



# LONDON

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London is more than 600 square miles of urban jungle. With nine million people—who don't all speak English—it's a world in itself and a barrage on all the senses. On my first visit, I felt very, very small.

London is more than its museums and landmarks. It's a living, breathing, thriving organism...a coral reef of humanity. The city has changed dramatically in recent years, and many visitors are surprised to find how “un-English” it is. Whites are now a minority in major parts of the city that once symbolized white imperialism. Arabs have nearly bought out the area north of Hyde Park. Chinese take-outs outnumber fish-and-chips shops. Many hotels are run by people with foreign accents (who hire English chambermaids), while outlying suburbs are home to huge communities of Indians and Pakistanis. With the English Channel Tunnel in place and union with the rest of Europe inevitable, many locals see even more holes in their bastion of Britishness. London is learning—sometimes fitfully—to live as a microcosm of its formerly vast empire.

With just a few days here, you'll get no more than a quick splash in this teeming human tidal pool. But with a good orientation, you'll find London manageable and fun. You'll get a sampling of the city's top sights, history, and cultural entertainment, and a good look at its ever changing human face.

Blow through the city on the open deck of a double-decker orientation tour bus and take a pinch-me-I'm-in-London roll or stroll through the West End. Ogle the crown jewels at the Tower of London, hear the chimes of Big Ben, and see the Houses of Parliament in action. Cruise the Thames River and take a spin on the London Eye Ferris Wheel. Hobnob

with the tombstones in Westminster Abbey, enjoy Shakespeare in a replica of the Globe Theatre, and gawk in awe at the original Magna Carta at the British Library. Visit with Leonardo, Botticelli, and Rembrandt in the National Gallery. Rummage through our civilization's attic at the British Museum. And sip your tea with your pinky raised and clotted cream dribbling down your scone. Spend one evening at a theater and the others catching your breath.

## **Accessibility in London**

A staggering 20 million people visit London every year, and many of them have disabilities. With recent improvements and a barrier-free mentality, the city makes a great first stop for your trip.

Mention accessibility, and hoteliers, restaurateurs, and civil servants snap to attention. Many venues and services are geared to people who use wheelchairs. The city tours help you taste the fabled history of this diverse and multicultural place. The central restaurants, pubs, and hotels put you in the midst of London's sights and attractions. The city's taxis are convenient, inexpensive, and fully accessible. The bus system has recently completed a transition to full accessibility, and many Tube stations are also possible for someone who uses a wheelchair. The airports are accessible, from customs to baggage claim to queuing for a taxi.

Most of London's big sights are Level 1—Fully Accessible: Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Somerset House, London Transport Museum, Theatre Museum, British Museum, British Library, Wallace Collection, Madame Tussaud's Waxworks, Buckingham Palace, Royal Mews, Hyde Park and Speakers' Corner, Apsley House, Victoria and Albert Museum, Natural History Museum, Science Museum, St. Paul's Cathedral (main floor only), City Hall, London Eye Ferris Wheel, Imperial War Museum, Tate Britain, Tate Modern, Shakespeare's Globe, Bramah Tea and Coffee Museum, Vinopolis City of Wine, and Kew Gardens.

A few London sights will work for wheelchair users who have some assistance (Level 2—Moderately Accessible): Westminster Abbey, Houses of Parliament, St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church (except the crypt), Museum of London, and Dalí Universe.

Fortunately, not many of London's sights are Level 3—Minimally Accessible or Level 4—Not Accessible. Travelers with limited mobility will only have to skip one major attraction (the Tower of London, where only the crown jewels are accessible) and a few minor ones (such as the Banqueting House, Sir John Soane's Museum, Old Bailey, and the top of St. Paul's dome).

### Accessibility Levels

This book rates sights, hotels, and restaurants using four levels:

**Level 1—Fully Accessible:** A Level 1 building is completely barrier-free. Entryways, elevators, and other facilities are specifically adapted to accommodate a person using a wheelchair. If there's a bathroom, it has wide doors and an adapted toilet and sink. Where applicable, the bathing facilities are also fully adapted (including such features as bath boards, grab bars, or a roll-in, no-rim shower). Fully adapted hotel rooms often have an alarm system with pull cords for emergencies.

**Level 2—Moderately Accessible:** A Level 2 building is suitable for, but not specifically adapted to accommodate, a person using a wheelchair. This level will generally work for a wheelchair user who can make transfers and take a few steps. A person who is permanently in a wheelchair may require some assistance here (either from a companion or from staff).

**Level 3—Minimally Accessible:** A Level 3 building is satisfactory for people who have minimal mobility difficulties (that is, people who usually do not use a wheelchair, but take more time to do things than a non-disabled person). This building may have some steps and a few other barriers—but not too many. Level 3 buildings are best suited to slow walkers; wheelchair users will require substantial assistance here.

**Level 4—Not Accessible:** Unfortunately, some places in this book are simply not accessible to people with limited mobility. This means that barriers such as staircases, tight interiors and facilities (elevators, bathrooms, etc.), or other impediments interfere with passage for travelers with disabilities. Buildings in this category might include a church tower that has several flights of steep stairs, or a museum interior that has many levels with lots of steps and no elevator.

For a complete listing of the Accessibility Codes used in this chapter, please see pages 6–7.

To help you prioritize and plan your time, note the ranking that accompanies each sight listing (ranging from ▲▲▲—a can't-miss sight—to zero, for a sight that is easily skippable).

## ORIENTATION

(area code: 020)

To grasp London comfortably, see it as the old town in the city center without the modern, congested sprawl. The Thames River runs roughly

west to east through the city, with most of the visitor's sights on the north bank. Mentally, maybe even physically, trim down your map to include only the area between the Tower of London (to the east), Hyde Park (west), Regent's Park (north), and the Thames (south). (This is roughly the area bordered by the Tube's Circle Line.) This three-mile stretch between the Tower and Hyde Park—looking like a milk bottle on its side (see map on the next page)—holds 80 percent of the sights mentioned in this chapter.

London is a collection of neighborhoods:

**The City:** Shakespeare's London was a walled town clustered around St. Paul's Cathedral. Today, it's the modern financial district.

**Westminster:** This neighborhood includes Big Ben, Parliament, Westminster Abbey, and Buckingham Palace—the grand government buildings from which Britain is ruled.

**The West End:** Lying between Westminster and The City (that is, at the “west end” of the original walled town), this is the center of London's cultural life. Trafalgar Square has major museums. Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square host tourist traps, cinemas, and nighttime glitz. Soho and Covent Garden are thriving people zones that house theaters, restaurants, pubs, and boutiques.

**The South Bank:** Until recently, the entire south bank of the Thames River was a run-down, generally ignored area, but now it's the hottest real estate in town, with upscale restaurants, major new sightseeing attractions, and pedestrian bridges allowing convenient access from the rest of London.

**Residential Neighborhoods to the West:** Though they lack major tourist sights, Mayfair, South Kensington, Notting Hill, Chelsea, and Belgravia are home to London's wealthy and trendy, as well as many shopping streets and enticing restaurants.

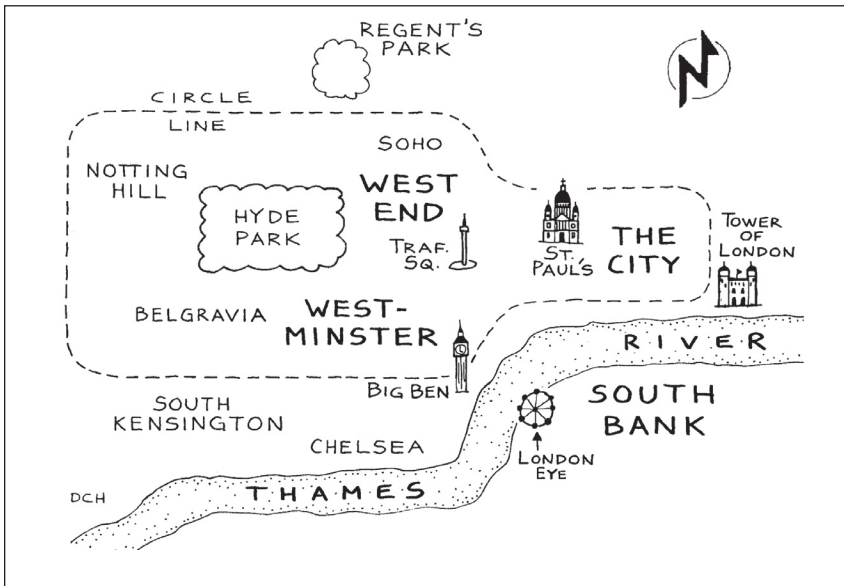
With this focus and a good orientation, you'll find London manageable and even fun. You'll get a sampling of the city's top sights, history, and cultural entertainment, and a good look at its ever changing human face.

## **Tourist Information**

**The Britain and London Visitors Centre**, just a block off Piccadilly Circus, is the best tourist information service in town (**AE, AI, AL+A, AT+A**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, no adapted toilet, but small lift leads to suitable upper-level toilet; Mon–Fri 9:00–18:30, Sat–Sun 10:00–16:00, phone not answered after 17:00 Mon–Fri and not at all Sat–Sun, booking service, 1 Lower Regent Street, tel. 020/8846-9000, [www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com), [www.visitlondon.com](http://www.visitlondon.com)). If you're traveling beyond



## London's Neighborhoods



London, take advantage of the Centre's well-equipped England desk. Bring your itinerary and a checklist of questions. At the London desk, pick up these free publications: *London Map and Guide*, *London Planner* (a great free monthly that lists all the sights, events, and hours), walking-tour schedule fliers, a theater guide, *Central London Bus Guide*, and the Thames River Services brochure. If you'll be taking the Underground, pick up a free copy of the Accessible Tube Map. After you've grazed through the great leaflet racks, take the elevator upstairs to find inviting tables and Internet access (with disk-burning service).

The Britain and London Visitors Centre ("pink desk") sells long-distance bus tickets and passes, train tickets (convenient for reservations), and tickets to plays (20 percent booking fee). They also sell **Fast Track tickets** to some of London's attractions (at no extra cost), allowing you to skip the queue at the sights. These can be worthwhile for places that sometimes have long ticket lines, such as the Tower of London, London Eye Ferris Wheel, and Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum. (But remember that many of these sights allow wheelchair users and their companions to skip the line anyway.) While the Visitors Centre books rooms, you can avoid their £5 booking fee by calling hotels direct (see "Sleeping," page \*TK).

The **London Pass** provides free entrance to most of the city's sights, but since many museums are free, it's hard to justify the purchase.

### If You Need Medical Help

Your first point of contact is your hotel. They are accustomed to dealing with medical emergencies. Here are some other resources:

**Ambulance:** You can call an ambulance by dialing 999 or 112. In Britain, an emergency room is called a “casualty department.”

**Hospitals:** Local hospitals have 24-hour-a-day emergency care centers where any tourist who needs help can drop in and, after a wait, be seen by a doctor. The quality is good and the price is right (free). Your hotel has details. St. Thomas' Hospital, immediately across the river from Big Ben, has a fine reputation (Lambeth Palace Road, tel. 020/7928-9292).

**Pharmacies:** Pharma-Center is on call 24 hours a day (no appointment necessary, toll-free tel. 0808-108-5720). You can have a medical consultation at your hotel or visit a clinic (travel vaccinations, health screening, and same-day blood test results). Another pharmacy, Bliss Chemist, is at 5 Marble Arch (open daily until 24:00). Police stations have addresses for other late-night pharmacies.

**Dentists:** For dental emergencies, consider the 24-Hour Accident and Acute Dental Emergency Service (75 Gloucester Road, opposite Gloucester Road Tube station, tel. 020/7373-3744 or 020/7373-6708). Or call the Dental Emergency Care Service, an all-hours advisory service that can direct you where to go for dental emergencies (tel. 020/7935-4486).

Still, fervent sightseers can check the list of covered sights and do the arithmetic (£27/1 day, £42/2 days, £52/3 days, £72/6 days, includes 160-page guidebook, tel. 0870-242-9988 for purchase instructions, [www.londonpass.com](http://www.londonpass.com)).

Nearby you'll find the **Scottish Tourist Centre** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; Mon–Fri 8:00–20:00, Sat 9:00–17:30, Sun 10:00–16:00, Cockspur Street, tel. 0845-225-5121, [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)) and the slick **French National Tourist Office** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; Mon–Fri 10:00–18:00, Sat until 17:00, closed Sun, 178 Piccadilly Street, tel. 0906-824-4123).

Unfortunately, **London's Tourist Information Centres** (which present themselves as TIs at major train and bus stations and airports) are now simply businesses selling advertising space to companies with fliers to distribute. For solid information, visit the Britain and London Visitors Centre, mentioned above.

Local bookstores sell London guides and maps; *Bensons Map Guide* is the best (£3, also sold at newsstands).

## Arrival in London

**By Train:** London has eight train stations, all connected by the Tube (subway) and all with ATMs, exchange offices, and luggage storage. From any station, ride the Tube or taxi to your hotel.

**By Bus:** The bus (“coach”) station is one block southwest of Victoria Station, which has a TI and Tube entrance.

**By Plane:** For detailed information on getting from London’s airports to downtown London, see “Transportation Connections” (page \*TK).

## Helpful Hints

**Accessibility Resources:** Call the Accessibility Officer of London if you need help with any accessibility issue (tel. 020/7332-1995 or tel. 020/7332-1933). The extremely helpful *Access in London* guidebook is a deal for £10 at Waterstone’s and other good London bookstores (see “Travel Bookstores,” below; see also [www.accessproject-phsp.org](http://www.accessproject-phsp.org)).

**Safety Crossing Streets:** Cars drive on the left side of the road, so before crossing a street, I always look right, look left, then look right again just to be sure.

**Theft Alert:** The Artful Dodger is alive and well in London. Be on guard, particularly on public transportation and in places crowded with tourists. Tourists, considered naive and rich, are targeted. More than 7,500 handbags are stolen annually at Covent Garden alone.

**U.S. Embassy:** The embassy is fully accessible (AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1; open Mon–Fri 8:30–17:30, closed Sat–Sun, 24 Grosvenor Square, Tube: Bond Street, tel. 020/7499-9000).

**Changing Money:** ATMs are the way to go (many accessible on-street ATMs charge no fees). Regular banks charge several pounds to change traveler’s checks, but most American Express offices offer a fair rate and will change any brand of traveler’s checks for no fee. A handy, fully accessible AmEx office is at Heathrow’s Terminal 4 Tube station (daily 7:00–19:00). The always accessible Marks & Spencer stores give good rates with no fees.

Avoid changing money at exchange bureaus. Their latest scam: They advertise very good rates with a same-as-the-banks fee of 2 percent. But the fine print explains that the fee of 2 percent is for buying pounds. The fee for selling pounds is 9.5 percent. Ouch!

**Internet Access:** The *easyInternetcafé* chain offers up to 500 computers per store and is open long hours daily. Depending on the time of day,

a £2 ticket buys anywhere from 80 minutes to six hours of computer time. The ticket is valid for four weeks and multiple visits at any of their branches. They also sell 24-hour, seven-day, and 30-day passes ([www.easyinternetcafe.com](http://www.easyinternetcafe.com)). The locations—which have varying degrees of accessibility—include Trafalgar Square (456 Strand), Tottenham Court Road (#9–16), Oxford Street (#358, opposite Bond Street Tube station), and Kensington High Street (#160–166). The fully accessible (and appropriately named) **Access Printers**, across the street from Victoria Station (next to the Apollo Victoria Theatre), has plenty of terminals (£1/30 min, open long hours daily).

**Travel Bookstores:** Stanfords Travel Bookstore, in Covent Garden, is good and stocks current editions of my books (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; Mon–Fri 9:00–19:30, Sat 10:00–19:00, Sun 12:00–18:00, 12 Long Acre, tel. 020/7836-1321). Two impressive Waterstone's bookstores have the biggest collection of travel guides in town (both **AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible): on Piccadilly (Mon–Sat 10:00–22:00, Sun 12:00–18:00, 203 Piccadilly, tel. 020/7851-2400) and on Trafalgar Square (Mon–Sat 9:30–21:00, Sun 12:00–18:00, next to Costa Café, tel. 020/7839-4411).

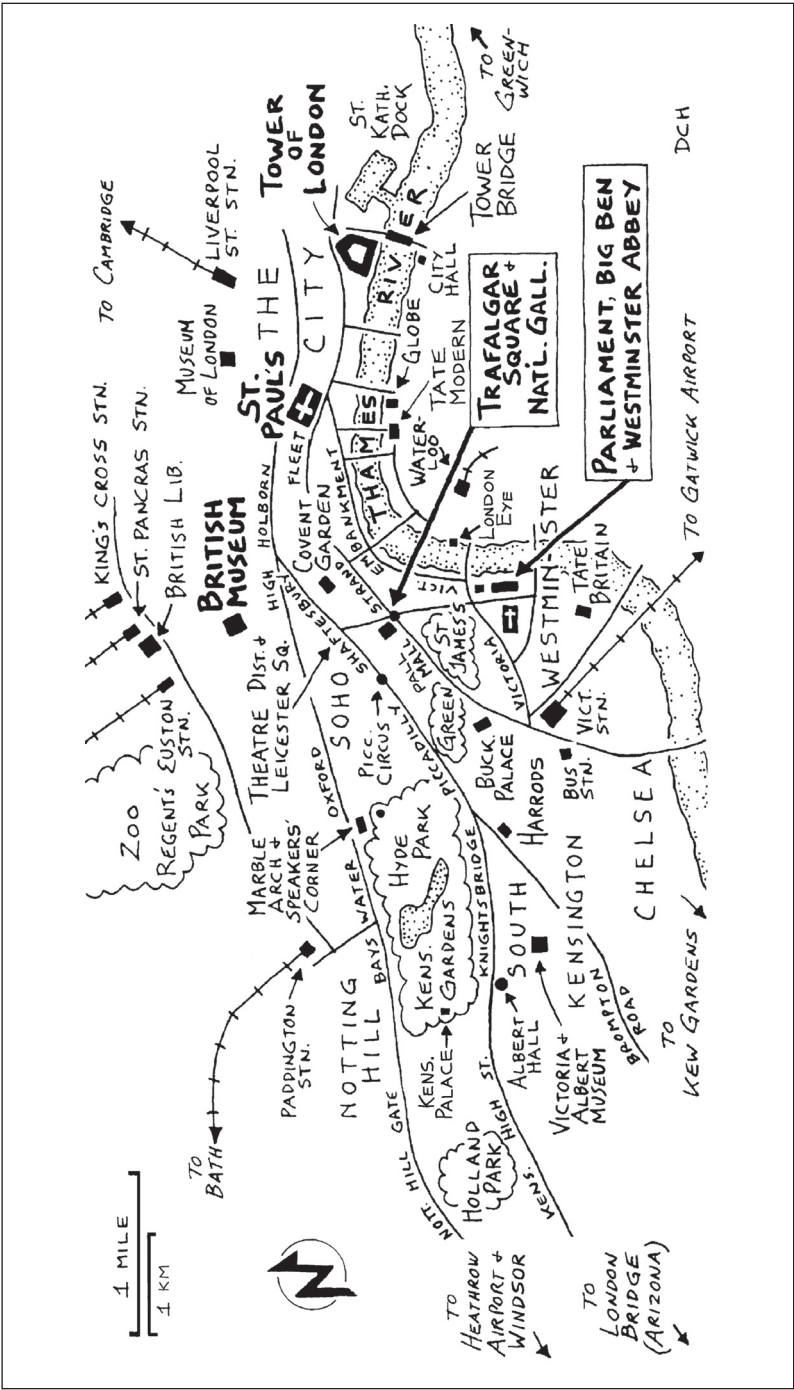
**Left Luggage:** As security concerns heighten, train stations have replaced their lockers with left-luggage counters. Each bag must go through a scanner (just like at the airport), so lines can be long. Expect a wait to pick up your bags, too (each item-£6/24 hrs, daily 7:00–24:00). You can also check bags at the airports (£5/day). If leaving London and returning later, you may be able to leave a box or bag at your hotel for free—assuming you'll be staying there again.

## Getting Around London

To travel smart in a city this size, get comfortable with public transportation. London's excellent taxis, buses, and subway system make a private car unnecessary. In fact, the “congestion charge” of £8 levied on any private car entering the city center has been effective in cutting down traffic jam delays and bolstering London's public transit. The revenue raised subsidizes the buses, which are now cheaper, more frequent, and even more user-friendly than before. Today, the vast majority of vehicles in the city center are buses, taxis, and service trucks. (Drivers, for all the details on the congestion charge, see [www.cclondon.com](http://www.cclondon.com).)

Slow walkers and non-disabled travelers find the Tube and buses to be the cheapest and most efficient way to get around. If you're a wheelchair user, you'll be glad to know that all London buses are fully accessible, though the Tube networks still have several non-accessible

London



### Affording London's Sights

London is, in many ways, Europe's most expensive city, with lots of pricey sights, but—fortunately—lots of freebies, too.

Many of the city's biggest and best museums won't cost you a dime. Free sights include the British Museum, British Library, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Tate Britain, Tate Modern, Wallace Collection, Imperial War Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, Natural History Museum, Science Museum, Sir John Soane's Museum, Theatre Museum, and the Museum of London.

Some museums, such as the British Museum, request a £2–3 donation, but whether you contribute or not is up to you. Many offer essential audioguides for around £3. If I spend the money on an audioguide, I don't feel bad about not donating otherwise.

Remember that if you use a wheelchair, you (or your companion) will get free or discounted entry to sights that normally charge admission.

Other freebies to consider: You can get into the Tower of London by attending the Ceremony of the Keys (which requires a reservation made long in advance—see page \*TK). You can view the legislature at work in the Houses of Parliament. There are plenty of free concerts, such as the lunch concerts at St. Martin-in-the-Fields. You can also enjoy the pageantry of Changing of the Guard and the wild people-watching scene at Covent Garden.

Smaller churches let worshippers in free (even tourist worshippers), having given up on asking for donations. The big sightseeing churches—Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's—charge £9–10 for admission, but offer free evensong services virtually daily and a free organ recital on Sunday.

