London Travel Notes

PLAN LONDON LIKE YOU'VE BEEN BEFORE

FREE GUIDE

EXPLORE LONDON BY AREA

London Neighbourhoods Guide

Twelve areas every visitor should know: what each feels like, what not to miss, how long to spend, and which ones pair well in a day.



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London, one neighbourhood at a time

London is easiest to understand as a collection of villages. Each has its own personality, rhythm and best time of day. Plan your trip by area rather than by attraction, and you'll spend less time travelling and more time enjoying the city.

How to use this guide

- **Group your days by area.** Pick two neighbourhoods that "pair with" each other and explore them on foot.
- **Match the time of day.** Markets in the morning, the South Bank at sunset, Soho at night.
- **Use the "Where to stay" table** at the end to choose a base that suits your style.

IF YOU LOVE…	GO TO
Iconic sights & royal history	Westminster, The City & Tower
Food & markets	Borough, Shoreditch, Camden
Museums & rainy days	South Kensington
Photos & pretty streets	Notting Hill, Marylebone, Greenwich
Nightlife & theatre	Soho, Covent Garden, Shoreditch
River views & walks	South Bank, Greenwich

GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE

London is bigger than it looks on the map. Two or three neighbourhoods a day is plenty. The magic is in the side streets you find between the sights.

The classics

Westminster

Royal and political London: Parliament, the Abbey, Buckingham Palace and the grand parks between them. The London on the postcards.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
First-timers, history	Half a day	Westminster, St James's Park	South Bank

- Houses of Parliament and Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben) from Parliament Square
- Westminster Abbey: book a timed ticket, or attend a service for free
- Horse Guards Parade, St James's Park and the view toward Buckingham Palace
- Changing of the Guard (check the official schedule, because it doesn't happen every day)

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Arrive before 10:00. By midday Parliament Square is packed. Cross Westminster Bridge and take your photo of Big Ben from the South Bank side.

South Bank

A riverside promenade of theatres, galleries, food stalls and street performers. It's the best free walk in London.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Views, culture, sunset walks	2–4 hours	Waterloo, Southwark	Westminster, Borough

- The London Eye and Jubilee Gardens
- Southbank Centre, the BFI and the riverside book market under Waterloo Bridge
- Tate Modern (free) and the Millennium Bridge to St Paul's
- Shakespeare's Globe on Bankside

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Walk it west to east in the late afternoon. The light on the river is golden, and you finish near Borough for dinner.

Soho

London's lively heart: restaurants, pubs, theatres and late-night streets, with Chinatown right next door.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Food, nightlife, theatre	2–4 hours (evening)	Tottenham Court Rd, Piccadilly Circus	Covent Garden

- Carnaby Street and the lanes around it
- Chinatown's Gerrard Street
- Soho Square and the side streets off Old Compton Street
- A West End show on Shaftesbury Avenue

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Soho is best after 17:00, when it fills with energy. Leave it for the end of the day, not the morning.

Covent Garden

Market halls, street performers, boutiques and the Royal Opera House, with Seven Dials' colourful corners close by.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Shopping, families, pre-theatre	2–3 hours	Covent Garden, Leicester Square	Soho, Strand

- The Piazza and the Apple Market
- Seven Dials and Neal's Yard
- London Transport Museum
- Somerset House courtyard (ice rink in winter)

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Covent Garden Tube station is often crowded and has lifts only. Leicester Square is a few minutes' walk away and usually faster.

Pretty, grand & maritime

Notting Hill

Pastel terraces, antique shops and Portobello Road, west London at its most photogenic.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Photos, markets, cafés	Half a day	Notting Hill Gate, Ladbroke Grove	Kensington, Hyde Park

- Portobello Road Market (biggest on Saturdays)
- The pastel houses around Portobello Road and Westbourne Grove
- Independent bookshops and vintage shops
- Holland Park and its Kyoto Garden, a short walk away

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Saturday is the famous market day, but it's very crowded. For calmer photos, come on a weekday morning.

Greenwich

A maritime village with a royal park, the Prime Meridian and one of the best views of the city.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Day trip, history, views	Half to full day	Cutty Sark (DLR), Greenwich	A river boat ride

- Cutty Sark and the Old Royal Naval College
- Royal Observatory and the Prime Meridian line
- The view from Greenwich Park's hilltop
- Greenwich Market

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Take the boat there and the DLR back. You get the river views one way and a fast return the other.

