

# Attractions of London



*"When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life."*

Samuel Johnson made that statement 300 years ago. London was already the most exciting city in the world before the London Eye, before the Tate Modern, before Wembley Stadium and before the Sausages & Mash Café.

If you're only making a short stay, then plan carefully. If you're sticking around then you should still plan because there's never enough time to experience everything London has to offer.

The guide that follows will tell you about some of the places for good food, relaxed drinking and a few of the interesting sites in the city. But if you want to stroll out, breathe in the air and see where the night takes you, that's fine too. Something's happening in every corner of London town.



Sites

# Sites



## Westminster Abbey:

It was at Westminster Abbey that almost every English monarch since 1066 was crowned king or queen. Many of them came back to also be buried here.

The abbey is a truly amazing sight. It's a fascinating mix of architectural styles, though mainly it is a great example of Early English Gothic (1180-1280). The basic church was built in the 11th century by King (later Saint) Edward the Confessor, who is buried in the chapel behind the main altar.

Inside you'll find small chapels, elaborate tombs of monarchy, and monuments to various important figures from British history. There are three museums run by English Heritage.

**Nearest tube:** Westminster



## London Eye:

The ride lasts a gracefully slow 30 minutes. If there are no clouds around, you can see 25 miles in every direction from the top of the world's tallest Ferris wheel. To the west lies Windsor, while to the east the sea. In between, you can see which familiar landmarks you can pick out.

A trip in one of the 32 glass-enclosed gondolas holding up to 25 people is something you really shouldn't miss.

**Nearest tubes:** Westminster/ Waterloo.

## Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew:

Kew is a public garden with the largest botanical collection in the world. It includes pristine lawns, formal gardens and greenhouses which can be enjoyed at any time of the year. Apart from the wonderful plants and trees, Kew has several specific sights within its borders. There's the enormous Palm House, a hothouse of metal and curved sheets of glass dating from 1848 and housing all sorts of exotic tropical greenery; an aerial walkway offers a bird's eye view of the lush vegetation. Then there's the Water Lily House, dating from 1852 and the hottest glasshouse at Kew. There's also the stunning Princess of Wales Conservatory, opened in 1987 and housing plants in 10 different computer-controlled climatic zones - everything from desert to mangrove swamp.

Other highlights include Kew Gardens Gallery, Kew Palace, the Japanese Gateway and the celebrated 10-storey Pagoda. For a good overview of the gardens, jump aboard the Kew Explorer minitrain, which allows you to hop on and off at stops along the way.

Kew Gardens has its own tube and train station. Alternatively, from April to October, there's the water option: Boats run by the Westminster Passenger Services Association ([www.wpsa.co.uk](http://www.wpsa.co.uk)) sail from Westminster Pier to Kew Gardens up to four times a day.

# Sites

## National Gallery:



With more than 2000 Western European paintings on display, the National Gallery is one of the largest galleries in the world. There are seminal paintings from every important epoch in the history of art. If you have the time to make multiple visits, focus on one section at a time to fully appreciate the astonishing collection.

The size and layout can be confusing, so you'll need a gallery plan which can be picked up at the entrance. To see the art in chronological order, start with the Sainsbury Wing on the gallery's western side, which houses paintings from 1260 to 1510. In these 16 rooms you can explore the Renaissance through works by Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Raphael and Titian, among others. This is where you'll also find the Micro gallery, a dozen computer terminals on which you can explore the pictorial database, find the location of your favourite works or create your own personalised tour.

The High Renaissance (1510-1600) is covered in the West Wing, where Michelangelo, Titian, Correggio, El Greco and Bronzino hold court, while Rubens, Rembrandt and Caravaggio can be found in the North Wing (1600-1700). The most crowded part of the gallery is likely to be the East Wing (1700-1900) housing the many works of the impressionists and postimpressionists, including Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne, Monet, Degas and Renoir.

Although it hardly stands out in such exalted company, the impressive display featuring 18th century British landscape artists Gainsborough, Constable and Turner is also worth checking out. The gallery's collection cuts off at 1900; to see 20th century art you need to head to Tate Modern and, for British art, Tate Britain.

**Nearest tube:** Charing Cross.

## British Museum:

This is one of the world's oldest and most interesting museums. However, it has had its fair share of controversy; its impressive collections were mostly acquired through sharp business and the plundering of colonies when the British ruled the world.

The collections are an exhaustive and exhilarating stampede through world cultures. There are galleries devoted to Egypt, Western Asia, Greece, the Orient, Africa, Italy, the Etruscans, the Romans, prehistoric and Roman Britain and medieval antiquities. The museum is massive, so make a few focused visits if you have plenty of time, and the choice of tours are worth considering.

**Nearest tube:** Russell Square



ST. E

BRICK LANE E1  
SWAN

## POPULAR LOCAL MARKETS

This is real life. Street sellers shouting about their goods; you have to make a snap decision; are you getting a bargain or are you being ripped off? Soak up the lively atmosphere and meet some characters at London's local markets.



GOING OUT  
in London

**London's**  
Local Parks