When budgeting your sightseeing money, consider the £5.50 city walking tours as one of the best deals going. The hop-on, hop-off big-bus tours (£16–20), while expensive, provide a great overview, and

stops (see “Accessibility on London's Public Transportation” sidebar for details). Taxis, which are all fully accessible, are also very convenient for people who use wheelchairs.

### By Taxi

London is the best taxi town in Europe. Big, black, carefully regulated cabs are everywhere. Best of all, every taxi in London is required to be wheelchair-accessible.



include boat tours as well as city walks, depending on the company you choose (see page \*TK). A one-hour Thames ride costs about £7, but generally comes with entertaining commentary (see page \*TK).

The queen charges big-time to open her palace to the public: Buckingham Palace (£14, open Aug–Sept only) and her art gallery and carriage museum (adjacent to the palace, about £7 each) are interesting but expensive.

Gimmicky private enterprises can charge sky-high prices, such as the London Dungeon (£14), the fun, popular, and overpriced Madame Tussaud’s Waxworks (£23, but £14 after 17:00), and the Dalí Universe (£9), which capitalizes on its location next to the popular London Eye Ferris Wheel.

Big-ticket sights worth their admission fees are Kew Gardens (£8.50), Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre (£9, includes a tour), and the Cabinet War Rooms, with its fine Churchill Exhibit (£10). The London Eye Ferris Wheel is an unforgettable experience (£12.50), and Vinopolis wine museum provides a classy way to get a buzz and call it museum-going (£12.50 entry includes 5 small glasses of wine).

Many classy smaller museums cost around £5. My favorites include the three Somerset House museums (Courtauld Gallery, Heritage Rooms, and the Gilbert Collection) and the Wellington Museum at Apsley House.

The freestanding “tkts” booth at Leicester Square offers discounted tickets to London’s famous shows; unfortunately, it’s not suited for people who use wheelchairs (see page \*TK).

These days, London doesn’t come cheap. But with its many free museums and affordable plays, this cosmopolitan, cultured city offers days of sightseeing thrills without requiring you to pinch your pennies (or your pounds).

I’ve never met a crabby cabbie in London. They love to talk, and they know every nook and cranny in town. I ride in one each day just to get my London questions answered.

**Access:** **AE**, Level 1—Fully Accessible. All “Black Cabs” have ramps that pull down on the side of the car, so you can wheel right in. The older cabs carry a ramp in the trunk, which the driver will take out when needed. Cab drivers have sometimes been known to switch off their light when they see a wheelchair user on the road, but this is unusual. In fact,

if a taxi driver is reported to be discourteous to a wheelchair user (or anyone else, for that matter), he can lose his license.

**Cost and Procedure:** Rides start at £2.20. Connecting downtown sights is quick and easy and will cost you about £5 (for example, St. Paul's to the Tower of London). For a short ride, three people in a cab travel at Tube prices. Groups of four or five should taxi everywhere. While telephoning a cab will get you one in a few minutes (try Radio Taxi, tel. 020/7272-0272; or DiAL+A-Cab, tel. 020/7253-5000; tell them if you're using a wheelchair), it's generally not necessary; hailing a cab is easy and costs less. If a cab's top light is on, just wave it down. (Drivers flash lights when they see you.) They have a tiny turning radius, so you can wave at cabs going in either direction. If waving doesn't work, ask someone where you can find a taxi stand.

Don't worry about meter cheating. British cab meters come with a sealed computer chip and clock that ensure you'll get the regular tariff #1 most of the time, tariff #2 during "unsociable hours" (18:00–6:00 and Sat–Sun), and tariff #3 only on holidays. (Rates only go up about 10 percent with each higher tariff.) All extra charges are explained in writing on the cab wall. The only way a cabbie can cheat you is to take a needlessly long route. Another pitfall is taking a cab when traffic is bad to a destination efficiently served by the Tube. On my last trip to London, I hopped in a taxi at South Kensington for Waterloo Station and hit bad traffic. Rather than spending 20 minutes and £2 on the tube, I spent 40 minutes and £16 in a taxi.

Tip a cabbie by rounding up (maximum 10 percent). If you overdrink and ride in a taxi, be warned: Taxis charge £40 for "soiling" (a.k.a. pub puke).

## By Bus

Riding city buses doesn't come naturally to many travelers, but if you make a point to figure out the system, you'll swing like Tarzan through the urban jungle of London.

**Access:** Thanks to a recent initiative, all London buses are now Level 1—Fully Accessible. A mechanical ramp electronically lowers to the curb to allow wheelchair users to board the bus.

**Taking the Bus:** Pick up the free *Central London Bus Guide* at a transport office or TI for a fine map listing all the bus routes best for sightseeing. If you learn how to decipher bus stop signs, you can figure out on your own where to catch the bus to get to your destination. Find a bus stop and study the signs mounted on the pole next to the stop. You'll see a chart listing (alphabetically) the destinations served by buses

## Accessibility on London's Public Transportation



London has one of the world's best public transportation networks—and making all of the trains, buses, and boats fully accessible to all visitors is a priority. There are gaps in the network, but they are gradually being filled. New Tube stations and buses are fully adapted, and old ones are continually being retrofitted to meet accessibility standards.

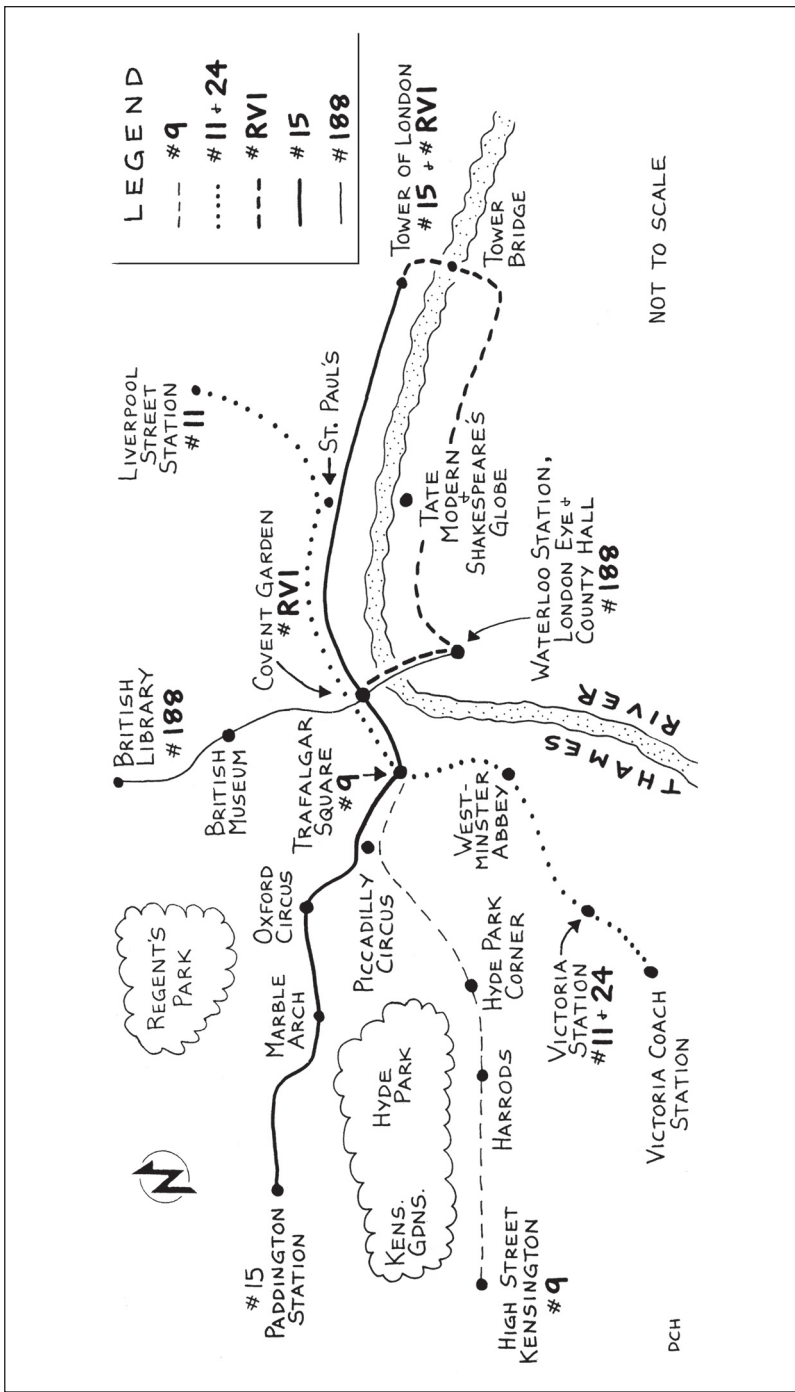
If you have specific questions about accessibility on London's public transportation, call **Transport for London** at tel. 020/7222-1234. There is also accessibility information on their Web site: [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk) (click on "Travel info & planned works," then "Passenger help," then "Accessibility").

Transport for London offers several free resources for travelers with limited mobility, including a Tube map listing all accessible stations (see pages vi–vii, or online at [www.thetube.com](http://www.thetube.com)). Be warned that even when the Tube map says a station is "accessible," there's often a 4–10" step between the platform and the train. (That's why they say, "Mind the gap.") You can call Transport for London to request any of these materials (from the U.S., dial 011-44-20-7222-1234). Once in London, you can get the Accessible Tube Map at any Tube station. For the other materials, or for questions, visit a Travel Information Center (at various Tube stations around London, including Victoria Station, Victoria Coach Station, both Tube stations at Heathrow Airport, Piccadilly Circus, Liverpool Street, Euston, West Croydon, Bromley, and Camden Town Hall).

For a specific trip within London, Transport for London's online **Journey Planner** will figure out if you can get to your destination without encountering barriers (<http://journeyplanner.tfl.gov.uk>; click on "More Options" to specify your mobility level).

that pick up at this spot or nearby; the names of the buses; and alphabet letters that identify where the buses pick up. After locating your destination, remember or write down the bus name and bus stop letter. Next, refer to the neighborhood map (also on the pole) to find your bus stop. Just match your letter with a stop on the map. Make your way to that stop—you'll know it's yours because it will have the same letter on its

Key Bus Routes



## Handy Buses

London's great bus system is fully wheelchair-accessible. And, since the institution of London's "congestion charge" for cars, it's faster and easier, than ever. Tube-oriented travelers need to make a point to get over their tunnel vision, learn the bus system, and get around quickly and easily.

Here are some of the most useful routes:

**Route #9:** Harrods to Hyde Park Corner to Piccadilly Circus to Trafalgar Square.

**Routes #11 and #24:** Victoria Station to Westminster Abbey to Trafalgar Square (#11 continues to St. Paul's).

**Route #RV1:** Tower of London to Tower Bridge to Tate Modern/Shakespeare's Globe to London Eye/Waterloo Station/County Hall Travel Inn accommodations to Trafalgar Square to Covent Garden (a scenic joyride).

**Route #15:** Paddington Station to Oxford Circus to Regent Street/TL to Piccadilly Circus to Trafalgar Square to Fleet Street to St. Paul's to Tower of London.

**Route #188:** Waterloo Station/London Eye to Trafalgar Square to Covent Garden to British Museum.

In addition, several buses (including #6, #12, #13, #15, #23, #139, and #159) make the corridor run from Trafalgar, Piccadilly Circus, and Oxford Circus to Marble Arch.



pole—and wait for the bus with the right name to arrive. Some fancy stops have electric boards indicating the minutes until the next bus arrives; but remember to check the name on the bus before you get on. Crack the code, and you're good to go.

On most buses, you'll pay at a machine at the bus stop (exact change only; bus rides covered by Travelcards or Oyster cards), then show your ticket as you board. If you're using an Oyster card (see below), don't forget to touch it to the electronic card reader as you board (there's no need to do so when you get off). On a few of the older double-decker buses (serving "Heritage" routes #9 and #15, not accessible), you still pay a conductor; he or she will come around and collect your fare. Any ride in downtown

London costs £1.50 for those paying cash. If you have an Oyster card, the trip costs 80p (except before 9:30, when it's £1). A ticket six-pack costs £6, and an all-day bus pass costs £3.50. If you're staying longer, consider the £13.50 all-week bus pass. The best views are upstairs on a double-decker.

If you have a Travelcard or Oyster card, get in the habit of using buses for quick little straight shots, even just to get to a Tube stop. During bump-and-grind rush hours (8:00–10:00 and 16:00–19:00), you'll go faster by Tube.

## By Tube

London's subway system (called the Tube or Underground, but never “subway”) is one of this planet's great people-movers and the fastest long-distance transport in town (runs Mon–Sat about 5:00–24:00, Sun about 7:00–23:00).

**Access:** Ranges from Level 4—Not Accessible to Level 1—Fully Accessible. The Accessible Tube Map (available at any Tube station, in the front of this book, or online at [www.thetube.com](http://www.thetube.com)) shows which Tube stops are accessible. It can be hit-or-miss downtown. The handy Jubilee line has accessible stations at several important downtown stops, including Westminster, Waterloo, Southwark, and London Bridge; several other outlying stops on other lines are also accessible (including both Heathrow Airport stops on the Piccadilly Line). Even at “accessible” stations, you will have to conquer the famous “gap” between the platform and the train, which can be as big as 10 inches.

**Using the Tube:** Survey a Tube map. At the front of this book, you'll find a complete Tube map with color-coded lines and names. You can also pick up a free Tube map at any station. Each line has a name (such as Circle, Northern, or Bakerloo) and two directions (indicated by the end-of-the-line stop). Find the line that will take you to your destination, and figure out roughly what direction (north, south, east, west) you'll need to go to get there.

In the Tube station, feed your paper ticket or pass into the turnstile, reclaim it, and hang onto it—you'll need it to get through the turnstile at the end of your journey. If you are using a plastic Oyster card (see below), make sure you touch the card to the yellow card reader when you enter and exit the station. Find your train by following signs to your line and the (general) direction it's headed (such as Central Line: east).





Since some tracks are shared by several lines, you'll need to double-check before boarding a train: First, make sure your destination is one of the stops listed on the sign at the platform. Also, check the electronic signboards that announce which train is next, and make sure the destination (the end-of-the-line stop) is the one you want. Some trains, particularly on the Circle and District lines, split off for other directions, but each train has its final destination marked above its windshield. When in doubt, ask a local or a blue-vested staff person for help.

Trains run roughly every three to 10 minutes. If one train is absolutely packed and you notice another to the same destination is coming in three minutes, you can wait and avoid the sardine experience. The system can be fraught with construction delays and breakdowns, so pay attention to signs and announcements explaining necessary detours. The Circle Line is notorious for problems. Rush hours (8:00–10:00 and 16:00–19:00) can be packed and sweaty. Bring something to do to make your waiting time productive. If you get confused, ask for advice at the information window located before the turnstile entry.

You can't leave the system without feeding your ticket to the turnstile or touching your Oyster card to a scanner. (The turnstile will either eat your now-expired single-trip ticket, or spit your still-valid pass back out.) Save time by choosing the best street exit—check the maps on the walls or ask any station personnel. "Subway" means "pedestrian underpass" in "English." For Tube and bus information, visit [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk) (and check out the Journey Planner). And always...mind the gap.

**Cost:** Any ride in Zone 1 through 4 costs a steep £3 for adults paying cash. Riding out to Zones 5 or 6 (e.g., to Heathrow Airport) costs £4. The savings you get from any of the below passes or Oyster cards make paying cash each time an expensive ride. Tube tickets or Oyster cards are also valid on city buses and the Docklands Light Railway.

If you do buy a single Tube ticket, you can avoid ticket-window lines in stations by using the coin-op or credit-card machines; practice on the punchboard to see how the system works (hit "Adult Single" and your destination). These tickets are valid only on the day of purchase.

**London Tube and Bus Passes:** Consider using the following passes, valid on both the Tube and buses. Note that all passes can be purchased as easily as a normal ticket at any Tube station, get you a 30 percent discount on most Thames cruises (details online at [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk), look under "Tickets and Oyster"), and come in a pricier all-zone version.

If you take at least two rides in a day, a Travelcard is a good deal. The **One-Day Travelcard**, covering Zones 1 and 2, gives you unlimited travel for a day. The regular price is £6.20, but an "Off-Peak" version is only

## London at a Glance

▲▲▲**Westminster Abbey** Britain's finest church and the site of royal coronations and burials since 1066. **Hours:** Mon–Fri 9:30–15:45, Wed also until 19:00, Sat 9:30–13:45, closed Sun to sightseers but open for services. **Access:** Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

▲▲▲**Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms** Underground WWII headquarters of Churchill's war effort. **Hours:** Daily April–Sept 9:30–18:00, daily Oct–March 10:00–18:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲▲**National Gallery** Remarkable collection of European paintings (1250–1900), including Leonardo, Botticelli, Velázquez, Rembrandt, Turner, van Gogh, and the Impressionists. **Hours:** Daily 10:00–18:00, Wed until 21:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲▲**British Museum** The world's greatest collection of artifacts of Western civilization, including the Rosetta Stone and the Parthenon's Elgin Marbles. **Hours:** Daily 10:00–17:30, Thu–Fri until 20:30 but only a few galleries open after 17:30. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲▲**British Library** Impressive collection of the most important literary treasures of the Western World, from the Magna Carta to Handel's *Messiah*. **Hours:** Mon–Fri 9:30–18:00, Tue until 20:00, Sat 9:30–17:00, Sun 11:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲▲**St. Paul's Cathedral** The main cathedral of the Anglican Church, designed by Christopher Wren, with a climbable dome and daily even-song services. **Hours:** Mon–Sat 8:30–16:30, closed Sun except for worship. **Access:** Everything except the dome and American Memorial Chapel is Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲▲**Tower of London** Historic castle, palace, and prison, today housing the crown jewels and a witty band of Beefeaters. **Hours:** March–Oct Tue–Sat 9:00–18:00, Sun–Mon 10:00–18:00; Nov–Feb Tue–Sat 9:00–17:00, Sun–Mon 10:00–17:00. **Access:** Level 3—Minimally Accessible. Only the crown jewels are fully accessible.

▲▲▲**London Eye Ferris Wheel** Enormous observation wheel, dominating—and offering commanding views over—London's skyline. **Hours:** April–mid-Sept daily 9:30–21:00, until 22:00 in July–Aug,

mid-Sept–March daily 9:30–20:00, closed Jan. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲▲**Tate Modern** Works by Monet, Matisse, Dalí, Picasso, and Warhol displayed in a converted powerhouse. **Hours:** Daily 10:00–18:00, Fri–Sat until 22:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Houses of Parliament** London's famous neo-Gothic landmark, topped by Big Ben and occupied by the Houses of Lords and Commons. **Hours** (both houses): Generally Mon 14:30–22:30, Tue–Thu 11:30–19:30, Fri 9:30–15:00. **Access:** Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

▲▲**National Portrait Gallery** Who's Who of British history, featuring portraits of this nation's most important historical figures. **Hours:** Daily 10:00–18:00, Thu–Fri until 21:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Buckingham Palace** Britain's royal residence, with the famous Changing of the Guard. **Hours:** Palace—Aug–Sept only, daily 9:30–17:00; Guard—almost daily in summer at 11:30, every other day all year long. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Victoria and Albert Museum** The best collection of decorative arts anywhere. **Hours:** Daily 10:00–17:45, Wed and last Fri of the month until 22:00 except mid-Dec–mid-Jan. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Shakespeare's Globe** Timbered, thatched-roofed reconstruction of the Bard's original wooden "O." **Hours:** Mid-May–Sept exhibition open daily 9:00–18:00, tours go on the half-hour from 9:30, generally until 12:30, until 11:30 on Sun, 17:30 on Mon; Oct–mid-May exhibition open daily 10:00–17:00 with 30-min tours on the half-hour. Plays are also held here; see page \*TK. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Vinopolis: City of Wine** Offers a breezy history of wine, with plenty of tasting opportunities. **Hours:** Daily 12:00–18:00, Fri–Sat and Mon until 21:00. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲▲**Tate Britain** Collection of British painting from the 16th century through modern times, including works by William Blake, the Pre-Raphaelites, and J.M.W. Turner. **Hours:** Daily 10:00–17:50. **Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

### London for Early Birds and Night Owls

Most sightseeing in London is restricted to between 10:00 and 18:00. Here are a few exceptions:

#### Sights Open Early

**British Library:** Mon–Sat at 9:30.

**Buckingham Palace:** Aug–Sept daily at 9:30.

**Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms:** April–Sept daily at 9:30.

**Houses of Parliament:** Fri at 9:30.

**Kew Gardens:** Daily at 9:30.

**London Eye Ferris Wheel:** Daily at 9:30.

**Madame Tussaud's Waxworks:** Sat–Sun at 9:30.

**Shakespeare's Globe:** Mid-May–Sept exhibition opens at 9:00, tours start at 9:30.

**St. Paul's Cathedral:** Mon–Sat at 8:30.

**Tower of London:** Mon–Sat at 9:00 (Tue–Sat in winter).

**Westminster Abbey:** Mon–Sat at 9:30.

#### Sights Open Late

**British Library:** Tue until 20:00.

**British Museum (some galleries):** Thu–Fri until 20:30.

**Houses of Parliament (when in session):** Mon until 22:30, Tue–Thu until 19:30.

**London Eye Ferris Wheel:** Daily until 21:00 (22:00 in July–Aug, 20:00 in winter).

**National Gallery:** Wed until 21:00.

**National Portrait Gallery:** Thu–Fri until 21:00.

**Sir John Soane's Museum:** First Tue of month until 21:00.

**Tate Modern:** Fri–Sat until 22:00.

**Victoria and Albert Museum:** Wed and last Fri of month until 22:00.

**Vinopolis:** Mon and Fri–Sat until 21:00.

£4.90; it's good for travel starting after 9:30 on weekdays and anytime on weekends. A One-Day Travelcard for Zones 1 through 6, which includes Heathrow Airport, costs £12.40; the restricted "off-peak" version (good for travel after 9:30 on weekdays and all day on weekends and holidays) costs £6.30.

Families save with the "Kid for a Quid" promotion: Any adult with a Travelcard can buy an Off-Peak One-Day Travelcard for up to four kids age 15 or younger for only £1 ("quid") each.

