



Sight Two

Big Ben

- ☛ The name of the tower is actually Elizabeth Tower.
- ☛ Big Ben is the bell inside that weighs over 13 tons or 13,000 kilograms.

Houses of Parliament

- ☛ Also known as the Palace of Westminster
- ☛ This is where much of British democratic processes take place
- ☛ Holds both the house of Commons and the house of Lords, where UK legislation is debated.
- ☛ The best way to see the H of P is on a self-guided tour or organised tour that you can book through [Parliament's website](#).
- They're available on Saturdays and most weekdays during parliamentary recesses which change each year, but happen for a few days every couple of months.

Sadly, overseas visitors can't go inside Elizabeth Tower to see Big Ben up close.

- ☛ Even UK residents have to write a letter in advance with a request for a visit, but you can marvel at it from the outside which really is the best view.

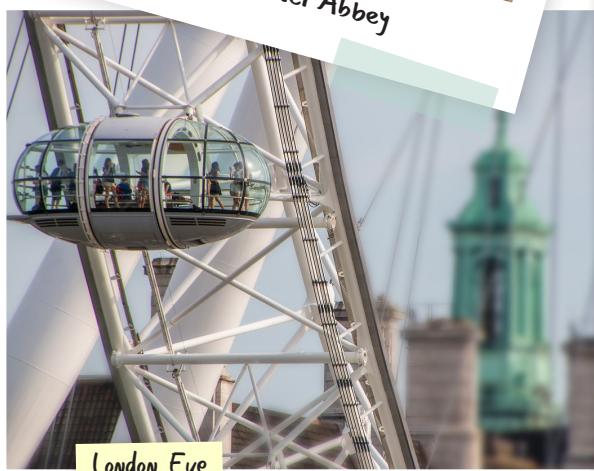
Sight Three

Westminster Abbey

- ☛ A royal church with daily public services and a World Heritage Site.
- ☛ Has over a thousand years of history, including coronations, royal weddings like Kate and Will's, and funerals.
- ☛ It's also the resting place of over 3,000 famous Brits, including 30 kings and queens.
- ☛ The best way to visit the Abbey is to go inside and see the history for yourself.
 - Buy tickets for entrance in advance via the [Abbey's website](#)
 - They close Sundays for services.
- ☛ Anyone can visit for a free service, but you won't be allowed to see any other parts of the Abbey.



Westminster Abbey



London Eye

Sight Four

London Eye

- ☛ One of London's newest landmarks
- ☛ It sits at 135 meters or 442 feet tall
- ☛ It's the largest cantilevered observation wheel in the world.
- ☛ It was built and launched for the millennium, and was meant to be taken down in 2005, but it was so popular with visitors that its lease was extended.
- ☛ The best way to experience the [London Eye](#) is by going on it.
 - You'll step into a pod which will rotate around the wheel for 30 minutes while you admire the views and take photos.
 - You can buy tickets directly from the London Eye website and the price is around 27 pounds.

Sight Five

Tower Bridge

- ☛ It was built between 1886 and 1894.
- ☛ Has become an iconic symbol of the city.
- ☛ It was built as there was a need for a bridge in the area, but it needed to not disrupt river traffic.
- ☛ Ways to see Tower Bridge.
 - There are many angles along the north bank and the south bank of the River Thames where you can admire it from.
 - I'd also recommend walking across it, so you can see it from directly underneath.
 - You can also get tickets for the [Tower Bridge Experience](#).
 - Walk across the upper bridge that connects the two towers.
 - Learn about the history of the bridge in great detail
 - There's also a glass floor allowing you to look down to see the cars and people walking across the bridge.

Sight Six

Tower of London

- ☛ Built way back in the 1070s by William the Conqueror to be his London fortress.
- ☛ Almost 1000 years later it still protects the Crown Jewels, is home to the iconic Yeoman Warders, and still holds centuries old traditions like the Ceremony of the Keys.
- ☛ The best way to see the Tower of London is through a Yeoman Warder tour, which is included in the price of a general admission ticket into the tower.

Sight Seven

The Tate Modern

- ☛ The Tate Modern is a huge modern art gallery that's completely free to visit
- Has some optional paid exhibitions
- ☛ It has become the most visited attraction in all of the UK.
- ☛ The best way to visit the Tate Modern is with plenty of time to spare, as there is a lot to see.
- ☛ You'll also want to pop up to the 10th floor viewing point for some free skyline views of the city.