South Kensington & Knightsbridge

Grand museums, Hyde Park and luxury shopping. It's the best area for a rainy day.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Museums, families, rainy days	Half to full day	South Kensington, Knightsbridge	Hyde Park, Notting Hill

- Natural History Museum (free)
- V&A Museum (free)
- Science Museum (free)
- Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens and Harrods

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Use the pedestrian tunnel from South Kensington station to reach the museums. It keeps you dry and avoids the crowded pavements.

The City & Tower

London's oldest square mile: Roman walls, Wren churches and glass towers, with the Tower of London at its edge.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
History, architecture	Half a day	Tower Hill, Bank, St Paul's	Borough, South Bank

- Tower of London (book ahead and arrive at opening for the Crown Jewels)
- Tower Bridge
- St Paul's Cathedral
- Leadenhall Market and the Sky Garden (free, but book in advance)

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> The City is very quiet at weekends. That makes it great for photos, but many cafés and pubs close.

Food, markets & creative London

Borough & London Bridge

Food lovers' London: Borough Market, historic pubs and The Shard.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Food, pubs	2–3 hours	London Bridge, Borough	The City, South Bank

- Borough Market (check opening days)
- Southwark Cathedral
- The Shard and the views over London Bridge
- Bermondsey Street's restaurants and galleries

♛ GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE

Go at lunchtime on a weekday. The market is at its best, and the queues are shorter than on Saturday.

Shoreditch

East London's creative side: street art, bars, vintage markets and some of the city's best food.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Street art, nightlife, food	Half a day	Shoreditch High St, Liverpool St	Spitalfields, Brick Lane

- Street art around Brick Lane and its side streets
- Old Spitalfields Market
- Brick Lane (bagels, curry houses and Sunday markets)
- Boxpark and Columbia Road Flower Market (Sundays)

♛ GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE

Sunday is the big market day here: Columbia Road in the morning, then Brick Lane and Spitalfields.

Camden

Alternative, loud and colourful: markets, live music and canal-side walks.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Markets, music, street food	2–4 hours	Camden Town, Chalk Farm	Regent's Park, Primrose Hill

- Camden Market and Stables Market
- Regent's Canal towpath toward Little Venice
- Primrose Hill viewpoint
- Live music venues in the evening

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Walk the canal from Camden to Little Venice (about an hour), or the other way round. It's one of London's best free walks.

Marylebone

Elegant, village-like and calm, with independent shops close to Regent's Park.

BEST FOR	TIME NEEDED	NEAREST TUBE	PAIRS WITH
Relaxed strolls, boutique stays	2–3 hours	Baker Street, Bond Street	Regent's Park, Oxford Street

- Marylebone High Street and its side lanes
- The Wallace Collection (free)
- Regent's Park and Queen Mary's Rose Gardens (summer)
- Sherlock Holmes territory around Baker Street

> ♛ **GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE**
>
> Marylebone is a great base. It's central and well connected, but much quieter than Soho or Covent Garden.

Where to stay, by neighbourhood

AREA	FEELS LIKE	GOOD FOR	KEEP IN MIND
Covent Garden / Soho	Lively, central, busy	First-timers, theatre fans, short stays	Noisy at night; higher prices
South Bank / Waterloo	Riverside, cultural	Walkers, first-timers	Fewer late-night options
Westminster / Victoria	Classic, well connected	Sightseeing, airport links (Victoria)	Quiet in the evenings
Kensington	Elegant, calm	Families, museum lovers	Further from the East End
Marylebone	Village-like, refined	Couples, repeat visitors	Fewer big sights on the doorstep
Bloomsbury / King's Cross	Literary, practical	Eurostar arrivals, value, transport	Less charming around the stations
Shoreditch	Creative, nightlife	Younger travellers, foodies	Further from Westminster
London Bridge / Borough	Foodie, historic	Food lovers, central east	Busy around the station

♛ GUIDE GUARD'S NOTE

Being close to a **Tube station on a useful line** (Elizabeth, Jubilee, Piccadilly or Central) matters more than being in the exact centre. Ten minutes from a good station beats being "central" but far from the Tube.

Perfect pairings for one day

- **Westminster + South Bank:** the classic first day, all on foot
- **The City + Borough:** history in the morning, the market at lunch
- **South Kensington + Notting Hill:** museums, then pastel streets
- **Covent Garden + Soho:** afternoon shopping, evening food and a show
- **Shoreditch + Spitalfields:** best on a Sunday
- **Greenwich:** worth a full day on its own

Read the full neighbourhood guides

Detailed guides with maps, walking routes and local tips:

londontravelnotes.com/london-neighbourhoods
londontravelnotes.com/london-walking-routes
londontravelnotes.com/london-map

Opening days and times change. Please check official websites before you visit. Information was checked in November 2026.