The **Three-Day Travelcard**, covering Zones 1 and 2 for £15.40, costs 20 percent less than three One-Day “Peak” Travelcards and is also good any time of day. Most travelers staying three days will easily take enough Tube and bus rides to make this worthwhile. Buying three separate One-Day “Off-Peak” Travelcards will save you 70 pence, but you’ll only be able to travel after 9:30 on weekdays. Three-Day Travelcards are not available in an “Off-Peak” version.

The **Seven-Day Travelcard** costs £22.20 and covers Zones 1 and 2. Those that cover travel beyond Zone 2 cost progressively more, up to £41. All Seven-Day Travelcards are now sold as plastic Oyster cards (no photo needed; see below).

**Groups** of 10 or more adults can travel all day on the Tube for £3.50 each (but not on buses). Kids 17 and younger pay £1 when part of a group of 10.

You’ll likely see signs advertising the **Oyster card**, designed for commuters (but potentially useful for tourists staying more than a few days). These prepaid, rechargeable plastic “smart cards” are good for Tube, bus, and Docklands Light Railway trips, depending on what version you buy. There’s a £10 minimum to get or add to a card, and you’ll pay an additional £3 deposit, refundable at any Tube station ticket office when you return the card. You should also receive a cash refund of any remaining balance. Using an Oyster card slashes the cost of a Tube ride in half to £1.50 when traveling in Zone 1 (additional zones cost more), and the money on the card never expires. If you ride a lot in one day, the Oyster card will never deduct more than the price of a One-Day Travelcard. When it runs low, your Oyster card can be “topped up” at most Tube station ticket offices or self-serve machines, Victoria or Euston train stations, Heathrow Tube station, or at more than 2,000 participating convenience stores. For more details, visit [www.tfl.gov.uk/oyster](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/oyster).

## TOURS

▲▲▲**Hop-on, Hop-off Double-Decker Bus Tours**—Two competitive companies (Original and Big Bus) offer essentially the same tours with buses that have either live (English-only) guides or a tape-recorded, dial-a-language narration. This two-hour, once-over-lightly bus tour drives by all the famous sights, providing a stress-free way to get your bearings and at least see the biggies. You can sit back and enjoy the entire two-hour orientation tour (a good idea if you like the guide and the weather), or get on and get off at any of the nearly 30 stops and catch a later bus. Buses run about every 10–15 minutes in summer, every 20

minutes in winter. It's an inexpensive form of transport, as well as an informative tour. Buses operate daily (from about 9:00 until early evening in summer, until late afternoon in winter) and stop at Victoria Station, Marble Arch, Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, and elsewhere. These tours aren't fully accessible (specific details for each company described below), so if you use a wheelchair, you may prefer to get oriented by taxi or public bus instead.

Both Original and Big Bus offer a core two-hour overview tour, two other routes, and a narrated Thames boat tour covered by the same ticket (buy ticket from driver, credit cards accepted



at major stops such as Victoria Station, ticket good for 24 hours, bring a sweater and a camera). Big Bus tours are a little better, but more expensive (£20), while Original tours are cheaper (£13.50 with this book) and nearly as good. Pick up a map from any flier rack or from one of the countless salespeople, and study the complex system. Note: If you start at Victoria Station at 9:00, you'll finish near Buckingham Palace in time to see the Changing of the Guard at 11:30; ask your driver for the best place to get off. Sunday morning—when traffic is light and many museums are closed—is a fine time for a tour. The last full loop leaves Victoria at 17:00. Both companies have entertaining as well as boring guides. The narration is important. If you don't like your guide, get off and find another. If you like your guide, settle in for the entire loop. Unless you're using the bus tour mainly for transportation, consider saving money with a night tour (described below).

**Original London Sightseeing Bus Tour:** Live-guided buses have a Union Jack flag and a yellow triangle on the front of the bus. If the front has many flags or a green or red triangle, it's a tape-recorded multilingual tour—avoid it, unless you have kids who'd enjoy the entertaining recorded kids' tour (£16, £2.50 discount with this book, limit 2 discounts per book, they'll rip off the corner of this page—raise bloody hell if they don't honor this discount, ticket good for 24 hours, tel. 020/8877-1722, [www.theoriginaltour.com](http://www.theoriginaltour.com)). Your ticket includes a 50-minute round-trip boat tour from Westminster Pier (departs hourly, tape-recorded narration) or a point-to-point boat trip from Embankment Pier to Greenwich, with stops in between (14 departures per day).



**Access:** **AE+A** Level 2—Moderately Accessible. The driver will assist a wheelchair user onto the bus. They have one space available per bus for a wheelchair. If you use a wheelchair, this company is your best bet for access.

**Big Bus Hop-on, Hop-off London Tours:** For £20 (£18 if you book online), you get the same basic tour plus coupons for several silly one-hour London walking tours and the scenic and usually entertainingly guided Thames boat ride (normally £5.60) between Westminster Pier and the Tower of London. The pass and extras are valid for 24 hours. Buses with live guides are marked in front with a picture of a red bus; buses with tape-recorded spiels display a picture of a blue bus and headphones. These pricier tours tend to have better, more dynamic guides than Original (daily 8:30–18:00, winter until 16:30, from Victoria Station, tel. 020/7233-9533, [www.bigbus.co.uk](http://www.bigbus.co.uk)).

**Access:** Level 3—Minimally Accessible. There are no wheelchair-accessible buses, so the wheelchair user will need to be able to climb on the bus.

**At Night:** The London by Night Sightseeing Tour runs basically the same circuit as the other companies, but after hours, with none of the extras (e.g., walking tours, boat tours) and for half the price. While the narration can be pretty weak, the views at twilight are grand (£9, pay driver or buy tickets at Victoria Station or Paddington Station TI, April–Sept only, 2-hour tour with live guide, normally departs 19:30–21:30 every half hour from Victoria Station, live guides at 19:30, 20:30, and 21:30, Taxi Road, at front of station near end of Wilton Road, tel. 020/8646-1747, [www.london-by-night.net](http://www.london-by-night.net)). Munch a scenic picnic dinner (from the top deck, if you are able to climb the stairs up) for a memorable and economical evening.

**Access:** Level 3—Minimally Accessible. There are no wheelchair-accessible buses; passengers need to be able to climb on the bus.

**▲▲Walking/Wheeling Tours**—Several times a day, top-notch local guides lead (often big) groups through specific slices of London's past. Wheelchair users are generally welcome to roll along on these tours—but call ahead to check with the individual companies to be sure that their tours are appropriate for your mobility level. Schedule fliers litter the desks of TIs, hotels, and pubs. *Time Out* lists many, but not all, scheduled walks. Simply show up at the announced location, pay £5.50, and enjoy two chatty hours of Dickens, the Plague, Shakespeare, Legal London, the Beatles, Jack the Ripper, or whatever is on the agenda. Original London Walks, the dominant company, lists its extensive daily schedule in a beefy, plain, black-and-white *The Original London Walks* brochure (walks offered

### Daily Reminder

**Sunday:** Some sights don't open until noon. The Tower of London and British Museum are both especially crowded today. Hyde Park Speakers' Corner rants from early afternoon until early evening.

These places are closed: Banqueting House, Sir John Soane's Museum, and legal sights (Houses of Parliament, City Hall, and Old Bailey; the neighborhood called The City is dead). Evensong is at 15:00 at Westminster Abbey (plus free organ recital at 17:45) and 15:15 at St. Paul's (plus free organ recital at 17:00); both churches are open during the day for worship but closed to sightseers. Many stores are closed. There are no plays on Sunday as actors take a day off. Street markets flourish: Camden Lock, Spitalfields, Greenwich, and Petticoat Lane.

**Monday:** Virtually all sights are open except for Apsley House, the Theatre Museum, Sir John Soane's Museum, and a few others. The St. Martin-in-the-Fields church offers a free 13:00 concert. At Somerset House, the Courtauld Gallery is free until 14:00. Vinopolis is open until 21:00. Houses of Parliament are usually open until 22:30.

**Tuesday:** All sights are open; the British Library is open until 20:00. St. Martin-in-the-Fields has a free 13:00 concert. On the first Tuesday of the month, St. John Soane's Museum is also open 18:00–21:00.

year-round—even on Christmas, private tours for £95, tel. 020/7624-3978, for a recorded listing of today's walks call 020/7624-9255, [www.walks.com](http://www.walks.com)). They also run minimally accessible **Explorer day trips**, a good option for those with limited time and transportation (different trip daily: Stonehenge/Salisbury, Oxford/Cotswolds, York, Bath, and so on).

**Beatles:** Fans of the still Fabulous Four can take one of the Beatles walks (Original London Walks, above, has 5/week; Big Bus, above, has a daily walk included with their bus tour). While these "walks" include wheelchair-using participants (Level 2—Moderately Accessible), the route ends with an inaccessible Tube ride to Abbey Road (skip this ending, or take a taxi to meet the group at your own expense).

**Private Guides**—Standard rates for London's registered guides are £100 for four hours, £159 for eight hours (tel. 020/7403-2962, wheelchair users can call tel. 020/7495-5504 to request a guide that suits your needs; [www.touristguides.org.uk](http://www.touristguides.org.uk), [www.blue-badge.org.uk](http://www.blue-badge.org.uk)). William Forrester,

**Wednesday:** All sights are open, plus evening hours at Westminster Abbey (until 19:00, but no evensong), the National Gallery (until 21:00), and Victoria and Albert Museum (until 22:00).

**Thursday:** All sights are open, British Museum until 20:30 (selected galleries), National Portrait Gallery until 21:00. St. Martin-in-the-Fields hosts a 19:30 evening concert (for a fee).

**Friday:** All sights are open, British Museum until 20:30 (selected galleries only), National Portrait Gallery until 21:00, Vinopolis until 21:00, Tate Modern until 22:00. Best street market: Spitalfields. St. Martin-in-the-Fields offers two concerts (13:00-free, 19:30-fee).

**Saturday:** Most sights are open except legal ones (Old Bailey, City Hall, Houses of Parliament—open summer Sat for tours only; skip The City). Vinopolis is open until 21:00, Tate Modern until 22:00. Best street markets: Portobello, Camden Lock, Greenwich. Evensong is at 15:00 at Westminster Abbey, 17:00 at St. Paul's. St. Martin-in-the-Fields hosts a concert at 19:30 (fee).

**Notes:** Evensong occurs daily at St. Paul's (Mon-Sat at 17:00 and Sun at 15:15) and daily except Wednesday at Westminster Abbey (Mon-Tue and Thu-Fri at 17:00, Sat-Sun at 15:00). London by Night Sightseeing Tour buses leave from Victoria Station every evening at 19:30 and 21:30. The London Eye Ferris Wheel spins nightly until 21:00, until 22:00 in summer, until 20:00 in winter (closed Jan).

one of the authors of *Access in London* and a wheelchair user himself, is a London Registered Guide. He offers tailor-made day tours, as well as group tours (early booking necessary, mobile 0148-357-5401). Robina Brown leads tours of small groups in her Toyota Previa. She has led tours for deaf, blind, and other travelers with disabilities, and wheelchair users are welcome—though they must be able to climb into her car (£220/half day, £320-400/day, tel. 020/7228-2238, [www.driverguidetours.com](http://www.driverguidetours.com), [robina@driverguidetours.com](mailto:robina@driverguidetours.com)).

**▲▲Cruises**—Boat tours with entertaining commentaries sail regularly from many points along the Thames.

**Access:** All passenger boats on the Thames (including all listed below, except on Regent's Canal) are legally required to be wheelchair-accessible (Level 1). Boats are accessed via ramps (no steps or other barriers), but the steepness of the ramp depends on the level of the water. At the lowest tide, the ramp is much steeper than at high tide—so some

wheelchair users might require assistance. While some boats have accessible toilets, not all do. If finding a boat with an adapted toilet is important to you, or if you want to check on when the ramp will be the least steep, call the individual companies (listed below). The most modern fleet is City Cruises, and Thames River Services also has newer boats with good access. They cost the same. For general questions, contact London River Services at 020/7941-2400.

**Options:** It's confusing, since there are several companies offering essentially the same thing. Your basic options are downstream (to the



Tower and Greenwich), upstream (to Kew Gardens), and round-trip scenic tour cruises. Most people depart from the Westminster Pier (AE, AI, AT, dock area and boat ramp are Level 1—Fully Accessible; at the base of Westminster Bridge under Big Ben). You can catch most of the same boats (with less waiting) from Waterloo Pier at the London Eye Ferris Wheel across the river (Level 1—Fully Accessible dock area and boat ramp). For pleasure and efficiency, consider combining a one-way cruise (to Kew, Greenwich, or

wherever) with a Tube ride back. While Tube and bus tickets don't work on the boats, a Travelcard can snare you a 33 percent discount on most cruises (just show the card when you pay for the cruise). Children and seniors get discounts. You can purchase drinks and scant, pricey snacks on board. Buy boat tickets at the small ticket offices on the docks. Clever budget travelers pack a small picnic and munch while they cruise.

Here are some of the most popular cruise options:

**To the Tower of London: City Cruises** boats sail 30 minutes to the Tower from Westminster Pier (£5.60 one-way, £6.80 round-trip, one-way included with Big Bus London tour; covered by £9 "River Red Rover" ticket that includes Greenwich—see next paragraph; 3/hr during June–Aug daily 9:40–20:40, 2/hr and shorter hours rest of year).

**To Greenwich:** Two companies head to Greenwich from Westminster Pier. Choose between **City Cruises** (£6.80 one-way, £8.60 round-trip; or get their £9 all-day, hop-on, hop-off "River Red Rover" ticket to have option of getting off at London Eye and Tower of London; June–Aug daily 10:00–17:00, less off-season, every 40 min, 70 min to Greenwich, usually narrated only downstream—to Greenwich, tel. 020/7740-0400, [www.citycruises.com](http://www.citycruises.com)) and **Thames River Services** (£6.80 one-way, £8.60

### Thames Boat Piers

While Westminster Pier is the most popular, it's not the only dock in town. Consider all the options:

**Westminster Pier**, at the base of Big Ben, offers round-trip sight-seeing cruises and lots of departures in both directions. Because it adjoins the accessible Westminster Tube station, it's convenient and offers excellent access: adapted toilets, fully accessible boats, and wide ramps that are easy to navigate and have a mild grade. City Cruises and Thames River Services—which both have modern fleets offering good access—both use this dock.

**Waterloo Pier**, at the base of London Eye Ferris Wheel, is a good, less crowded alternative to Westminster, with many of the same cruise options.

**Embankment Pier** is near Covent Garden, Trafalgar Square, and Cleopatra's Needle (the obelisk on the Thames). You can take a round-trip cruise from here, or catch a boat to the Tower of London and Greenwich.

**Tower Millennium Pier** is at the Tower of London. Boats sail west to Westminster Pier or east to Greenwich.

**Bankside Pier** (near Tate Modern and Shakespeare's Globe) and **Millbank Pier** (near Tate Britain) are connected to each other by the "Tate to Tate" ferry service.

round-trip, April–Oct daily 10:00–16:00, July–Aug until 17:00, has shorter hours and runs every 40 min rest of year, 2/hr, 50 min, usually narrated only to Greenwich, tel. 020/7930-4097, [www.westminsterpier.co.uk](http://www.westminsterpier.co.uk)).

**To Kew Gardens:** Westminster Passenger Services Association leaves for Kew Gardens from Westminster Pier (£11 one-way, £17 round-trip, 4/day, generally departing 10:30–14:00, 90 min, narrated for 45 min, tel. 020/7930-2062, [www.wpsa.co.uk](http://www.wpsa.co.uk)). Some boats continue on to Hampton Court Palace for an additional £3 (and 90 min). Because of the river current, you'll save 30 minutes cruising from Hampton Court back into town.

**Round-Trip Cruises:** Fifty-minute round-trip cruises of the Thames go hourly from Westminster Pier to the Tower of London (£8, included with Original London Bus tour—listed above, tape-recorded narration, Catamaran Circular Cruises, tel. 020/7987-1185). The London Eye Ferris Wheel operates its own "River Cruise Experience," offering a similar

40-minute live-guided circular tour from Waterloo Pier (£10, £21 with Ferris Wheel, reservations recommended, departures generally :45 past hour, tel. 0870-443-9185, [www.ba-londoneye.com](http://www.ba-londoneye.com)).

**From Tate to Tate:** This boat service for art-lovers connects the Tate Modern and Tate Britain in 18 scenic minutes, stopping at the London Eye Ferris Wheel en route (£4 one-way or £7 for a day ticket; with a Travelcard, it's £2.70-one-way/£4.50-day ticket; buy ticket at gallery desk or on board, departing every 40 min 10:00–17:00, tel. 020/7887-8008).

**On Regent's Canal:** Consider exploring London's canals by taking a cruise on historic Regent's Canal in north London. The good ship *Jenny Wren* (AE+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) offers 90-minute guided canal boat cruises from Walker's Quay in Camden Town through scenic Regent's Park to Little Venice (£7, March–Oct daily 12:30 and 14:30, Sat–Sun also at 16:30, Walker's Quay, 250 Camden High Street, near Tube: Camden Town, tel. 020/7485-6210, [www.walkersquay.com](http://www.walkersquay.com)). While in Camden Town, stop by the popular, punky Camden Lock Market to browse through trendy arts and crafts (daily 10:00–18:00, busiest on weekends, a block from Walker's Quay).

**London Duck Tours**—A bright-yellow amphibious WWII-vintage vehicle (the model that landed troops on Normandy's beaches on D-Day) takes a gang of 30 tourists past some famous sights on land—Big Ben, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus—then splashes into the Thames for a cruise (Level 3—Minimally Accessible, 5 steps to enter; £18, 2/hr, daily 10:00–17:30, 75 min—45 min on land and 30 min in the river, these book up in advance, departs from Chicheley Street—you'll see the big ugly vehicle parked 100 yards behind London Eye Ferris Wheel, Tube: Waterloo or Westminster, tel. 020/7928-3132, [www.londonducktours.co.uk](http://www.londonducktours.co.uk)). All in all, it's good fun at a rather steep price; the live guide works hard, and it's kid-friendly to the point of goofiness.

## SIGHTS

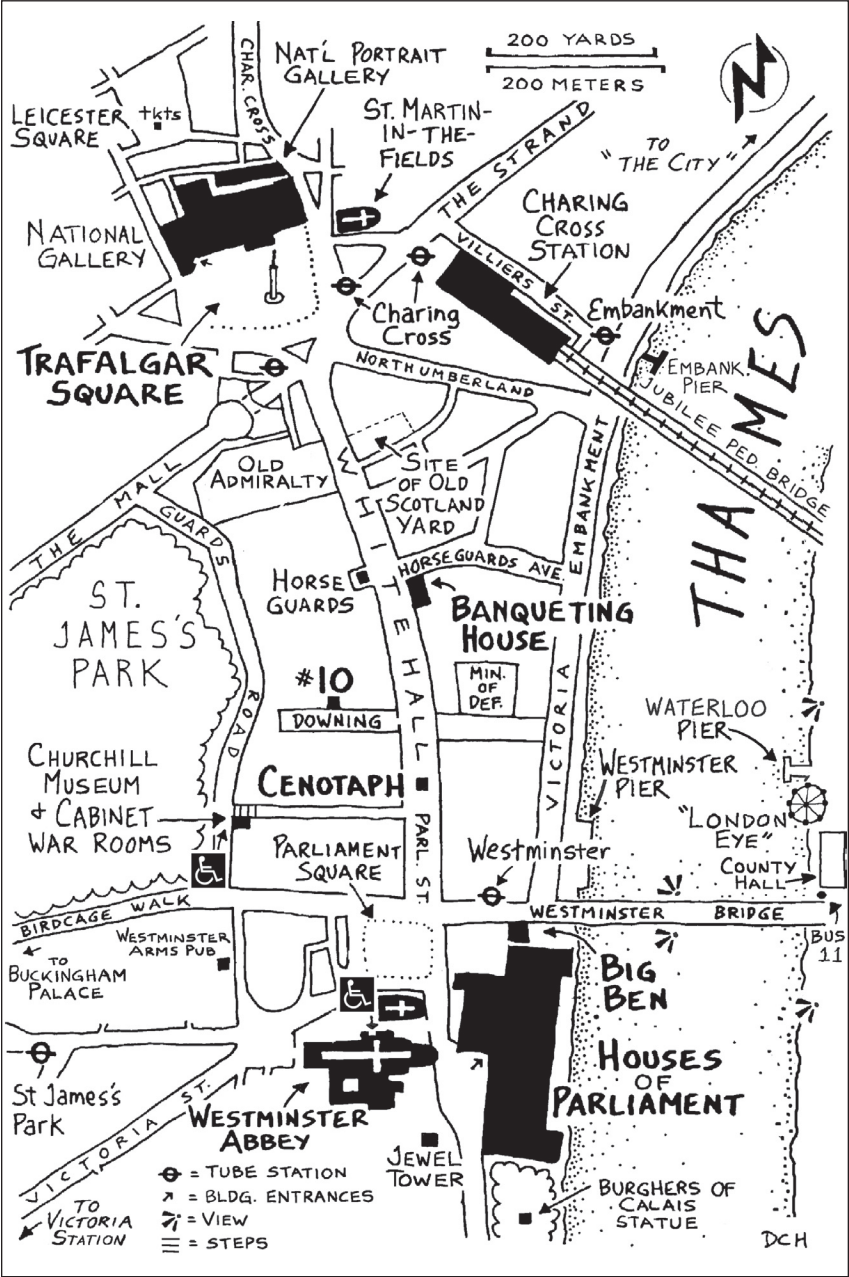
### From Westminster Abbey to Trafalgar Square

These sights are linked by the Westminster Roll or Stroll chapter on page \*TK.

▲▲▲**Westminster Abbey**—As the greatest church in the English-speaking world, Westminster Abbey has been the place where England's kings and queens have been crowned and buried since 1066. A thousand years of English history—3,000 tombs, the remains of 29 kings and queens, and hundreds of memorials—lie within its walls and under its stone slabs. Like a stony refugee camp huddled outside St. Peter's



Westminster Abbey to Trafalgar Square



Pearly Gates, this place has a story to tell and the best way to enjoy it is with a tour (audioguide-£3, live-£4; many prefer the audioguide because it's self-paced).