Sight Eight

National Gallery

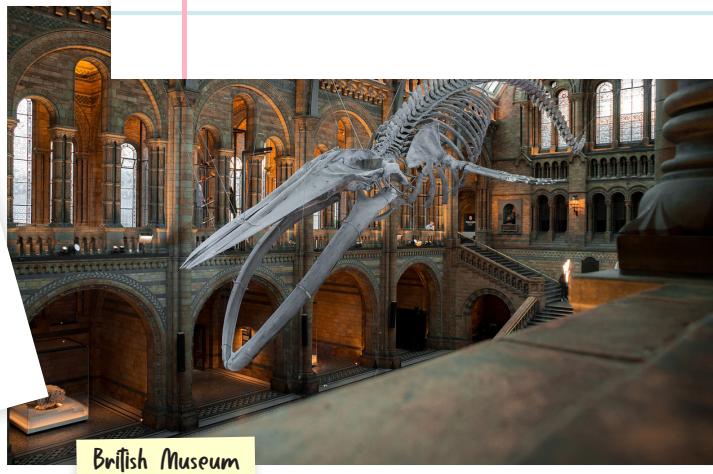
- ☛ Located in Trafalgar Square has a collection of over 2300 paintings from the mid 13th cent to 1900.
- ☛ Like many of London's museums, it's completely free to visit, with at least a couple of paid exhibitions always on offer too.



Sight Nine

British Museum

- ☛ The most famous museum
- ☛ The first public museum in the world, opening in 1753.
- ☛ It tells the story of human civilization with over 8 million artifacts from all over the world some of which are centuries old.
- ☛ The best way to visit the British Museum is avoiding weekends and going as early as you can.
- ☛ There's of course no way to see everything but some key pieces to see are The Rosetta Stone, the Cat Mummies and the Easter Island Statue.



Top London Experiences

Afternoon tea

- ❖ A British tradition that was started by Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, in the year 1840.
- ❖ An experience that Brits love to do, usually for special occasions.
- ❖ It usually involves your choice of specialty tea or coffee, and a selection of finger sandwiches, scones and sweet treats.
- ❖ London is a great place to experience it because there's a wide range of options to choose from, with varying prices and themes.
- ❖ You can opt for the classic afternoon tea, which you can find at many hotels, like Claridge's, or go for something themed or seasonal.
 - For example, many hotels do festive-themed teas around Christmas time, and the Sanderson Hotel's afternoon tea is Mad Hatter-themed.
- ❖ The experience will last between 1 and 2 hours and you can expect to pay £22 pp on the low end and up to £70 for a really fancy experience.
- ❖ Definitely dress up a little nicer for an afternoon tea experience.
- ❖ The internet is full of top ten lists of afternoon teas in London.



Lists of Afternoon Tea

[The Best Afternoon Tea in London](#)

[Where to Take Afternoon Tea in London](#)

[27 Best Tea Rooms and Hotels for Afternoon Tea](#)



You should research it and find the one that looks good to you. You will definitely want to book ahead of time for the more popular spots. Overall, afternoon tea is a very very british tradition and totally worth exploring.



Sunday Roast

- ❖ My favourite British dish.
- ❖ Brits will either have it out at the pub or cook it at home.
- ❖ Yes, it's always a Sunday thing, never any other day.
- ❖ Sunday Roast is very thanksgiving-esque,
 - You'll have your choice of roast meat or a veggie option,
 - Sides of roast veg and potatoes, plus a Yorkshire Pudding which is a bit like a pastry bread, that you can dip in your gravy.
- ❖ Just about every pub will have a Sunday Roast so you don't need to travel far for one.
- ❖ Ask at your hotel or your Airbnb host for a recommendation for good Sunday Roast in the area .



Full English Breakfast

- ❖ A traditional breakfast that is meant to fill you up and really get you started for the day.
- ❖ It usually consists of Some kind of Egg, bacon, sausages, fried or toasted bread, Black pudding (which is a type of blood sausage), baked beans, and mushrooms.
- ❖ You can get it almost anywhere that does breakfast, from little holes in the wall to high-end restaurants.
 - Some places will have a veggie option.

British Cuisine

Fish and Chips

- ❖ The most famous British cuisine.
- ❖ It's fried fish, quite often Cod, with a pile of chips aka chunky fries.
 - I'd also recommend trying it with mushy peas which yes sounds gross but it's tasty with salt and a little lemon squeezed on top.
- ❖ Fish and chips are usually had in a takeaway fashion, so you can go somewhere like award-winning Poppies to have it casually.
- ❖ To get good fish and chips in a restaurant atmosphere, you can also look out for a pub like this one, as many pubs offer it for lunch or dinner.