**Access:** **AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Most of the museum is wheel-chair-accessible. There are loaner wheel-chairs, but no accessible toilets. Wheelchair riders use the main entrance on the north (Big Ben) side of the museum.

**Cost, Hours, Information:** £10, includes cloisters and Abbey Museum; abbey open Mon–Fri 9:30–15:45, Wed until 19:00, Sat 9:30–13:45, last entry 1 hour before closing, closed Sun to sightseers but open for services; cloisters open daily 8:00–18:00; Abbey Museum open daily 10:30–16:00. Photography is prohibited. (Tube: Westminster or St. James's Park, call for tour schedule, tel. 020/7222-7110.)

The main entrance, on the Parliament Square side, often has a sizable line; visit early or late to avoid tourist hordes. Midmornings are most crowded. On weekdays after 15:00 it's less crowded; come then and stay for the 17:00 evensong (except Wed). Since the church is often closed to the public for special services, it's wise to call first.

**Museums:** Three tiny **museums** (all **AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible) ring the cloisters: the Chapter House (where the monks held their daily meetings, notable for its fine architecture and well-described but faded medieval art), the Pyx Chamber (containing an exhibit on the king's treasury), and the Abbey Museum (which tells of the abbey's history, royal coronations, and burials). Look into the impressively realistic eyes of Henry VII's funeral effigy (one of a fascinating series of wax-and-wood statues that, for three centuries, graced royal coffins during funeral processions).

**Music:** Experience an **evensong** service—awesome in a nearly empty church (weekdays except Wed at 17:00, Sat–Sun at 15:00). The 40-minute **free organ recital** on Sunday at 17:45 is another highlight. Organ concerts (different from the Sunday recital) held here are great and inexpensive; look for signs with schedule details (or visit [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org)).

**▲▲Houses of Parliament (Palace of Westminster)**—This neo-Gothic icon of London, the royal residence from 1042 to 1547, is now the meeting place of the legislative branch of government. Tourists are welcome



to view debates in either the bickering House of Commons or the genteel House of Lords (in session when a flag flies atop the Victoria Tower). While the actual debates are generally extremely dull, it is a thrill to be inside and see the British government in action (for details, see below).

Just past security to the left, study the big dark **Westminster Hall**, which survived the 1834 fire. The hall was built in the 11th century and its famous self-supporting hammer-beam roof was added in 1397. The Houses of Parliament are located in what was once the Palace of Westminster, long the palace of England's medieval kings, until it was largely destroyed by fire in 1834. The palace was rebuilt in the Victorian Gothic style (a move away from neoclassicism back to England's Christian and medieval heritage, true to the Romantic Age). It was completed in 1860.

The **Jewel Tower** is the only other part of the old Palace of Westminster to survive (besides Westminster Hall). It contains a fine little exhibit on Parliament (1st floor—history, 2nd floor—Parliament today) with a 25-minute video and lonely, picnic-friendly benches (£2, April–Sept daily 10:00–17:00, across street from St. Stephen's Gate, tel. 020/7222-2219).

**Big Ben**, the clock tower (315 feet high), is named for its 13-ton bell, Ben. The light above the clock is lit when the House of Commons is sitting. The face of the clock is huge—you can actually see the minute hand moving. For a good view of it, cross halfway over Westminster Bridge.

**Access:** AE+A, AI, AT, AL+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. To enter either House of Parliament, you need to alert the main entrance guards to your presence. You will be escorted to a separate entry and guided to your choice of house. Security is very tight and body searches should be expected, especially if the House of Commons is in session.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free. Both houses usually open Mon 14:30–22:30, Tue–Thu 11:30–19:30, Fri 9:30–15:00, closed Sat–Sun, generally less action and no lines after 18:00, use St. Stephen's entrance, Tube: Westminster, tel. 020/7219-4272 for schedule, [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk). The House of Lords has more pageantry, shorter lines, and less interesting debates (tel. 020/7219-3107 for schedule, and visit [www.parliamentlive.tv](http://www.parliamentlive.tv) for a preview).

**How to Visit:** If there's only one line outside, it's for the House of Commons. Wheelchair users can go to the head of the line (see above). Slow walkers and non-disabled travelers can go to the gate and tell the guard you want the Lords (that's the 2nd “line,” with no people in it; it just takes a few minutes and both are worth seeing). You may pop right in—that is, after you've cleared the security gauntlet. Once you've seen the Lords (hide your HOL flier), you can often slip directly over to the

House of Commons and join the gang waiting in the lobby. Inside the lobby, you'll find an announcement board with the day's lineup for both houses.

**Tours:** Houses of Parliament tours are offered in August and September (£7, 75 min; roughly Mon, Tue, Fri, and Sat 9:15–16:30; Wed and Thu 13:15–16:30; to avoid waits, book in advance through First Call, tel. 0870-906-3773, [www.firstcalltickets.com](http://www.firstcalltickets.com), no booking fee). Meet your Blue Badge guide (at the Sovereign's Entrance—far south end) for a behind-the-scenes peek at the royal chambers and both houses.

▲▲▲**Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms**—This is a fascinating trip through the underground headquarters of the British government's fight against the Nazis in the darkest days of the Battle for Britain. The 27-room nerve center of the British war effort was used from 1939 to 1945. Churchill's room, the map room, and other rooms are just as they were in 1945. For details on all the blood, sweat, toil, and tears, pick up the excellent and included audioguide at the



entry and follow the 60-minute tour; be patient—it's well worth it. Don't bypass the new Churchill Museum (entrance is a half dozen rooms into the exhibit), giving a human look at the man behind the famous cigar, bowler hat, and V-for-victory sign. It shows his wit, irascibility, work ethic, American ties, writing talents, and drinking habits. A long touch-the-screen timeline lets you zero in on events in his life, from his birth (November 30, 1874) to his election as Prime Minister in 1940. It's all the more amazing considering that, in the 1930s, the man who became my vote for greatest statesman of the 20th century was considered a washed-up loony ranting about the growing threat of fascism. The shop is great for anyone nostalgic for the 1940s.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible. The accessible entrance is on Horse Guards Road (to get there, go up Great George Street opposite the Westminster Bridge and turn right on Horse Guards Road; if you try to enter from Whitehall via King Charles Street, you'll run into a steep flight of stairs). Once inside, the accessible toilet is nearby, as is an accessible elevator to the underground headquarters. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £11, daily 9:30–18:00, last entry 60 min before closing, on King Charles Street, 200 yards off Whitehall, follow the signs, Tube: Westminster, tel. 020/7930-6961, [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk).

**Eating Nearby:** If you're hungry, get your rations at the museum's

fully accessible Switch Room café. Or, for a nearby pub lunch, try the Westminster Arms (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) on Storeys Gate a couple of blocks south of the War Rooms (food served outside on patio, downstairs, or on the accessible ground floor; no accessible toilet, but you can use the one nearby at Westminster Tube station).

**Horse Guards**—The Horse Guards change daily at 11:00 (10:00 on Sun), and there's a colorful dismounting ceremony daily at 16:00. The rest of the day, they just stand there—terrible for camcorders (on Whitehall, between Trafalgar Square and #10 Downing Street, Tube: Westminster). While Buckingham Palace pageantry is canceled when it rains, the horse guards change regardless of the weather.

**▲Banqueting House**—England's first Renaissance building was designed by Inigo Jones around 1620. It's one of the few London landmarks spared by the 1698 fire and the only surviving part of the original Palace of Whitehall. Don't miss its Rubens ceiling, which, at Charles I's request, drove home the doctrine of the legitimacy of the divine right of kings. In 1649—divine right ignored—Charles I was beheaded on the balcony of this building by a Cromwellian Parliament. Admission includes a restful 20-minute audiovisual history, which shows the place in banqueting action; a 30-minute audio tour—interesting only to history buffs; and a look at the exquisite banqueting hall.

**Access:** **AE+A**, Level 4—Not Accessible. There is one 4" step to enter the lobby. From then on, the building is divided into upper and lower levels with no lifts or ramps.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £4, Mon–Sat 10:00–17:00, closed Sun, last entry at 16:30, subject to closure for government functions, aristocratic WC, immediately across Whitehall from the Horse Guards, Tube: Westminster, tel. 020/7930-4179.

Just up the street is Trafalgar Square.

## Trafalgar Square

**▲▲Trafalgar Square**—London's recently renovated central square, the climax of most marches and demonstrations, is a thrilling place to simply hang out. Lord Nelson stands atop his 185-foot-tall fluted granite column, gazing out to Trafalgar, where he lost his life but defeated the French fleet. Part of this 1842 memorial was made from his victims' melted-down cannons. He's surrounded by giant lions, hordes of people, and—until recently—even more pigeons. London's mayor, Ken Livingstone, nicknamed "Red Ken" for his passion for an activist government, decided that London's "flying rats" were a public nuisance and evicted the venerable seed salesmen (Tube: Charing Cross).



▲▲▲**National Gallery**—Displaying Britain's top collection of European paintings from 1250 to 1900—including works by Leonardo, Botticelli,



Velázquez, Rembrandt, Turner, van Gogh, and the Impressionists—this is one of Europe's great galleries. While the collection is huge, following the route suggested on the map on page \*TK will give you my best quick visit. The audioguide tours (suggested £4 donation) are the best I've used in Europe. On the first floor, the "Art Start" computer room lets you study any artist, style, or topic in the museum, and print out a tailor-made tour map.

In 2006, the new main entrance opened, offering visitors a grand first impression of Britain's greatest collection of paintings.

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Loaner wheel-chairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, Information:** Free, daily 10:00–18:00, Wed until 21:00, free 1-hour overview tours daily at 11:30 and 14:30, plus Wed at 18:00 and 18:30. Photography is prohibited. It's on Trafalgar Square (Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Square, tel. 020/7839-3321, [www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)).

▲▲**National Portrait Gallery**—Put off by halls of 19th-century characters who meant nothing to me, I used to call this "as interesting as someone else's year-book." But a selective wander through this 500-year-long *Who's Who* of British history is quick and free and puts faces on the story of England. A bonus is the chance to admire some great art by painters such as Holbein, Van Dyck, Hogarth, Reynolds, and Gainsborough. The collection is well described, not huge, and in historical sequence, from the 16th century on the second floor to today's royal family on the ground floor.



Some highlights: Henry VIII and wives; several fascinating portraits of the “Virgin Queen” Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Drake, and Sir Walter Raleigh; the only real-life portrait of William Shakespeare; Oliver Cromwell and Charles I, with his head on; self-portraits and other portraits by Gainsborough and Reynolds; the Romantics (Blake, Byron, Wordsworth, and company); Queen Victoria and her era; and the present royal family, including the late Princess Diana.

The excellent audioguide tours (free, but £2 donation requested) describe each room (or era in British history) and more than 300 paintings. You’ll learn more about British history than art and actually hear interviews with 20th-century subjects as you stare at their faces.

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, Information:** Free, daily 10:00–18:00, Thu–Fri until 21:00. It’s 100 yards off Trafalgar Square (around corner from National Gallery, opposite Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Square, tel. 020/7306-0055, [www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)).

**Eating Nearby:** The elegant Portrait Restaurant on the top floor comes with views and high prices; the cheaper Portrait Café is in the basement. Both are Level 1—Fully Accessible.

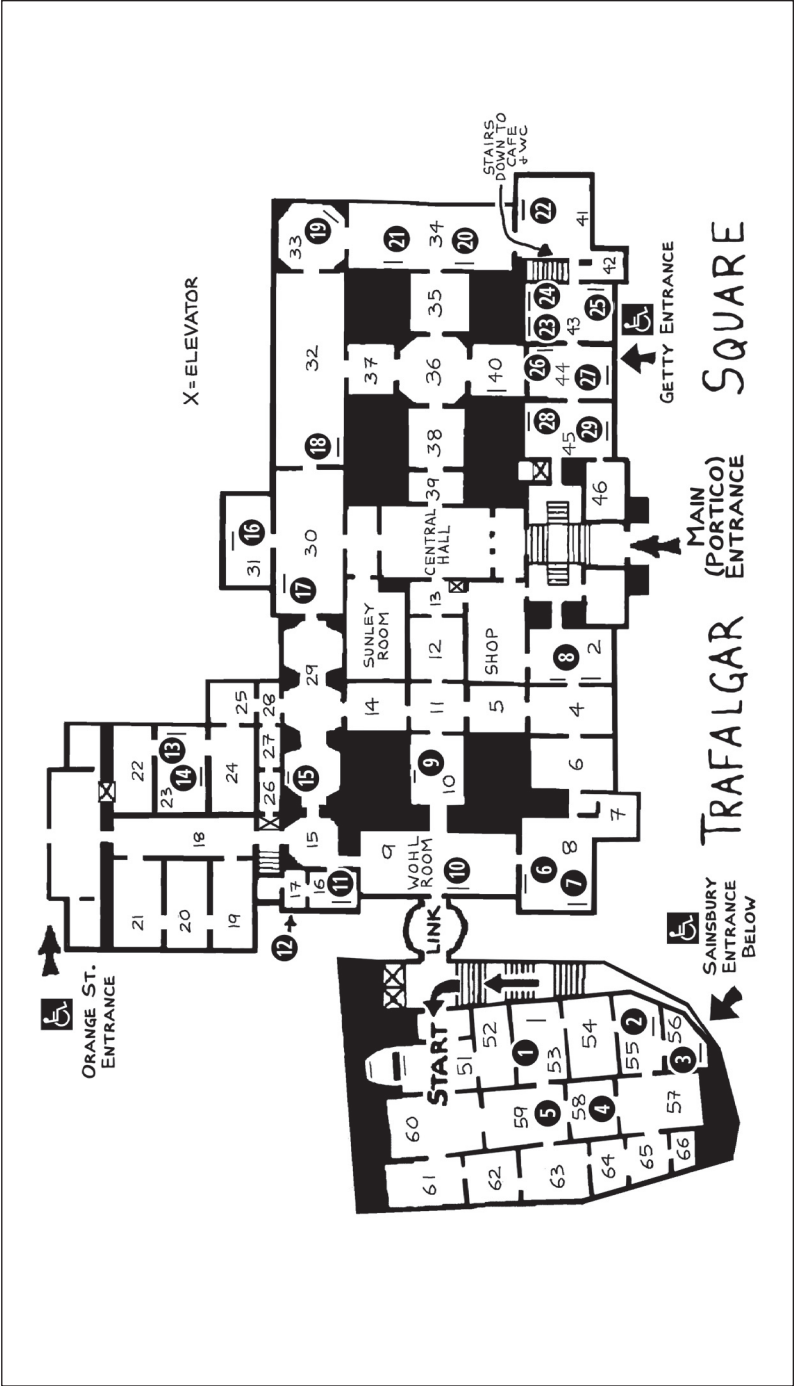
**▲St. Martin-in-the-Fields**—This church, built in the 1720s with a Gothic spire atop a Greek-type temple, is an oasis of peace on the wild and noisy Trafalgar Square. St. Martin cared for the poor. “In the fields” was where the first church stood on this spot (in the 13th century), between Westminster and The City. Going inside, you still feel a compassion for the needs of the people in this community. A free flier provides a brief yet worthwhile self-guided tour. The church is famous for its concerts. Consider a free lunchtime concert (Mon, Tue, and Fri at 13:00) or an evening concert (£8–18, at 19:30 Thu–Sat and on some Tue and Wed, box office tel. 020/7839-8362, church tel. 020/7766-1100). Downstairs (and not accessible for wheelchair users) is a ticket office for concerts, a gift shop, a brass-rubbing center, and a fine support-the-church cafeteria.

**Access:** The main floor is AE, AI, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. A ramp on the north side of the building takes wheelchair users directly into the sanctuary/concert hall. Fourteen steps lead downstairs (Level 4—Not Accessible) to the café, bookstore, exhibit hall, and brass-rubbing center. The toilets are clean and free, but not accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, donations welcome, open daily, Tube: Charing Cross, [www.smitf.com](http://www.smitf.com).



National Gallery Highlights



# MEDIEVAL & EARLY RENAISSANCE

- 1 **Wilton Diptych**
- 2 **UCCELLO – Battle of San Romano**
- 3 **VAN EYCK – The Arnolfini Marriage**

# ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

- 4 **BOTTICELLI – Venus and Mars**
- 5 **CRIVELLI – The Annunciation with St. Emidius**

# HIGH RENAISSANCE

- 6 **MICHELANGELO – Entombment**
- 7 **RAPHAEL – Pope Julius II**
- 8 **LEONARDO DA VINCI – The Virgin of the Rocks; Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist and St. Anne**

# VENETIAN RENAISSANCE

- 9 **TITIAN – Bacchus and Ariadne**
- 10 **TINTORETTO – The Origin of the Milky Way**

# NORTHERN PROTESTANT ART

- 11 **VERMEER – A Young Woman**
- 12 **"A PEEP'SHOW"**
- 13 **REMBRANDT – Belshazzar's Feast**
- 14 **REMBRANDT – Self-Portrait**

# BAROQUE & ROCOCO

- 15 **RUBENS – The Judgment of Paris**
- 16 **VAN DYCK – Charles I on Horseback**
- 17 **VELÁZQUEZ – The Rokeby Venus**
- 18 **CARAVAGGIO – The Supper at Emmaus**
- 19 **BOUCHER – Pan and Syrinx**

# BRITISH

- 20 **CONSTABLE – The Hay Wain**
- 21 **TURNER – The Fighting Temeraire**
- 22 **DELAROCHE – The Execution of Lady Jane Grey**

# IMPRESSIONISM & BEYOND

- 23 **MONET – Gare St. Lazare**
- 24 **MONET – The Water-Lily Pond**
- 25 **MANET – The Waitress (Corner of a Café-Concert)**
- 26 **RENOIR – Boating on the Seine**
- 27 **SEURAT – Bathers at Asnières**
- 28 **VAN GOGH – Sunflowers**
- 29 **CEZANNE – Bathers**

## More Top Squares: Piccadilly, Soho, and Covent Garden

▲▲**Piccadilly Circus**—London's most touristy square got its name from the fancy ruffled shirts—*picadils*—made in the neighborhood long ago. Today, the square, while pretty grotty, is surrounded by fascinating streets swimming with youth on the rampage. For overstimulation, drop by the extremely trashy **Pepsi Trocadero Center's** (AE, AI+A, AL, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) “theme park of the future” for its Segaworld virtual reality games, nine-screen cinema, and thundering IMAX theater (admission to Trocadero is free; individual attractions cost £2–8; before paying full price for IMAX, look for a discount ticket on brochure racks at the TI or hotels; located between Coventry and Shaftesbury, just off Piccadilly, Tube: Piccadilly Circus). Chinatown, to the east, has swollen since the British colony of Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997. Nearby Shaftesbury Avenue and Leicester Square teem with fun-seekers, theaters, Chinese restaurants, and street singers.

**Soho**—North of Piccadilly, seedy Soho is becoming trendy and is well worth a gawk. Most sidewalk corners have curb cuts, and the sidewalks are very negotiable. Some of the streets have been made into pedestrian malls, so the sidewalk and the road are all on one level.

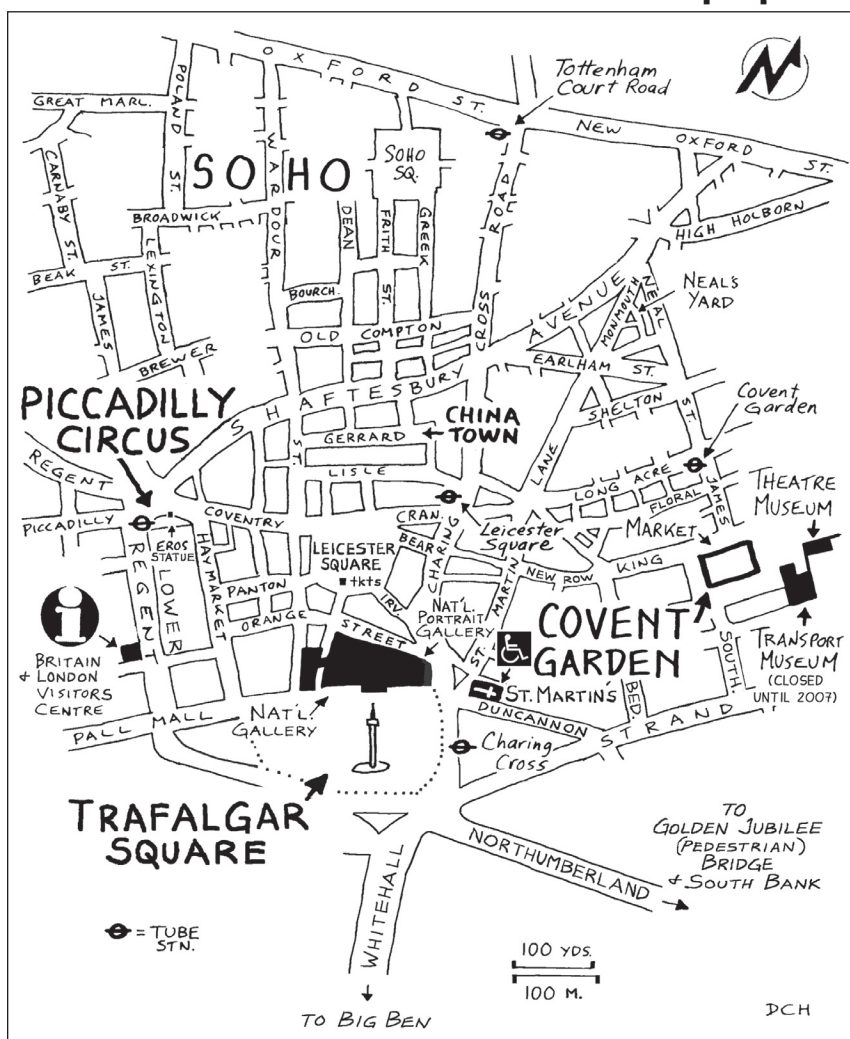
Soho is London's red light district, where “friendly models” wait in tiny rooms up dreary stairways and voluptuous con artists sell strip shows. While venturing into a building to check out a model is interesting, anyone who goes into any one of the shows will be ripped off. Every time. Even a £5 show in a “licensed bar” comes with a £100 cover or minimum (as it's printed on the drink menu) and a “security man.” You may accidentally buy a £200 bottle of bubbly. And suddenly, the door has no handle.

Telephone sex is hard to avoid these days in London. Phone booths are littered with racy fliers of busty ladies “new in town.” Some travelers gather six or eight phone booths' worth of fliers and take them home for kinky wallpaper.

▲▲**Covent Garden**—This boutique-ish shopping district is a people-watcher's delight, with cigarette eaters, Punch and Judy acts, food that's good for you (but not your wallet), trendy crafts, sweet whiffs of marijuana, two-tone hair (neither color natural), and faces that could set off a metal detector



## London's Top Squares



(Tube: Covent Garden). The sidewalks have curb cuts, but are quite narrow—so you may have to negotiate around other pedestrians. But the area is predominately accessible. For better Covent Garden lunch deals, get a block or two away from the eye of this touristic hurricane (check out the places north of the Tube station along Endell and Neal Streets).

### Museums near Covent Garden

▲▲**Somerset House**—This grand 18th-century civic palace offers a marvelous public space, three fine art collections, and a riverside terrace

(between the Strand and the Thames). The palace once housed the national registry that records Britain's births, marriages, and deaths, "...where they hatch 'em, match 'em, and dispatch 'em." Enter the courtyard to enjoy the fountain. Go ahead...roll or stroll through it. The 55 jets get playful twice an hour. (In the winter, this becomes a popular ice-skating rink, with a toasty café for viewing.)

Surrounding you are three small and sumptuous sights: the Courtauld Gallery (paintings), the Gilbert Collection (fine arts), and the Hermitage Rooms (the art of czarist Russia).



The **Courtauld Gallery** is less impressive than the National Gallery, but its wonderful collection of paintings is still a joy. The gallery is part of the Courtauld Institute of Art, and the thoughtful description of each piece of art reminds visitors that the gallery is still used for teaching. You'll see medieval European paintings and works by Rubens, the Impressionists (Manet, Monet, Degas), Post-Impressionists (such as Cézanne), and more (free Mon until 14:00, downstairs cafeteria, lockers, and WC).

The **Hermitage Rooms** offer a taste of Romanov imperial splendor. As Russia struggles and tourists are staying away, someone had the bright idea of sending the best of its art to London to raise some hard cash. These five rooms host a different collection every six months, with a standard intro to the czar's winter palace in St. Petersburg (tel. 020/7420-9410). To see what's on, visit [www.somerset-house.org.uk/attractions/hermitage](http://www.somerset-house.org.uk/attractions/hermitage).

The **Gilbert Collection** displays 800 pieces of the finest in European decorative arts, from diamond-studded gold snuffboxes to intricate Italian mosaics. Maybe you've seen Raphael paintings and Botticelli frescoes... but this lush collection is refreshingly different (includes free audioguide with a highlights tour and a helpful loaner magnifying glass).

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1: All of the Somerset House galleries are fully accessible. The west door provides accessible entry to the complex, and you can take the lift to the accessible toilet in the basement. Accessible parking and loaner wheelchairs are also available.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £5 per sight, £8 for any two sights, £12 for all three. All three are open the same hours (daily 10:00–18:00, last entry

17:15). Somerset House is located between the Strand and the Thames, off Waterloo Bridge. Coming from Trafalgar Square, catch bus #6, #9, #11, #13, #15, or #23. Tube: Temple (closer) or Covent Garden. Info: tel. 020/7848-2526 or 020/7845-4600, [www.somerset-house.org.uk](http://www.somerset-house.org.uk). The Web site lists a busy schedule of tours, kids' events, and concerts. The riverside terrace is picnic-friendly (deli inside lobby).

**▲London Transport Museum**—This wonderful museum (closed until early 2007) is a delight for kids. Whether you're cursing or marveling at the buses and Tube, the growth of Europe's biggest city has been made possible by its public transit system.

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, and Location:** £6, kids under 16 free, Sat–Thu 10:00–18:00, Fri 11:00–18:00, in southeast corner of Covent Garden courtyard, Tube: Covent Garden, tel. 020/7379-6344 or recorded info 020/7565-7299, [www.ltmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk).

**Theatre Museum**—This earnest museum traces British theater from Shakespeare to today.

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, Tue–Sun 10:00–18:00, closed Mon, free guided tours at 12:00 and 14:00, a block east of Covent Garden's marketplace down Russell Street, Tube: Covent Garden, tel. 020/7943-4700, [www.theatremuseum.org.uk](http://www.theatremuseum.org.uk).

## North London

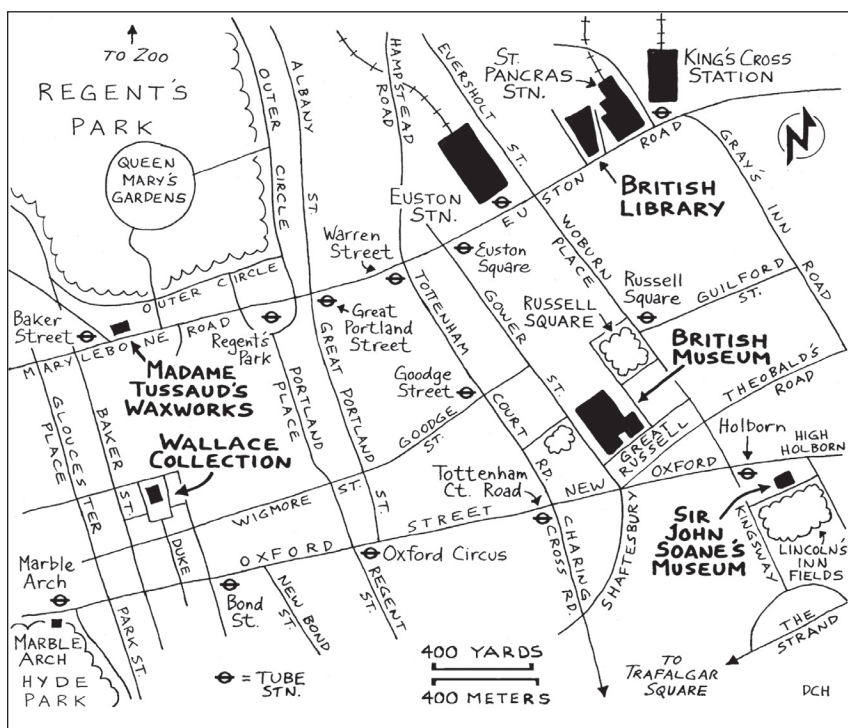
**▲▲British Museum, Great Court, and Reading Room**—Simply put, this is the greatest chronicle of civilization...anywhere. A visit here is like taking a long journey through Encyclopedia Britannica National Park. Entering on Great Russell Street, you'll find yourself in the Great Court, the glass-domed hub of a two-acre cultural complex, containing restaurants, shops, and lecture halls plus the Round Reading Room.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible: The museum and the Great Court, as well as the top-floor restaurant, are all fully accessible. The main entry on Great Russell Street and the entry on Montague Place are both fully accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** The British Museum is free (£3 donation requested, daily 10:00–17:30, plus Thu–Fri until 20:30—but from 17:30, only selected galleries and the Reading Room are open, least crowded weekday late afternoons, Great Russell Street, Tube: Tottenham Court Road, tel. 020/7323-8000, recorded info tel. 020/7388-2227,



## North London



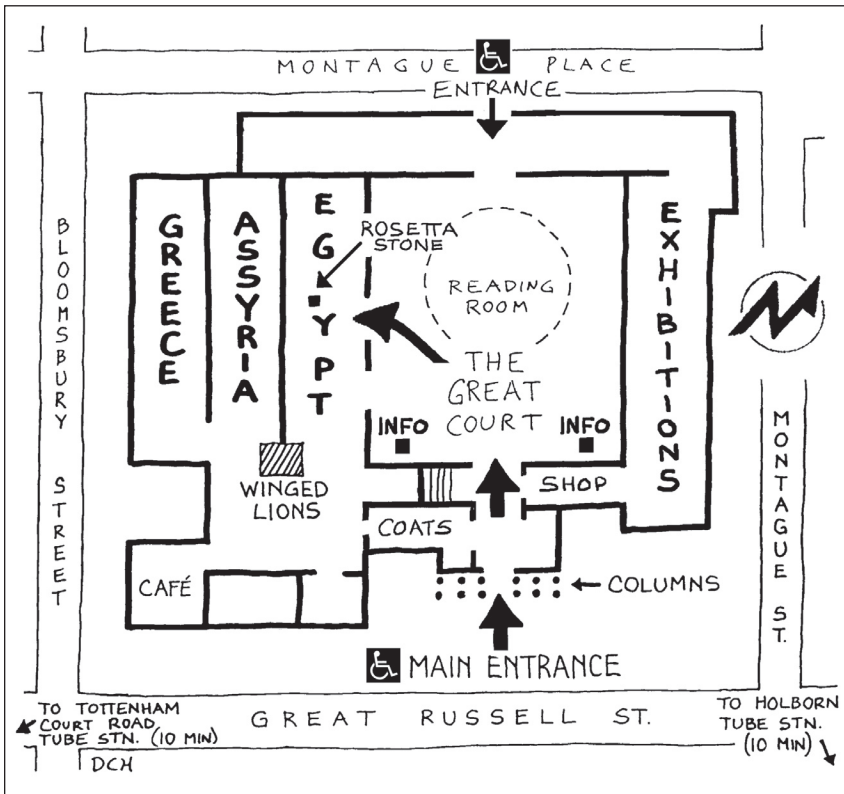
[www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)). The Reading Room is free and open daily 10:00–17:30 (Thu–Fri until 20:30). Computer terminals within the Reading Room offer COMPASS, a database of information about selected museum items (also available on their Web site, listed above). The Great Court has longer opening hours than the museum (daily 9:00–18:00, Thu–Sat until 23:00).

**Tours:** The various Eye-Opener tours are free (nearly hourly 11:00–15:30, 50 min); each one is different, focusing on one particular subject within the museum. The Highlights tours are expensive but meaty (£8, 90 min, at 10:30, 13:00, and 15:00). There are also several different audioguide tours (£3.50, requires leaving photo ID), including Top 50 Highlights (90 min), the Parthenon Sculptures (60 min), and Family Tours (length varies).

➡ **Self-Guided Tour:** The most popular sections of the museum fill the ground floor: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and ancient Greek—with the famous Elgin Marbles from the Athenian Parthenon. Huge winged lions (which guarded Assyrian palaces 800 years before Christ) guard these great ancient galleries. For a brief tour, connect these ancient dots:



## British Museum Overview



Start with the **Egyptian**. Wander from the Rosetta Stone past the many statues. Make your way to Room 7 (back at the winged lions) and explore the dark, violent, and mysterious **Assyrian** rooms. The Nimrud Gallery is lined with royal propaganda reliefs and wounded lions.

The most modern of the ancient art fills the **Greek** section. Find Room 11 behind the winged lions and start your tour through Greek art history with the simple and primitive Cycladic fertility figures. Later, painted vases show a culture really into partying. The finale is the Elgin Marbles. The much-wrangled-over bits of the Athenian Parthenon (from 450 B.C.) are even more impressive than they look. To best appreciate these ancient carvings, take the audioguide tour (available in this gallery).

Be sure to venture to the upper level to see artifacts from **Roman Britain** (Room 50) that surpass anything you'll see at Hadrian's Wall or elsewhere in Britain. Nearby, the Dark Age Britain exhibits offer a worthwhile peek at that bleak era; look for the Sutton Hoo Burial Ship artifacts from a 7th-century royal burial on the east coast of England

(Room 41). If you want more Egypt, check out the mummies in Rooms 62 and 63. A rare Michelangelo cartoon is in Room 90.

The **Great Court** is Europe's largest covered square—bigger than a football field. This people-friendly court—delightfully out of the London rain—was for 150 years one of London's great lost spaces...closed off and gathering dust. While the vast British Museum wraps around the court, its centerpiece is the stately **Reading Room**—famous as the place Karl Marx hung out while formulating his ideas on communism and writing *Das Kapital*. The Reading Room—one of the fine cast-iron buildings of the 19th century—is open to the public, but there's little to see that you can't see from the doorway.



▲▲▲**British Library**—The British Empire built its greatest monuments out of paper. And it's in literature that England made her lasting contribution to civilization and the arts. Britain's national archives has more than 12 million books, 180 miles of shelving, and the deepest basement in London. But everything that matters for your visit is in one delightful room labeled "The Treasures." This room is filled with literary and



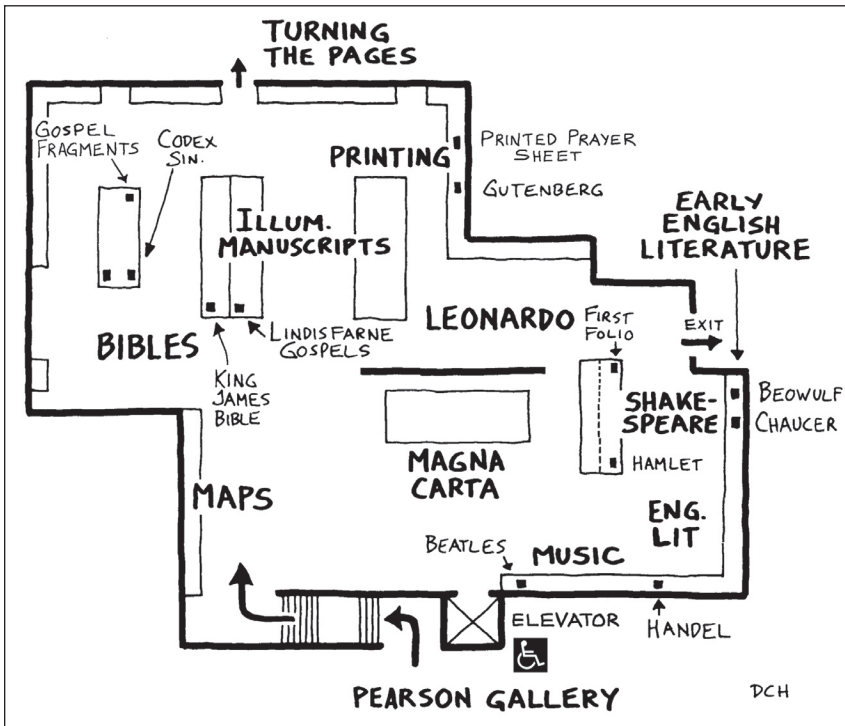
historical documents that changed the course of history. You'll trace the evolution of European maps over 800 years. Follow the course of the bible—from the earliest known gospels (written on scraps of papyrus) to the first complete bible to the original King James version and the Gutenberg Bible. You'll see Leonardo's doodles, the Magna Carta, Shakespeare's First Folio, the original *Alice in Wonderland* in Lewis Carroll's handwriting, and manuscripts by Beethoven,

Mozart, Lennon, and McCartney. Finish in the fascinating *Turning the Pages* exhibit, which lets you actually browse through virtual manuscripts of a few of these treasures on a computer.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, Mon–Fri 9:30–18:00, Tue until 20:00, Sat 9:30–17:00, Sun 11:00–17:00; 60-min tours for £6 usually offered Mon, Wed, and Fri–Sun at 15:00, Sat 10:30, and Sun 11:30; call 020/7412-7332 to confirm schedule and reserve; for £3.50 audioguide,

## British Library



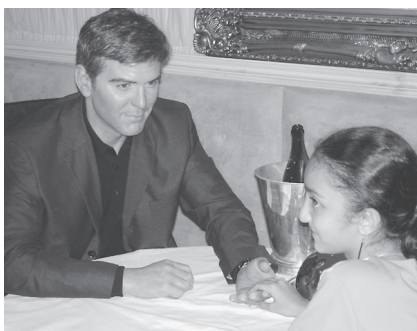
leave photo ID or 20 deposit; Tube: King's Cross, turn right out of station and go a block to 96 Euston Road, library tel. 020/7412-7000, [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk). The ground-floor café is next to a vast and fun pull-out stamp collection, and the cafeteria upstairs serves good hot meals; both eateries are Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**▲Wallace Collection**—Sir Richard Wallace's fine collection of 17th-century Dutch Masters, 18th-century French Rococo, medieval armor, and assorted aristocratic fancies fills the sumptuously furnished Hertford House on Manchester Square. From the rough and intimate Dutch lifescapes of Jan Steen to the pink-cheeked Rococo fantasies of Boucher, a wander through this little-visited mansion makes you nostalgic for the days of empire.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, Mon–Sat 10:00–17:00, Sun 12:00–17:00, audioguide-£3, just north of Oxford Street on Manchester Square, Tube: Bond Street, tel. 020/7563-9500, [www.wallacecollection.org](http://www.wallacecollection.org). The museum has an upscale, fully accessible restaurant, Café Bagatelle (tel. 020/7563-9500).

**▲Madame Tussaud's Waxworks**—This is gimmicky and expensive, but dang good. The original Madame Tussaud did wax casts of heads lopped off during the French Revolution (such as Marie Antoinette's). She took her show on the road and ended up in London, and now it's much easier to be featured. The gallery is one big Who's Who photo-op—a huge hit with the kind of travelers who skip the British Museum. After looking a hundred famous people in their glassy eyes and surviving a silly hall of horror, you'll board a Disney-type ride and cruise through a kid-pleasing



“Spirit of London” time trip. Your last stop is the auditorium for a 15-minute stage show. They’ve dumped anything really historical (except for what they claim is the blade that beheaded Marie Antoinette) because “There’s no money in it, and we’re a business.” Now, it’s all about squeezing Brad Pitt’s bum, wining and dining with

George Clooney, and partying with Beyoncé, Kylie, Britney, and Posh.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Admission varies with time, but about £23, kids-£19; after 17:00, it’s £14, kids-£9; children under 5 always free; Mon–Fri 10:00–18:30, Sat–Sun 9:30–18:30, last entry 60 min before closing, Marylebone Road, Tube: Baker Street.

**Crowd-Beating Tips:** The Waxworks are popular—and crowded. Unlike at some other sights, a wheelchair user cannot skip to the head of the line here. Avoid the wait by either booking ahead to get a ticket with an entry time (tel. 0870-400-3000, online at [www.madame-tussauds.com](http://www.madame-tussauds.com) for a £2 fee, or at no extra cost at the Britain and London Visitors Centre or the TIs at Victoria and Waterloo train stations) or arriving at 17:00 (avoiding any lines and saving £9 on admission—90 minutes is plenty of time for the exhibit).

**Sir John Soane's Museum**—Architects and fans of eclectic knickknacks love this quirky place, as do Martha Stewart types and lovers of Back Door sights. Tour this furnished home on a bird-chirping square and see 19th-century chairs, lamps, and carpets, wood-paneled nooks and crannies, and stained-glass skylights. The townhouse is cluttered with Soane's (and his wife's) collection of ancient



relics, curios, and famous paintings, including Hogarth's series on *The Rake's Progress* (read the fun plot) and several excellent Canalettos. In 1833, just before his death, Soane established his house as a museum, stipulating that it be kept as nearly as possible in the state he left it. If he visited today, he'd be entirely satisfied. You'll leave wishing you'd known the man.

**Access:** Level 3—Minimally Accessible. The entrance has eight steps up, and the ground floor is 80 percent on one level. The other two levels require a trip up or down narrow flights of stairs, and the doors are also narrow. Once inside, a narrow loaner wheelchair is available. Full accessibility is planned to be complete by 2007.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, Tue–Sat 10:00–17:00, first Tue of the month also 18:00–21:00, closed Sun–Mon, good £1 brochure, £3 guided tours Sat at 14:30, quarter mile southeast of British Museum, Tube: Holborn, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, tel. 020/7405-2107.

## Buckingham Palace

**▲Buckingham Palace**—This lavish home has been Britain's royal residence since 1837. When the queen's at home, the royal standard flies (a red, yellow, and blue flag); otherwise the Union Jack flaps in the wind. Recently, the queen has opened her palace to the public—but only in August and September, when she's out of town.

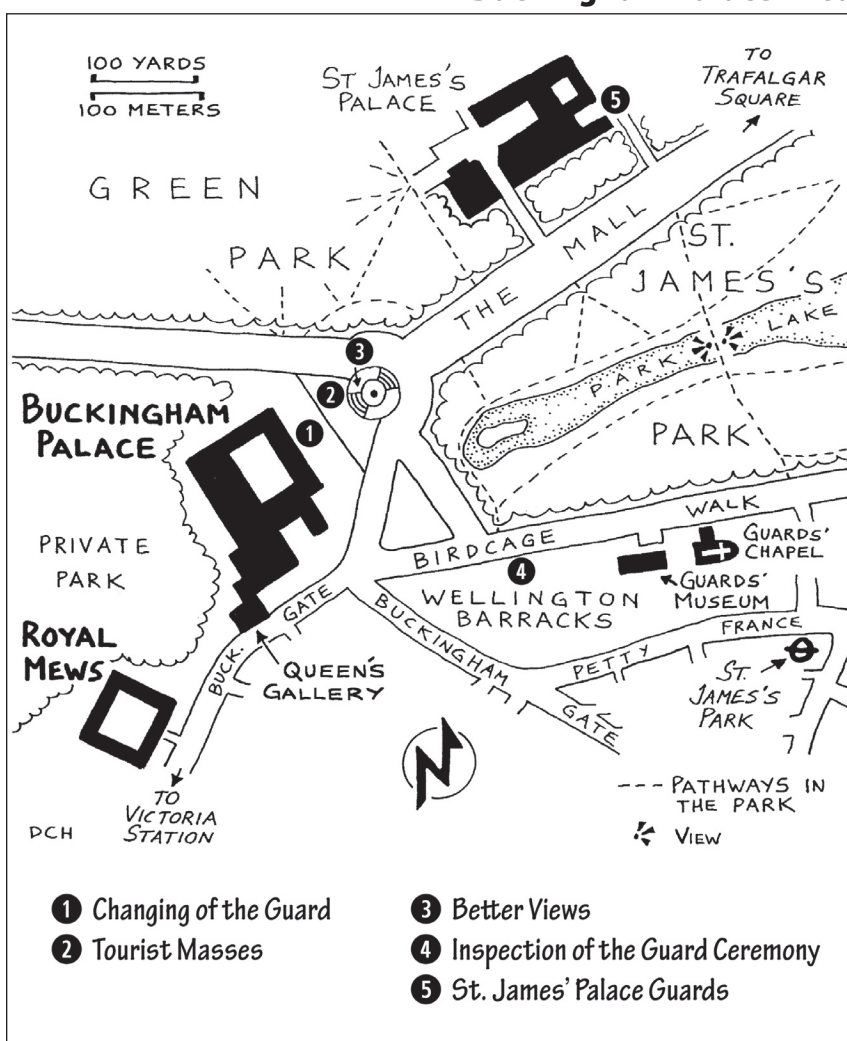
**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £14 for state apartments and throne room, Aug–Sept daily 9:30–18:50, only 8,000 visitors a day—come early to get an entry time, or for £1 extra you can book ahead by phone or online, Tube: Victoria, tel. 020/7766-7300, [www.royalcollection.org.uk](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk).