Pie and Mash

- ❖ Another popular British dish I'd recommend you try.
- ❖ Pie in the UK is typically savoury, and eaten as a main dish, and mash is just mashed potatoes!
- ❖ The original pie and mash
 - In the Victorian Era it was usually paired with a sauce called "liquor" which had eel in it
 - It was the only fish that could survive in the very polluted river thames.
 - Don't worry you don't have to get that now a days, you can get normal gravy.
- ❖ The "traditional" pie options are mince beef, onion, steak and ale, and some places have veggie options as well.



Visit a Pub

Of course you need to visit a pub while you're in London!

Pubs in the UK are different from other parts of the world. Most are family-friendly until the evening and are a combination of casual drinking spots and chilled out restaurants. Pubs are very iconic London and as a result, many centrally located pubs claiming to be "authentic" are often the exact opposite.

The best places to experience good pubs are outside Central London, in areas that are more local and neighborhood-like.

- ❖ Notting Hill
- ❖ Shoreditch

They'll have a more relaxed, local feel than the ones in Central London that usually aren't very nice.

To find a good pub, you can type "good pub in [area]" into google maps to find the highest-rated pubs in nearby places.



Viewpoints

London has a few very famous viewing platforms

The London skyline is amazing so you'll definitely want to get up to a viewpoint to see it from above.

London Eye



Sky Garden



Tate Modern



Unique Neighborhoods to Consider

Shoreditch

It's London's equivalent of NY's Williamsburg or San Francisco's Haight Ashbury.

- ❖ Very eclectic and having "hipster" vibes.
- ❖ The shopping, eating and drinking here is fantastic.
- ❖ Most notable for being the best area in the city for street art.
 - New pieces pop up every single day.
 - You can either take a street art tour to see these, or just go find them yourself.
- ❖ The markets in the area are also world-famous
 - Brick Lane Market
 - Spitalfields Market
 - Various vintage markets that pop up on the weekends.
- ❖ Branching out from Shoreditch and checking out surrounding Old Street, Hoxton, and Angel for a good local feel.



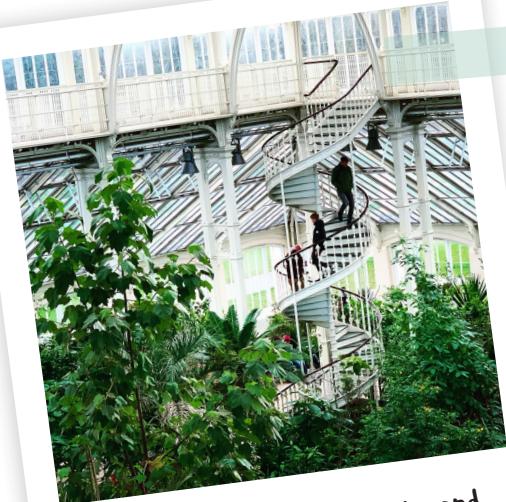
Shoreditch

Brixton

Located in South London

Easy to get to from Central London via the Victoria Line

- ❖ A large Afro-caribbean population,
 - Reflects in the food and culture of the area,
 - Due to gentrification you'll see a real push and pull here.
- ❖ The stars of Brixton are Brixton Village and Market Row.
 - They're both covered markets with teeny shops, market stalls, restaurants, cafes and more.
 - There's a ton of variety and it's a really cool spot to explore for a couple of hours.



The Temperate House, Richmond

Richmond

All the way at the end of the District Line

- ❖ A quaint riverside village that seems like it's not in the metropolitan city of London.
- ❖ If you find yourself with dry weather, Richmond is a lovely place to walk around and experience the greener side of London.
- ❖ The area is most famous for Richmond Park,
 - Three times the size of New York's Central Park.
 - Londoners and tourists visit for beautiful country walks, a day of cycle, and to see the incredible wildlife that live there.
- ❖ In the town of Richmond you'll find some shopping, quaint pubs and restaurants.

London Fields

All the way east is London Fields.

- ❖ An area that combines classic London vibes with eclectic East London ones.
- ❖ I recommend visiting this area on a Saturday.
 - The famous Broadway Market is on, and is a favourite of Londoners from all over the city.
 - You'll find pop up stalls offering clothing, accessories, food and drink for purchase.
- ❖ The area also has lovely independent cafes, restaurants and shops that are worth a visit any day of the week.
- ❖ Lots of green space called London Fields, where the name of the area came from.



Planning a Trip to London



Bright Trip