**▲Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace**—Queen Elizabeth's 7,000 paintings make up the finest private art collection in the world. It's actually a collection of collections, built on by each successive monarch since the 16th century, and rivaling Europe's biggest national art galleries. She rotates her paintings, enjoying some privately in her many palatial residences while sharing others with her subjects in public galleries in Edinburgh and London. Small, thoughtfully presented, and always exquisite displays fill the handful of rooms open to the public in a wing of Buckingham Palace. As you're in "the most important building in London," security is tight. You'll see a temporary exhibit and the permanent "treasures"—which come with a room full of "antique and personal jewelry." Compared to the crown jewels at the Tower, it may be Her Majesty's bottom drawer—but it's still a dazzling pile of diamonds. Temporary exhibits change about twice a year and are always lovingly



## Buckingham Palace Area



described with the included audioguides. While the admissions come with an entry time, this is only enforced during rare days when crowds are a problem.

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £7.50, £11.50 with Royal Mews, daily 10:00–17:30, last entry 60 min before closing, Tube: Victoria, tel. 020/7766-7301 (but Her Majesty rarely answers). Men shouldn't miss the mahogany-trimmed urinals.

**Royal Mews**—The queen’s working stables, the “mews,” are open to visitors. The visit is likely to be disappointing (you’ll see 2 horses out of the queen’s 30, a fancy car, and a bunch of old carriages) unless you follow the included guided tour, in which case it’s thoroughly entertaining—especially if you’re interested in horses and/or royalty. The 45-minute tours go twice an hour and finish with the Gold State Coach (c. 1760, 4 tons, 4 mpg). Queen Victoria said absolutely no cars. When she died in 1901, the mews got its first Daimler. Today, along with the hay-eating transport, the stable is home to five Rolls-Royce Phantoms.

**Access:** AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £6, Aug–Sept Sat–Thu 10:00–17:00, March–July and Oct Sat–Thu 11:00–16:00, closed Fri, closed Nov–Feb, Buckingham Palace Road, Tube: Victoria, tel. 020/7766-7302.

**▲▲Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace**—The guards change with much fanfare at around 11:30 almost daily in the summer and, at a minimum, every other day all year long (no band when it’s rainy). Each month, it’s either daily or on odd or even days. Call 020/7321-2233 for the day’s plan or check [www.royalresidences.com](http://www.royalresidences.com). Wave down a big black taxi and say, “Buck House, please” (a.k.a. Buckingham Palace).

Most tourists just mob the palace gates for a peek at the Changing of the Guard, but those who know the drill will enjoy the event more.

Here’s the lowdown on what goes down: It’s just after 11:00, and the on-duty guards, actually working at nearby St. James’s Palace, are ready to finish their shift. At 11:15, these tired guards, along with the band, head out to the Mall, and then take a right turn for Buckingham Palace. Meanwhile, their replacement guards—fresh for the day—gather at 11:00 at their Wellington Barracks, 500 yards east of the palace (on Birdcage Walk), for a review and inspection. At 11:30, they also head for Buckingham Palace. As both the tired and fresh guards converge on the palace, the Horse Guard



enters the fray, marching down the Mall from the Horse Guard Barracks on Whitehall. At 11:45, it’s a perfect storm of Red Coat pageantry, as all three groups converge. Everyone parades around, the guard changes (passing the regimental flag, or “color”) with much shouting, the band



## Harry Potter's London

Harry Potter's story is set in a magical Britain, and all of the places mentioned in the books except London are fictional, but you can visit many real film locations. Many of the locations are closed to visitors, though, or are an unmagical disappointment in person, unless you're a huge fan. For those diehard fans, here's a list.

*Spoiler Warning: Information in this sidebar will ruin surprises for those who haven't yet read the Harry Potter series or seen the movies.*

Harry's story begins in suburban London, in the fictional town of Little Whinging. In the first film, the gentle giant Hagrid touches down at #4 Privet Drive on his flying motorcycle. He leaves baby Harry—who was orphaned by the murder of his wizard parents—on the doorstep to be raised by an anti-magic aunt and uncle. The scene was shot in the town of **Bracknell** (pop. 50,000, 10 miles west of Heathrow) on a street of generic brick rowhouses called Picket Close. Later, 10-year-old Harry first realizes his wizard powers when talking with a boa constrictor, filmed at the **London Zoo's Reptile House** in Regent's Park (Tube: Great Portland Street). Harry soon gets invited to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he'll learn the magical skills he'll need to eventually confront his parents' murderer, Lord Voldemort.

**Big Ben** and **Parliament**, along the Thames, welcome Harry to the modern city inhabited by Muggles (non-magic folk). London bustles along, oblivious to the parallel universe of wizards. Hagrid takes Harry shopping for school supplies. They enter the glass-roofed **Leadenhall Market** (Tube: Bank), and approach a **storefront** in Bull's Head Passage—the entrance to the Leaky Cauldron pub (which, in the books, is placed among the bookshops of Charing Cross Road). The pub's back wall parts, opening onto the magical Diagon Alley (filmed on a set at Leavesden Studios, north of London), where Harry shops for wands, cauldrons, and wizard textbooks. He pays for it with gold Galleons from goblin-run Gringotts Bank, filmed in the marble-floored

plays a happy little concert, and then they march out. A few minutes later, fresh guards set up at St. James's Palace, the tired ones dress down at the barracks, and the tourists disperse.

If you are able, stake out the high ground on the circular Victoria Monument for the best overall view. Or start early either at St. James's Palace or the Wellington Barracks (the inspection is in full view of the street) and come in with the band. The marching troops and bands are colorful and even stirring, but the actual Changing of the Guard is a

and chandeliered Exhibition Hall of **Australia House** (Tube: Temple), home of the Australian Embassy.

Harry catches the train to Hogwarts at **King's Cross Station**. (The fanciful exterior shot from film #2 is actually of nearby **St. Pancras Station**.) Inside the glass-roofed train station, on a **pedestrian sky bridge** over the tracks, Hagrid gives Harry a train ticket. Harry heads to platform 9 3/4, actually filmed at **platform 4**. Harry and his new buddy Ron magically push their luggage carts through a brick pillar between the platforms, emerging onto a hidden platform. (For a fun photo op, find the *Platform 9 3/4* sign and the luggage cart that appears to be disappearing into the wall.)

A red steam train—the *Hogwarts Express*—speeds them through the (Scottish) countryside to Hogwarts, where Harry will spend the next seven years. Harry is taught how to wave his wand by tiny Professor Flitwick in a wood-paneled classroom filmed at **Harrow School** in Harrow on the Hill, eight miles northwest of London (Tube: Harrow on the Hill).

In film #3, Harry careens through London's lamplit streets on a purple three-decker bus that dumps him at the Leaky Cauldron. In this film, the pub's exterior was shot on rough-looking Stoney Street at the southeast edge of **Borough Street Market**, by the Market Porter Pub, with trains rumbling overhead (Tube: London Bridge).

Other scenes from the books are set in London—Sirius Black and the Order reside at "Twelve Grimmauld Place" and Harry plumbs the depths of the "Ministry of Magic"—but these places are fictional.

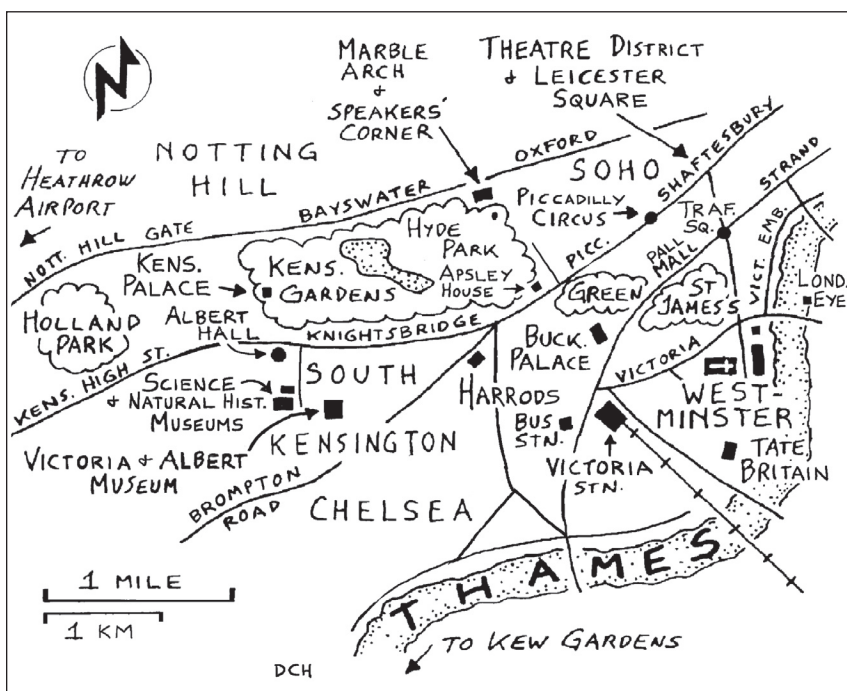
Finally, cinema buffs can visit Leicester Square (Tube: Leicester Square), where Daniel Radcliffe and other stars strolled past paparazzi and down red carpets to the Odeon Theater to watch the movies' premieres.

nonevent. It is interesting, however, to see nearly every tourist in London gathered in one place at the same time. Afterwards, stroll or roll through nearby St. James's Park (Tube: Victoria, St. James's Park, or Green Park).

## West London

▲**Hyde Park and Speakers' Corner**—London's "Central Park," originally Henry VIII's hunting grounds, has more than 600 acres of lush greenery, a huge man-made lake, the royal Kensington Palace, and the

## West London



ornate neo-Gothic Albert Memorial across from the Royal Albert Hall. Early afternoons on Sunday (until early evening), Speakers' Corner offers



soapbox oratory at its best (Tube: Marble Arch). This “grass roots of democracy” is actually a holdover from when the gallows stood here, and the criminal was allowed to say just about anything he wanted before he swung. I dare you to raise your voice and gather a crowd—it’s easy to do.

The Princess Diana Memorial Fountain opened in 2004 in honor of the “People’s Princess,” who once lived in nearby Kensington Palace. The low-key circular stream is in the eastern part of the park, near the Serpentine Gallery. (Don’t be confused by signs to the Diana Princess of Wales Children’s Playground, also found within the park.)

**Access:** Level 1—Fully Accessible.

▲**Apsley House (Wellington Museum)**—Having beaten Napoleon at Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington was once the most famous man in Europe. He was given London's ultimate address, #1 London. His newly refurbished mansion offers one of London's best palace experiences. An 11-foot-tall marble statue (by Canova) of Napoleon, clad only in a fig leaf, greets you. Downstairs is a small gallery of Wellington memorabilia (including a pair of Wellington boots). The lavish upstairs shows off the duke's fine collection of paintings, including works by Velázquez and Steen.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £4.50, Tue–Sun 10:00–17:00, until 16:00 in winter, closed Mon, well-described by included audioguide, 20 yards from Hyde Park Corner Tube station, tel. 020/7152-6156, [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk). Hyde Park's pleasant and picnic-wonderful rose garden is nearby.

▲▲**Victoria and Albert Museum**—The world's top collection of decorative arts (vases, stained glass, fine furniture, clothing, jewelry, carpets, and more) is a surprisingly interesting assortment of crafts from the West as well as Asian and Islamic cultures.

The V&A grew out of the Great Exhibition of 1851—the ultimate festival celebrating the greatness of Britain. After much support from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, it was renamed after the royal couple.

Many visitors start with the **British Galleries** (upstairs)—a one-way tour stretching through 400 years of British lifestyles, almost a museum in itself.

In Room 46 are the plaster casts of **Trajan's Column**, a copy of Rome's 140-foot spiral relief telling the story of the conquest of Romania. (The V&A's casts are copies made for the benefit of 19th-century art students who couldn't afford a rail-pass.) Plaster casts of **Renaissance sculptures** (Room 46B) let you compare Michelangelo's monumental *David* with Donatello's girlish *David*; see also Ghiberti's bronze Baptistery doors, which inspired the Florentine Renaissance.

In Room 48A are **Raphael's "cartoons,"** seven huge watercolor designs by the Renaissance master for tapestries meant for the Sistine



Chapel. The cartoons were sent to Brussels, cut into strips (see the lines), and placed on the looms. Notice that the scenes, the Acts of Peter and Paul, are the reverse of the final product (lots of left-handed saints).

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. There are two accessible entrances to the museum. An accessibility information sheet and loaner wheelchairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, £3 donation requested, possible fee for special exhibits (reduced for wheelchair users), daily 10:00–17:45, open every Wed and last Fri of the month until 22:00 except mid-Dec–mid-Jan. (Tube: South Kensington, a long tunnel leads directly from the Tube station to the museum, tel. 020/7942-2000, [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)).

**Tours:** The museum has 150 rooms and over 12 miles of corridors. While just wandering works well here, consider catching one of the free 60-minute orientation tours (daily, on the half-hour from 10:30–15:30, also daily at 13:00, Wed at 16:30, and a half-hour version at 18:30) or buying the fine £5 *Hundred Highlights* guidebook, or the handy £1 *What to See at the V&A* brochure (outlines 5 self-guided tours).

**▲Natural History Museum**—Across the street from Victoria and Albert, this mammoth museum is housed in a giant and wonderful Victorian, neo-Romanesque building. Built in the 1870s specifically for this huge collection (50 million specimens), it has two halves: the Life Galleries (creepy-crawlies, human biology, the origin of species, “our place in evolution,” and awesome dinosaurs) and the Earth Galleries (meteors, volcanoes, earthquakes, and so on). Exhibits are wonderfully explained, with lots of creative interactive displays. Pop in, if only for the wild collection of dinosaurs and the roaring *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. There are multiple entrances to the museum, and all are accessible. Loaner wheelchairs and brochures about museum access are available.

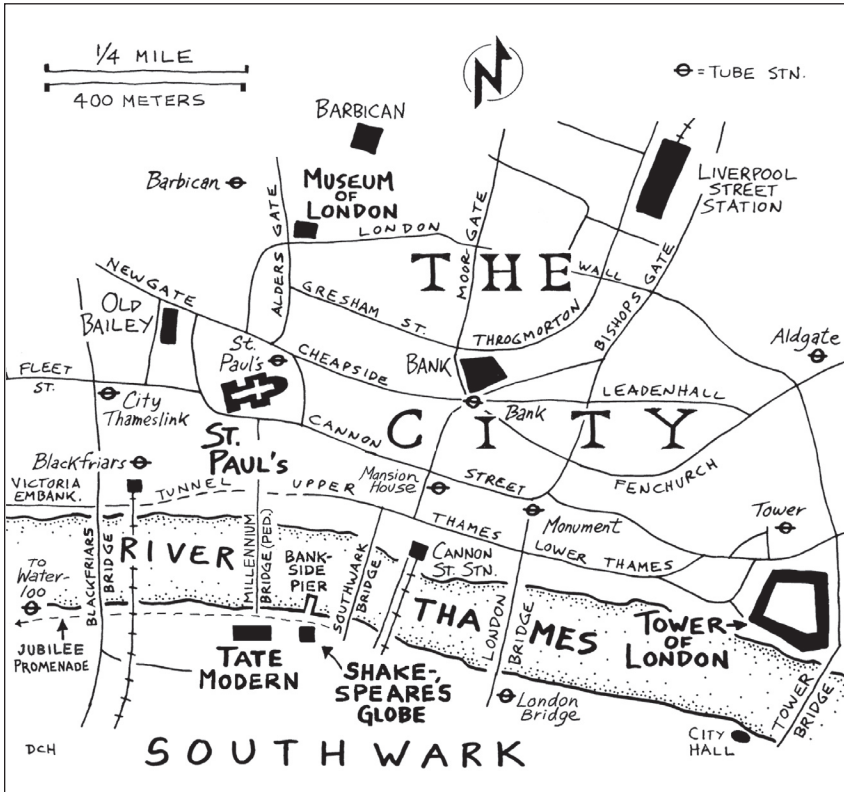
**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, possible fee for special exhibits, Mon–Sat 10:00–18:00, Sun 11:00–18:00, last entrance 17:30, a long tunnel leads directly from South Kensington Tube station to museum, tel. 020/7942-5000, exhibit info and reservations tel. 020/7942-5011, [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk). Free 45-minute highlights tours occur daily about every hour from 11:00 to 16:00.

**▲Science Museum**—Next door to the Natural History Museum, this sprawling wonderland for curious minds is kid-perfect. It offers hands-on fun, from moon walks to deep-sea exploration, with trendy technology exhibits, an IMAX theater (£7–10 tickets for grownups, kids less), cool rotating themed exhibits, and a kids’ zone in the basement.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible.



## The City



**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, daily 10:00–18:00, Exhibition Road, Tube: South Kensington, tel. 0870-870-4868, [www.sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk). The museum features the kid-friendly Deep Blue Café, plus several other small, fully accessible eateries. A picnic terrace is on the lower level.

### East London: The City

▲▲**The City of London**—When Londoners say “The City,” they mean the one-square-mile business, banking, and journalism center that 2,000 years ago was Roman Londinium. The outline of the Roman city walls can still be seen in the arc of roads from Blackfriars Bridge to Tower Bridge. Within The City are 23 churches designed by Sir Christopher Wren, mostly just ornamentation around St. Paul’s Cathedral. Today, while home to only 5,000 residents, The City thrives, with over 500,000 office workers coming and going daily. It’s a fascinating district to wander on weekdays, but since almost nobody actually lives there, it’s dull in

the evenings and on Saturday and Sunday.

**▲Old Bailey**—To view the British legal system in action—lawyers in little blond wigs speaking legalese with a British accent—spend a few minutes in the visitors' gallery at the Old Bailey, called the "Central Criminal Court." Don't enter under the dome; signs point you to the two visitors' entrances.

**Access:** Level 4—Not Accessible. With lots of winding stairs and many levels, Old Bailey will challenge any traveler with limited mobility.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, Mon–Fri about 10:30–16:30 depending on caseload, closed Sat–Sun, reduced hours in Aug; no kids under 14; no bags, mobile phones, or cameras, but small purses OK; you can check your bag at Bailey's Sandwich Bar across the street for £2 or at any other entrepreneurial place nearby; Tube: St. Paul's, 2 blocks northwest of St. Paul's on Old Bailey Street, tel. 020/7248-3277.

**▲▲▲St. Paul's Cathedral**—Wren's most famous church is the great St. Paul's, its elaborate interior capped by a 365-foot dome. The accessible crypt (included with admission) is a world of historic bones and memorials,



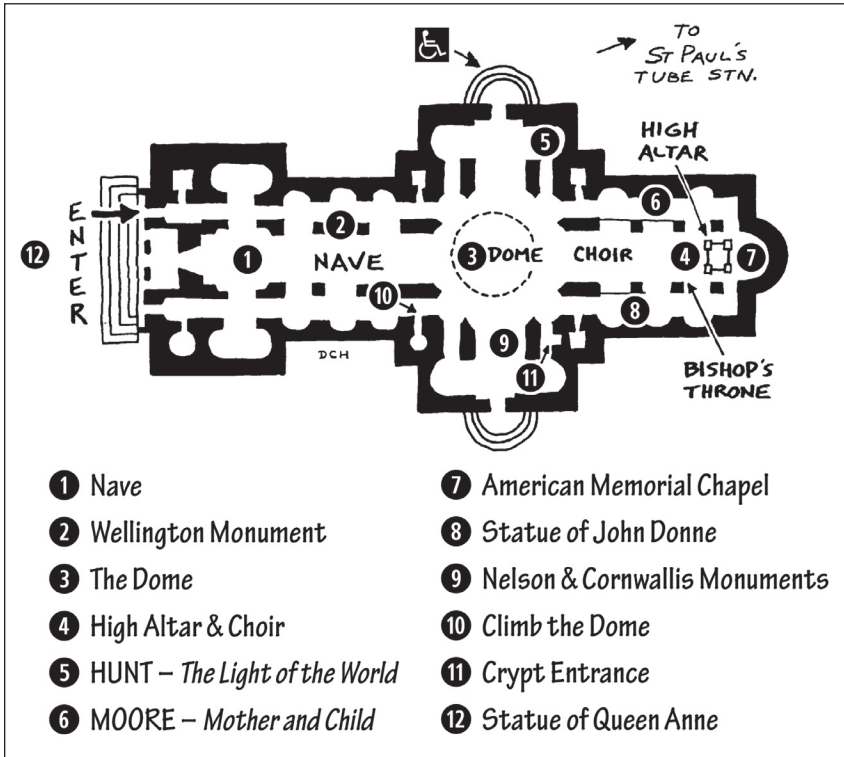
including Admiral Nelson's tomb and interesting cathedral models. The great West Door is opened only for great occasions, such as the wedding of Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana in 1981. Go to the back of the church and imagine how Diana felt before making the hike to the altar with the world watching. Sit under the second-largest dome in the world and eavesdrop on guided tours.

Since World War II, St. Paul's has been Britain's symbol of resistance. Despite 57 nights of bombing, the Nazis failed to destroy the cathedral, thanks to the St. Paul's volunteer fire watch, who stayed on the dome. Non-disabled travelers can climb the dome for a great city view and some fun in the Whispering Gallery—where the precisely designed barrel of the dome lets sweet nothings circle audibly around to the opposite side.

**Access:** Everything except the dome and American Memorial Chapel is AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. The temporary accessible entrance is to the left of the main entrance, halfway down the



## St. Paul's



length of the cathedral. This entrance is scheduled to move back to the south side of the cathedral in spring 2007. The main floor and crypt (both fully accessible) can be reached by lift. Follow signs to the accessible toilet. The dome and Whispering Gallery (Level 4—Not Accessible) can be reached only by climbing many flights of stairs.

**Cost, Hours, Information:** £9, includes church entry and dome climb, Mon–Sat 8:30–16:30, last entry 16:00, last dome entry 16:15, closed Sun except for worship. No photography is allowed. Ninety-minute “Super Tours” of the cathedral and crypt cost £3 (Mon–Sat at 11:00, 11:30, 13:30, and 14:00—confirm schedule at church or call tel. 020/7246-8350 Mon–Fri 9:00–17:00 or 020/7236-4128 for recorded info; £3.50 for 1-hour audioguide which covers 17 stops, available Mon–Sat 9:00–15:30). There’s a cheery café in the crypt of the cathedral (Tube: St. Paul’s, tel. 020/7236-4128, [www.stpauls.co.uk](http://www.stpauls.co.uk)).

**Services:** Sunday services are at 8:00, 10:15, 11:30 (sung Eucharist), 15:15 (evensong), and 18:00, with a **free organ recital** at 17:00. The **even-song** services are free, but nonpaying visitors are not allowed to linger

afterward (Mon–Sat at 17:00, Sun at 15:15, 40 min).

**▲Museum of London**—London, a 2,000-year-old city, is so littered with Roman ruins that when a London builder finds Roman antiquities, he doesn't stop work. He simply documents the finds, moves the artifacts to a museum, and builds on. If you're asking, "Why did the Romans build their cities underground?", a trip to the creative and entertaining London Museum is a must. Explore London history from pre-Roman times through the 1920s. This regular stop for the local schoolkids gives the best overview of London history in town.

**Access:** AE+A, AI, AT, AL, Level 2—Moderately Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, Mon–Sat 10:00–18:00, Sun 12:00–18:00, Tube: Barbican or St. Paul's, tel. 0870-444-3852.

**▲▲▲Tower of London**—The Tower has served as a castle in wartime, a king's residence in peacetime, and, most notoriously, as the prison



and execution site of rebels. Beefeaters lead witty tours of the premises (though much of the complex is not accessible—described below). Attractions also include the executioner's block that dispensed with troublesome heirs to the throne and a couple of Henry VIII's wives. The crown jewels, dating from the Restoration, are the best on Earth—and come

with hour-long lines for most of the day. To avoid the crowds, arrive when the Tower opens and go straight for the jewels, then (if you are able) do the Beefeater tour and White Tower later. If you want to go later in the day, the jewels are less crowded from about 16:30.

**Access:** AE, AT, AL, Level 3—Minimally Accessible. The Tower of London is a mixed bag for accessibility. The entry and toilet are fully accessible, as are the crown jewels. But beyond that, many steps make further access challenging. For more accessibility details, call 0870-751-5191.



**Cost, Hours, Information:** £14.50, or £8.75 for a person with a disability (companion enters free), family-£42, March–Oct Tue–Sat 9:00–18:00, Sun–Mon 10:00–18:00; Nov–Feb Tue–Sat 9:00–17:00, Sun–Mon 10:00–17:00; last entry 60 min before closing. No photography is allowed of the jewels or in chapels. Tube: Tower Hill, tel. 0870-751-5177, recorded info tel. 0870-756-6060, booking tel. 0870-756-7070.

**Crowd-Beating Tips:** The long but fast-moving ticket line is worst on Sunday. You can avoid the line entirely by picking up your ticket at any London TI or the Tower Hill Tube station ticket office.

**Ceremony of the Keys:** Every night at precisely 21:30, with pagentry-filled ceremony, the Tower of London is locked up (as it has been for the last 700 years). To attend this free 30-minute event, you need to request an invitation at least two months before your visit. Write to Ceremony of the Keys, H.M. Tower of London, London EC3N 4AB. Include your name; the addresses, names, and ages of all people attending (up to 6 people, nontransferable, no kids under 8 allowed); requested date; alternative dates; and two international reply coupons (buy at U.S. post office—if your post office doesn't have the \$1.75 coupons in stock, they can order them; the turnaround time is a few days).

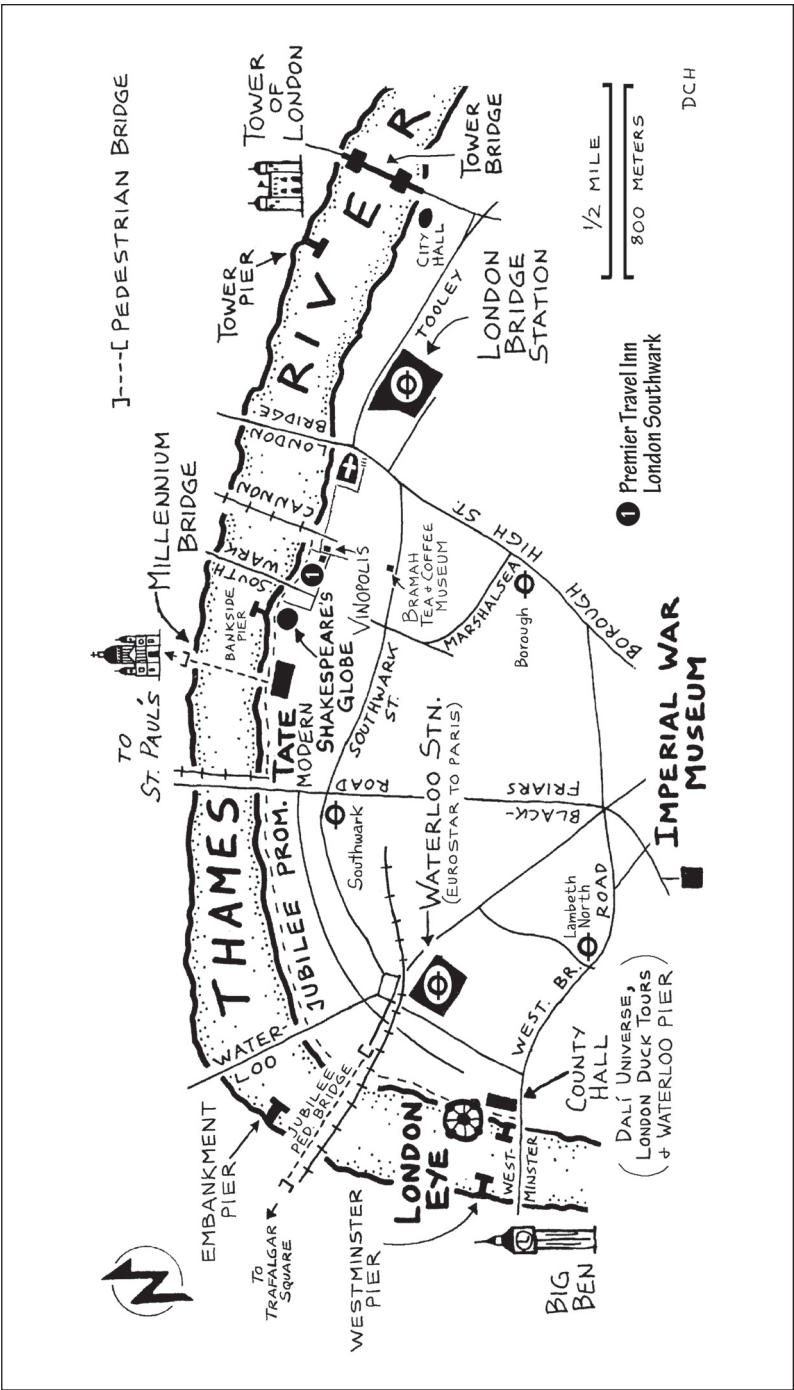
## South London, on the South Bank

The long, cool, smooth, fully accessible riverside path along the South Bank is a thriving arts and cultural center. This popular, pub-crawling people zone—called the Jubilee Promenade—stretches from Tower Bridge past Westminster Bridge, where it offers grand views of the Houses of Parliament. (The promenade hugs the river except just east of London Bridge, where it cuts inland for a couple of blocks.)

**City Hall**—Opened in 2002, the glassy, egg-shaped building near the south end of Tower Bridge is London's City Hall, designed by Lord Norman Foster, the architect who worked on London's Millennium Bridge and Berlin's Reichstag. An interior spiral ramp allows visitors to watch and hear the action below in the Assembly Chamber; ride the lift to the second floor (the highest visitors can go) and spiral down. The Visitors Centre on the lower ground floor has a handy cafeteria. A top-floor observation deck known as "London's Living Room" is open for tours, usually on Monday morning (phone-in reservation required), and on occasional weekends 10:00–16:30.



The South Bank



**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, Visitors Centre open Mon–Fri 8:00–20:00, closed Sat–Sun, between the London Bridge and Tower Hill Tube stations. The Hall occasionally opens up for public tours—call or check Web site to confirm tour times and opening hours, tel. 020/7983-4100, [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk).

▲▲▲**London Eye Ferris Wheel**—Built by British Airways, the wheel towers above London opposite Big Ben. This is the world's highest observational wheel, giving you a chance to fly British Airways without leaving London. Designed like a giant bicycle wheel, it's a pan-European undertaking: British steel and Dutch engineering, with Czech, German, French, and Italian mechanical parts. It's also very "green," running extremely efficiently and virtually silently. Twenty-five people ride in each of its 32 air-conditioned capsules for the 30-minute rotation (each capsule has a bench, but most people stand). From the top of this 450-foot-high wheel—the highest public viewpoint in the city—Big Ben looks small. You go around only once; save a shot on top for the glass capsule next to yours. Its original five-year lease has been extended to 25 years, and it looks like this will become a permanent fixture on the London skyline. Thames boats come and go from here using the Waterloo Pier at the foot of the wheel (fully accessible dock area and ramp—see page \*TK).



**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. People with limited mobility can call 0870-990-8885 to reserve a free "Fast Track" service that allows them to skip the line.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £12.50, £2 discount for a wheelchair user and free ticket for a companion if you book in advance by calling 0870-990-8885. April–mid-Sept daily 9:30–21:00, until 22:00 in July–Aug, mid-Sept–March 9:30–20:00, often closed Jan for maintenance, Tube: Waterloo or Westminster, [www.ba-londoneye.com](http://www.ba-londoneye.com) (10 percent discount for booking online).

**Crowd-Beating Tips:** Visitors face two lines: one to get your ticket, and the other to board. You can generally just buy your ticket at the wheel (never more than a 30-min wait, worst on weekends and school holidays). If you want to book a ticket (with an assigned time) in advance, call 0870-500-0600 or book online at [www.ba-londoneye.com](http://www.ba-londoneye.com) (and save



10 percent). Upon arrival, you either pick up your pre-booked ticket (if you reserved ahead; use the ATM-type machines to save time—just type in your confirmation number) or wait in the line inside to buy tickets. Then you join the ticket-holders' line at the wheel (starting 10 min before your assigned half-hour time slot).

**Dalí Universe**—Cleverly located next to the hugely popular London Eye Ferris Wheel, this exhibit features 500 works of mind-bending art by Salvador Dalí. While pricey, it's entertaining if you like Surrealism and want to learn about Dalí.

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Wheelchair users should call ahead to let them know you are coming. When you arrive, go to the box office, where you will be assisted.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £9, audioguide-£2.50, daily 10:00–18:30, generally summer evenings until 20:00, last entry 1 hour before closing, Tube: Waterloo or Westminster, tel. 020/7620-2720.

**▲▲Imperial War Museum**—This impressive museum covers the wars of the last century, from heavy weaponry to love notes and Varga Girls, from Monty's Africa campaign tank to Schwarzkopf's Desert Storm uniform. You can trace the development of the machine gun, watch footage of the first tank battles, see one of over a thousand V2 rockets Hitler rained on Britain in 1944 (each with over a ton of explosives), hold your breath through the gruesome WWI trench experience, and buy WWII-era toys in the fun museum shop. The "Secret War" section gives a fascinating peek into the intrigues of espionage in World Wars I and II. The section on the Holocaust is one of the best on the subject anywhere. Rather than glorify war, the museum does its best to shine a light on the powerful human side of one of mankind's most persistent traits.

The museum is housed in what was the Royal Bethlam Hospital. Also known as "the Bedlam asylum," the place was so wild it gave the world a new word for chaos: "bedlam." Back in Victorian times, locals—without trash-talk shows and cable TV—came here for their entertainment. The asylum was actually open to the paying public on weekends.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, daily 10:00–18:00, 2 hours is enough time for most visitors, Tube: Lambeth North or bus #12 from Westminster, tel. 020/7416-5000, [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk).

**▲▲▲Tate Modern**—Dedicated in the spring of 2000, this striking museum across the river from St. Paul's opened the new century with art from the old one. Its powerhouse collection of Monet, Matisse, Dalí, Picasso, Warhol, and much more is displayed in a converted powerhouse.



Each year, the main hall features a different monumental installation by a prominent artist.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, fee for special exhibitions, Sun–Thu 10:00–18:00, Fri–Sat 10:00–22:00, Fri–Sat evenings a good time to visit, audioguide–£2, multimedia handheld device–£3.50, call to confirm schedule, view café on top floor; cross the Millennium Bridge from St. Paul’s, or Tube: Southwark plus a half-mile roll or stroll; or connect by fully accessible Tate Boat ferry from Tate Britain for £4—see specifics on page \*TK; tel. 020/7887-8008, [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk).

**▲Millennium Bridge**—This pedestrian bridge—London’s first new bridge in a century—links St. Paul’s Cathedral and the Tate Modern



across the Thames. When it first opened, the \$25 million bridge wiggled when people walked on it, so it promptly closed for a \$7 million stabilization; now it’s stable and open again (free). Nicknamed “a blade of light” for its sleek minimalist design—370 yards long, four yards wide, stainless steel with teak

planks—it includes clever aerodynamic handrails to deflect wind over the heads of pedestrians.

**Access:** AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**▲▲Shakespeare’s Globe**—The original Globe Theater has been rebuilt, half-timbered and thatched, as it was in Shakespeare’s time. (This is the first thatched roof in London since they were outlawed after the Great Fire of 1666.) The Globe originally accommodated 2,000 seated and another 1,000 standing. (Today, slightly smaller and leaving space for reasonable aisles, the theater holds 900 seated guests and 600 groundlings.) Its promoters brag that the theater melds “the three A’s”—actors, audience, and architecture—with each contributing to the play. Open as a museum and a working theater, it hosts authentic old-time performances of Shakespeare’s plays. The Globe’s exhibition on Shakespeare is the world’s largest, with interactive displays and film presentations, a sound lab, a script factory, and costumes. The theater can



be toured when there are no plays going on—it's worth planning ahead for these excellent tours. For details on seeing a play, see page \*TK. The Globe Café is open daily (10:00–18:00, tel. 020/7902-1433).

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible. You can download an “Access Guide” at [www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org). For specific accessibility questions, call the Access Information Line at 020/7902-1409.

**Cost, Hours, Information:** £9 includes exhibition and actor-led guided tour; mid-May–Sept exhibition open daily 9:00–18:00, tours go on the half-hour from 9:30, generally until 12:30, until 11:30 on Sun, 17:30 on Mon; Oct–mid-May exhibition open daily 10:00–17:00 with 30-min tours on the half-hour as above. It's on the South Bank directly across the Thames over Southwark Bridge from St. Paul's (Tube: London Bridge, plus a roll or stroll). Info: tel. 020/7902-1500, [www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org).

**Bramah Tea and Coffee Museum**—Aficionados of tea or coffee will find this small museum fascinating. It tells the story of each drink almost passionately. The owner, Mr. Bramah, comes from a big tea family and wants the world to know how the advent of commercial television, with breaks not long enough to brew a proper pot of tea, required a faster hot drink. In came the horrible English instant coffee. Tea countered with finely chopped leaves in tea bags, and it's all gone downhill ever since. The museum café, which serves more kinds of coffees and teas than cakes, is open to the public (same hours as museum).

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £4, daily 10:00–18:00, 40 Southwark Street, Tube: London Bridge plus a quarter-mile roll or stroll. Info: tel. 020/7403-5650, [www.bramahmuseum.co.uk](http://www.bramahmuseum.co.uk). The #RV1 bus zips you to the museum easily and scenically from Covent Garden.

**▲▲Vinopolis: City of Wine**—While it seems illogical to have a huge wine museum in London, Vinopolis makes a good case. Built over a Roman wine store and filling the massive vaults of an old wine warehouse, the museum offers an excellent audioguide with a light yet earnest history of wine. Sipping various reds and whites, ports, and champagnes—immersed in your audioguide as you explore—you learn about the libation from its



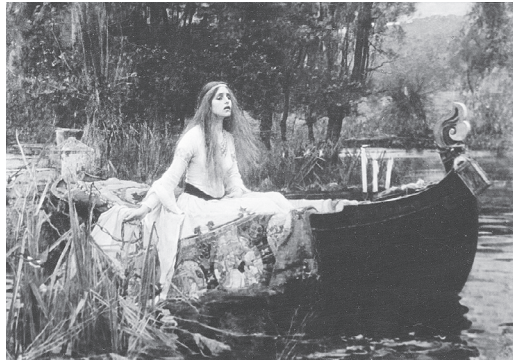
Georgian origins to Chile, including a Vespa ride through Chianti country in Tuscany. Allow some time, as the included audioguide takes 90 minutes—and the sipping can slow things down wonderfully.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible. This place is wheelchair-friendly, all on one level, fun, and hospitable.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £12.50 with 5 tastes, only £11 Tue–Thu; don't worry...for £3, you can buy 5 more tastes inside; £15 gets you a premium service with a couple of especially fine wines and a tasting lesson, daily 12:00–18:00, Mon and Fri–Sat until 21:00, last entry 2 hrs before closing, between the Globe and Southwark Cathedral at 1 Bank End, Tube: London Bridge, tel. 0870-241-4040 or 020/7940-8322, [www.vinopolis.co.uk](http://www.vinopolis.co.uk).

## South London, on the North Bank

▲▲**Tate Britain**—One of Europe's great art houses, Tate Britain specializes in British painting from the 16th century through modern times. The museum has a good representation of William Blake's religious sketches, the Pre-Raphaelites' realistic art, and J. M. W. Turner's swirling works.

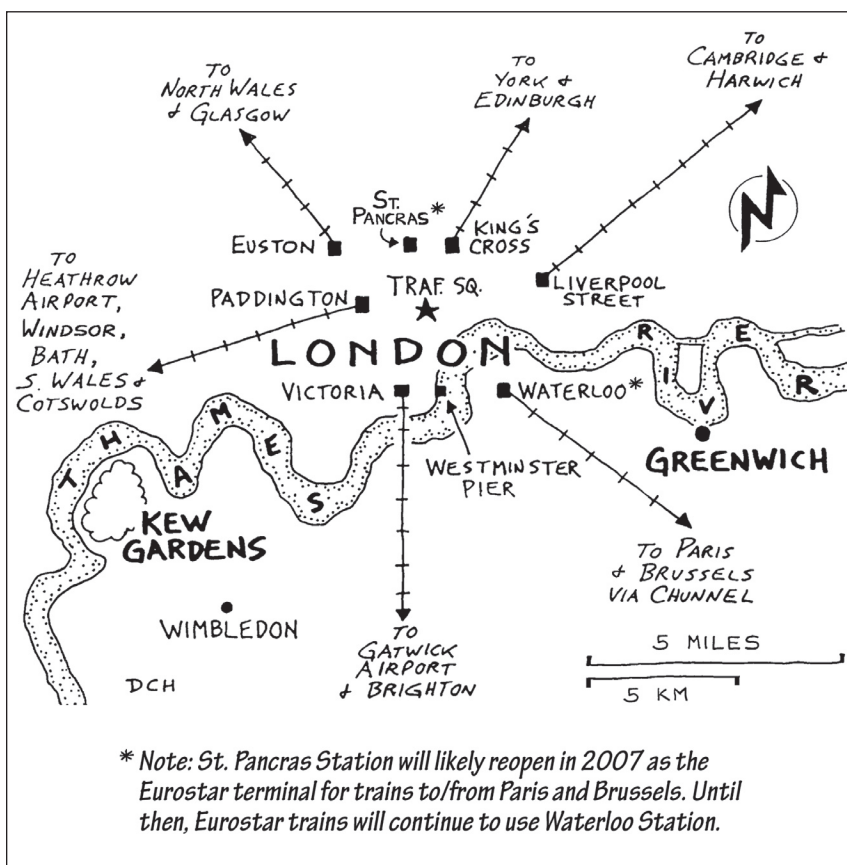


**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible, but there is a limit of six wheelchairs at one time.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** Free, £2 donation requested, daily 10:00–17:50, last entry at 17:00.

**Tours and Information:** The museum offers a fine, free, and necessary audioguide, plus free tours (normally Mon–Fri at 11:00—16th, 17th, and 18th centuries; at noon—19th century; at 14:00—Turner; at 15:00—20th century; Sat–Sun at noon and 15:00—highlights; call to confirm schedule, tel. 020/7887-8000, recorded info tel. 020/7887-8008, [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)). No photography is allowed. Tube: Pimlico, then a quarter-mile roll or stroll; or arrive directly at museum by taking bus #88 from Oxford Circus or #77A from National Gallery, or more fun, the fully accessible £4 Tate Boat ferry from Tate Modern—see specifics on page \*TK.

## Greater London



## Greater London

**▲Kew Gardens**—For a fine riverside park and a palatial greenhouse jungle to swing through, take the Tube or the boat to every botanist's favorite escape, Kew Gardens. While for most visitors, the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew are simply a delightful opportunity to wander among 33,000 different types of plants, to the hardworking organization that runs the gardens, it's a way to promote understanding and preservation of the botanical diversity of our planet. The Kew Tube station drops you in a little herbal business community two blocks from Victoria Gate (the main garden entrance). Pick up a map brochure and check at



the gate for a monthly listing of best blooms.

Garden-lovers could spend days exploring Kew's 300 acres. For a quick visit, spend a fragrant hour wandering through three buildings: the Palm House, a humid Victorian world of iron, glass, and tropical plants built in 1844; a Waterlily House that Monet would swim for; and the Princess of Wales Conservatory, a modern greenhouse with many different climate zones growing countless cacti, bug-munching carnivorous plants, and more.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Imagine peaceful, flat, gorgeous, and green (with only occasional areas of inaccessibility). For the most part, you can roll wherever you please—and there are accessible toilets, too. Loaner wheelchairs are available.

**Cost, Hours, Location:** £8.50, £6 at 15:00 or later, Mon–Fri 9:30–18:30, Sat–Sun 9:30–19:30, until 16:30 or sunset off-season, galleries and conservatories close at 17:30, a £3.50 narrated floral 35-minute joyride on an accessible little train departs on the hour until 16:00 from Victoria Gate, Tube: Kew Gardens, boats run between Kew Gardens and Westminster Pier—see page \*TK, tel. 020/8332-5000, [www.rbgekew.org.uk](http://www.rbgekew.org.uk). For a sun-dappled lunch, roll or stroll from the Palm House to the fully accessible Orangery (£6 hot meals, daily 10:00–17:30).

## Disappointments of London

On the South Bank, the London Dungeon, a much visited but amateurish attraction, is just a highly advertised, overpriced haunted house—certainly not worth the £20 admission, much less your valuable London time. It comes with long and rude lines. Wait for Halloween and see one in your hometown to support a better cause. “Winston Churchill’s Britain at War Experience” (next to the London Dungeon) also wastes your time and money (especially considering the wonderful new Churchill Museum in the Cabinet War Rooms; see page \*TK). The Jack the Ripper walking tours (by any of several companies) are big sellers, but don’t offer much. Anything actually related to the notorious serial killer was torn down a century ago, and all that’s left are a few small sights and lots of bloody stories.

## SHOPPING

**Marks & Spencer**—No one in London is doing a better job with confronting accessibility issues than Marks & Spencer shops and department stores, even sponsoring an annual contest where major hotels compete for accessible designs. Their stores are sprinkled throughout London,



and each one has an accessible food and wine section for gathering your picnic goodies (main store in South Kensington, store finder at [www.marksandspencer.com/stores](http://www.marksandspencer.com/stores)).

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

**Harrods**—Harrods is London's most famous and touristy department store. With a million square feet of retail space on seven floors, it's a place where some shoppers could spend all day. (To me, it's a department store.) Big yet classy, Harrods has everything from elephants to toothbrushes.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible. All floors are accessible by elevator, and the toilets are easily accessible.

**Hours and Location:** Mon–Sat 10:00–19:00, closed Sun, mandatory storage for big backpacks—£2.50, on Brompton Road, Tube: Knightsbridge, tel. 020/7730-1234, [www.harrods.com](http://www.harrods.com).

🗝 **Self-Guided Tour:** Sightseers should pick up the free *Store Guide* at any info post. Here's what I enjoyed: On the Ground and Lower Ground Floors, find the Food Halls, with their Edwardian tiled walls, creative and exuberant displays, and staff in period costumes—not quite like your local supermarket back home.

Descend to the Lower Ground Floor and follow signs to the Egyptian Escalator—lined with pharaoh-headed sconces, papyrus-plant lamps, and hieroglyphic balconies (Harrods' owner is from Egypt). Here you'll find a memorial to Dodi Fayed and Princess Diana. The huge (and slightly creepy) bronze statue was commissioned by Dodi Fayed's father, Mohamed al Fayed, who owns Harrods. Photos and flowers honor the late Princess and her lover, who both died in a car crash in Paris in 1997. See the wineglass still dirty from their last dinner, and the engagement ring that Dodi purchased the day before they died.



Ascend to the Fourth Floor, and go to the far corner of the store (toys) to find child-sized luxury cars that actually work. A junior Jaguar or Mercedes will set you back about \$13,000. The child's Hummer (\$30,000) is as big as my car.

Also on the Fourth Floor is the fully accessible Georgian Restaurant. Enjoy a fancy tea under a skylight as a pianist tickles the keys of a Bösendorfer, the world's most expensive piano (tea—£19, includes finger sandwiches and pastries, served after 15:45).



Many of my readers report that Harrods is overpriced, snooty, and teeming with American and Japanese tourists. Still, it's the palace of department stores. The nearby Beauchamp Place is lined with classy and fascinating shops.

**Harvey Nichols**—Once Princess Diana's favorite, "Harvey Nick's" remains the department store du jour. Want to pick up a little £20 scarf for the wife? You won't do it here, where they're more like £200. The store's fifth floor is a veritable food fest, with a gourmet grocery store, a fancy (but smoky) restaurant, a Yo! Sushi bar, and a lively café. Consider a take-away tray of sushi to eat in the Hyde Park rose garden two blocks away.

**Access:** AE, AI, AT+A, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible, including all of the eateries.

**Hours and Location:** Mon–Tue and Sat 10:00–19:00, Wed–Fri until 20:00, Sun 12:00–18:00, near Harrods, Tube: Knightsbridge, 109 Knightsbridge, [www.harveynichols.com](http://www.harveynichols.com).

**Toys**—The biggest toy store in Britain is **Hamleys**, with seven floors buzzing with 28,000 toys, managed by a staff of 200. At the "Bear Factory," kids can get a made-to-order teddy bear by picking out a "bear skin," and watch while it's stuffed and sewn.

**Access:** AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible. The accessible toilet is on the fourth floor.

**Hours and Location:** Mon–Sat 9:00–20:00, Thu until 21:00, Sun 12:00–18:00, 188 Regent Street, tel. 0870-333-2455, [www.hamleys.com](http://www.hamleys.com).

**Carnaby Street**—This pedestrian mall has big, flat cobblestones and no break between the sidewalk and street area. Most stores have a flat entry (or 1 step of less than 6"), and all corners have curb cuts. It's a short distance from here to Regent Street, where the sidewalks are wide and interesting shops abound.

**Street Markets**—Antique buffs, people-watchers, and folks who brake for garage sales love to haggle at London's street markets. While some nooks and crannies may be difficult for wheelchair users to reach, the markets generally have decent accessibility. There's good early-morning market activity somewhere any day of the week. The best are **Portobello Road** (Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 8:00–18:30, closes at 13:00 on Thu, closed Sun, Tube: Notting Hill Gate, near recommended B&Bs, tel. 020/7229-8354) and **Camden Lock Market** (daily 10:00–18:00, Tube: Camden Town, tel. 020/7284-2084, [www.camdenlock.net](http://www.camdenlock.net)). The TI has a complete, up-to-date list. Warning: Markets attract two kinds of people—tourists and pickpockets.

## ENTERTAINMENT

### Theater (a.k.a. "Theatre")

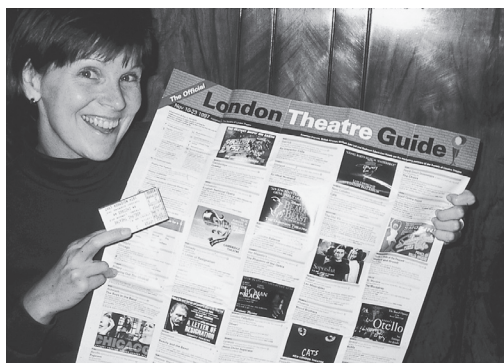
London's theater rivals Broadway's in quality and beats it in price. Choose from Shakespeare, musicals, comedies, thrillers, sex farces, cutting-edge fringe shows, revivals starring movie celebs, and more. London does it all well. I prefer big, glitzy—even bombastic—musicals over serious chamber dramas, simply because London can deliver the lights, sound, dancers, and multimedia spectacle I rarely get back home.

Most theaters, marked on tourist maps, are found in the West End between Piccadilly and Covent Garden. The majority of big venues are accessible and wheelchair-friendly (you'll find accessibility details for the most popular venues in the "What's On in the West End" sidebar on page \*TK); you can also find accessibility information for specific theaters online at [www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk) or [www.theatremonkey.com](http://www.theatremonkey.com).

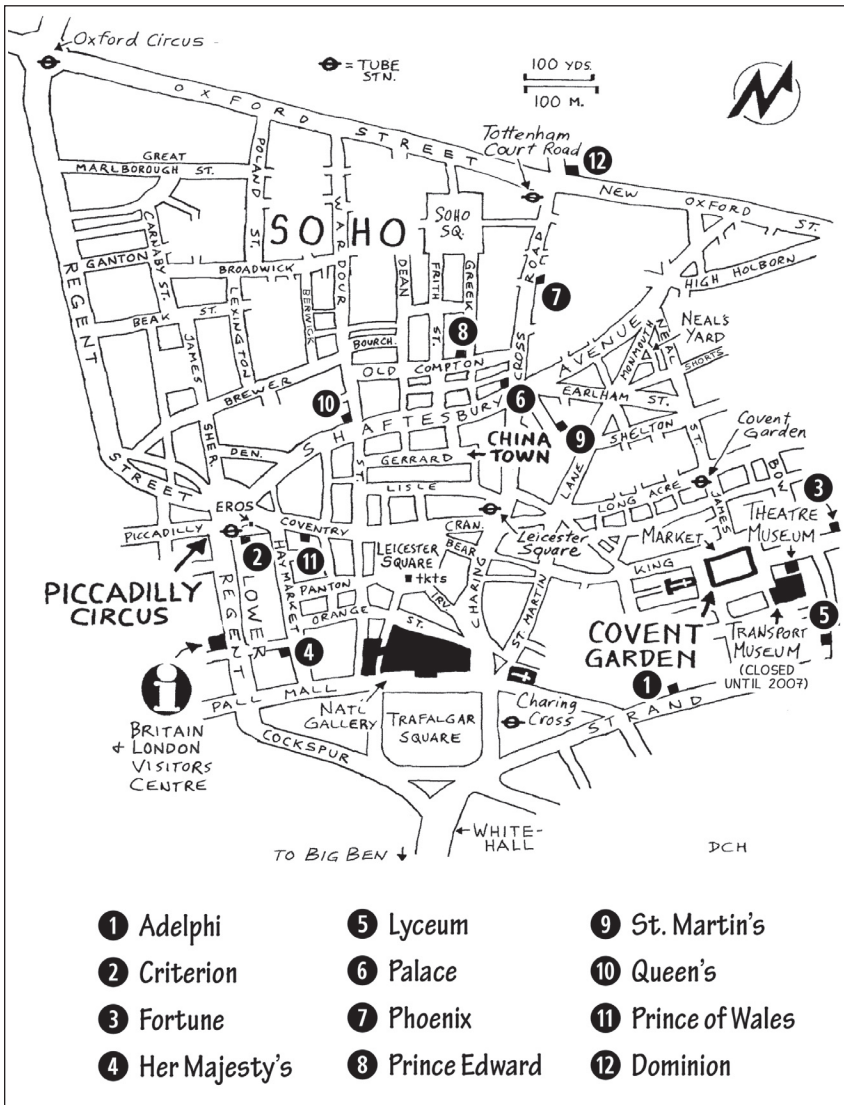
Box offices, hotels, and TIs offer a handy, free *Theatre Guide* (also at [www.londontheatre.co.uk](http://www.londontheatre.co.uk)). Performances are nightly except Sunday, usually with one or two matinees a week (Shakespeare's Globe is the rare theater that does offer performances on Sunday, mid-May–Sept). Tickets range from about £8 to £40. Matinees are generally cheaper and rarely sell out.

To book a ticket, simply call the theater box office directly, ask about prices and available dates, and purchase with your credit card. You can call from the U.S. as easily as from England (check [www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk), the American magazine *Variety*, or photocopy your hometown library's London newspaper theater section). Arrive about 30 minutes before the show starts to pick up your ticket and avoid lines.

For a booking fee, you can reserve online ([www.ticketmaster.co.uk](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk) or [www.firstcalltickets.com](http://www.firstcalltickets.com)) or call Keith Prowse Ticketing, formerly Global Tickets (U.S. tel. 800-223-6108). While booking through an agency is quick and easy, prices are inflated by a standard 25 percent fee. Ticket agencies (whether in the United States, at London's TIs, or scattered throughout the city) are scalpers with an address. If you're



## London's Major Theaters



buying from an agency, look at the ticket carefully (your price should be no more than 30 percent over the printed face value; the 17.5 percent VAT is already included in the face value) and understand where you're sitting according to the floor plan (if your view is restricted, it will state this on the ticket; for floor plans of the various theaters, see [www.theatremonkey.com](http://www.theatremonkey.com)). Agencies are worthwhile only if a show you've just got to see is sold out at the box office. They scarf up hot tickets, planning

### What's On in the West End

Here are some of the perennial favorites that you're likely to find among the West End's evening offerings. If spending the time and money for a London play, I like a full-fledged, high-energy musical.

Generally, you can book tickets for free at the box office or for a £2 fee by telephone or online. Wheelchair users and their companions are often eligible for discounts; ask when you buy your ticket.

#### Musicals

**Chicago**—A chorus girl gone bad forms a nightclub act with another murderess to bring in the bucks (**AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; £15–42.50, Mon–Thu and Sat 20:00, Fri 20:30, matinees Fri 17:00 and Sat 15:00, Adelphi Theatre, Strand, Tube: Covent Garden or Charing Cross, booking tel. 020/7344-0055, [www.chicagothemusical.com](http://www.chicagothemusical.com)).

**Mamma Mia!**—This high-energy spandex-and-platform-boots musical weaves together 20 or 30 ABBA hits to tell the story of a bride in search of her real dad as her promiscuous mom plans her Greek Isle wedding. The production has the audience dancing by its happy ending (**AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; £25–49, Mon–Thu and Sat 19:30, Fri 20:30, matinees Fri 17:00 and Sat 15:00, Prince of Wales Theatre, Coventry Street, Tube: Piccadilly Circus, booking tel. 0870-850-0393).

**Les Misérables**—Claude-Michel Schönberg's musical adaptation of Victor Hugo's epic follows the life of Jean Valjean as he struggles with the social and political realities of 19th-century France. This inspiring mega-hit takes you back to the days of France's struggle for a just and modern society (**AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; £10–45, Mon–Sat 19:30, matinees Wed and Sat 14:30, Queen's Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, Tube: Piccadilly Circus, box office tel. 020/7494-5040, [www.lesmis.com](http://www.lesmis.com)).

**Phantom of the Opera**—A mysterious masked man falls in love with a singer in this haunting Andrew Lloyd Webber musical about life beneath the stage of the Paris Opera (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately

to make a killing after the show is sold out. U.S. booking agencies get their tickets from another agency, adding even more to your expense by involving yet another middleman. Many tickets sold on the street are forgeries. Although some theaters have booking agencies handle their advance sales, you'll stand a good chance of saving money and avoiding the middleman by simply calling the box office directly to book your tickets (international phone calls are cheap, and credit cards make booking a snap).

Accessible; £15–45, Mon–Sat 19:30, matinees Tue and Sat 14:30, Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, Tube: Piccadilly Circus, booking tel. 0870-890-1106, [www.thephantomoftheopera.com](http://www.thephantomoftheopera.com)).

**The Lion King**—In this Disney extravaganza featuring music by Elton John, Simba the lion learns about the delicately balanced circle of life on the savanna (**AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; £17.50–40, Tue–Sat 19:30, matinees Wed and Sat 14:00 and Sun 15:00, Lyceum Theatre, Wellington Street, Tube: Charing Cross or Covent Garden, booking tel. 0870-243-9000 or 020/7344-4444, theater info tel. 020/7420-8112, [www.thelionking.co.uk](http://www.thelionking.co.uk)).

**We Will Rock You**—Whether or not you're a fan of Queen, this musical tribute—more to the band than to Freddie Mercury—is an understandably popular celebration of their work (**AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; £23.50–55, Mon–Fri at 19:30, matinees Wed and Sat at 14:30, Dominion Theatre, Tottenham Court Road, Tube: Tottenham Court Road, Ticketmaster tel. 0870-169-0116, [www.queenonline.com/wewillrockyou](http://www.queenonline.com/wewillrockyou)).

### Thrillers

**The Mousetrap**—Agatha Christie's whodunit about a murder in a country house continues to stump audiences after 50 years (**AE, AI+A, AT**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; £11.50–30, Mon–Sat 20:00, matinees Tue 14:45 and Sat 17:00, St. Martin's Theatre, West Street, Tube: Leicester Square, box office tel. 0870-162-8787).

**The Woman in Black**—The chilling tale of a solicitor who is haunted by what he learns when he closes a reclusive woman's affairs (Level 3—Minimally Accessible; £12.50–32.50, Mon–Sat 20:00, matinees Tue 15:00 and Sat 16:00, Fortune Theatre, Russell Street, Tube: Covent Garden, box office tel. 020/7369-1737, [www.thewomaninblack.com](http://www.thewomaninblack.com)).

**Theater Lingo:** Stalls (ground floor), dress circle (first balcony), upper circle (second balcony), balcony (sky-high third balcony), slips (cheap seats on the fringes). Many cheap seats have a restricted view (behind a pillar).

**Cheap Theater Tricks:** Most theaters offer cheap returned tickets, standing-room, matinee, and senior or student standby deals. These “concessions” are indicated with a “conc” or “s” in the listings. Picking up a late return can get you a great seat at a cheap-seat price. If a show is

“sold out,” there’s usually a way to get a seat. Call the theater box office and ask how.

Many theaters are so small that there’s hardly a bad seat. After the lights go down, scooting up is less than a capital offense. Shakespeare did it.

**Half-Price “tkts” Booth:** This famous but minimally accessible (steps and no ramp) ticket booth at **Leicester Square** sells discounted tickets for top-price seats to shows on the push list the day of the show only (£2.50 service charge per ticket, Mon–Sat 10:00–19:00, Sun 12:00–15:30, matinee tickets from noon, lines often form early, list of shows available online, [www.tkts.co.uk](http://www.tkts.co.uk)). Most tickets are half-price; other shows are discounted 25 percent.

Here are some sample prices: A top-notch seat to *Chicago* costs £40 bought directly from the theater, but only £22.50 at Leicester (LESS-ter) Square. The cheapest balcony seat (bought from the theater) is £15. Half-price tickets can be a good deal, unless you want the cheapest seats or the hottest shows. But check the board; occasionally they sell cheap tickets to good shows. For example, a first-class seat to the long-running *Les Misérables* (which rarely sells out) costs £45 when bought from the theater ticket office, but you’ll save 25 percent and pay £36.50 at the tkts booth. Note that the real half-price booth (marked *tkts*) is a freestanding kiosk at the edge of the garden in Leicester Square. Several dishonest outfits nearby advertise “official half-price tickets”; avoid these.

**West End Theaters:** The commercial (non-subsidized) theaters cluster around Soho (especially along Shaftesbury Avenue) and Covent Garden. With a centuries-old tradition of pleasing the masses, these present London theater at its glitziest. See the “What’s On in the West End” sidebar.

**Royal Shakespeare Company:** If you’ll ever enjoy Shakespeare, it’ll be in Britain. The RSC performs at various theaters around London and in Stratford year-round. To get a schedule and accessibility information for each venue, contact the RSC (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, tel. 01789/403-444, [www.rsc.org.uk](http://www.rsc.org.uk)).

**Shakespeare’s Globe:** To see Shakespeare in a replica of the theater for which he wrote his plays, attend a play at the Globe. This round, thatch-roofed, open-air theater performs the plays much as Shakespeare intended (with no amplification). The play’s the thing from mid-May through September (usually Tue–Sat 14:00 and 19:30, Sun at either 13:00 and 18:30 or 16:00 only, Mon at 19:30, tickets can be sold out months in advance). You’ll pay £13–29 for a seat (usually on a backless bench; only a few rows and the pricier Gentlemen’s Rooms have seats with backs; £2



cushions are considered a good investment by many). Or pay £5 to stand (or sit in your wheelchair) in the “groundling” pit; these tickets—while the only ones open to rain—are most fun. Scurry in early to stake out a spot on the stage’s edge leaning rail, where the most interaction with the actors occurs. You’re a crude peasant. You can lean your elbows on the stage, munch a picnic dinner, or wander around. I’ve never enjoyed Shakespeare as much as here, performed as it was meant to be in the “wooden O.” Plays can be long. Many groundlings leave before the end. If you like, hang out an hour before the finish and beg or buy a ticket from someone leaving early (groundlings are allowed to come and go).

**Access:** AE, AI, AT, AL, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible. Wheelchair users have two options at Shakespeare’s Globe: fancy “Gentlemen’s Rooms” seating for a discounted £20 (same discount for companion, book in advance), or in special elevated groundling pit spaces (though the view of the stage may still be partially obstructed). The staff will gladly assist if necessary. The theater runs a Disabled Access Information line (tel. 020/7902-1409), and you can download an “Access Guide” from their Web site ([www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org)).

**Information and Contact:** For information on plays or £9 tours (see page \*TK), contact the theater at tel. 020/7902-1500 (or see [www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org)). To reserve tickets for plays, call or drop by the box office (Mon–Sat 10:00–18:00, until 20:00 on day of show, at Shakespeare’s Globe at New Globe Walk entrance, tel. 020/7401-9919). If you reserve online ([www.wayahead.com/shakespeares-globe](http://www.wayahead.com/shakespeares-globe)), be warned: Your ticket price will have an added booking fee.

The theater is on the South Bank, directly across the Thames over the Millennium Bridge from St. Paul’s Cathedral (Tube: Mansion House or London Bridge). The Globe is inconvenient for public transport, but during theater season, there’s a regular supply of black cabs outside the main foyer on New Globe Walk.

**Fringe Theatre:** London’s rougher evening entertainment scene is thriving, filling pages in *Time Out*. Choose from a wide range of fringe theater and comedy acts (generally £5).

## Classical Music

For easy, cheap, or free concerts in historic churches, check the TIs’ listings for **lunch concerts**, especially:

- **Wren’s St. Bride’s Church**, with free lunch concerts Mon–Fri at 13:15 (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, no accessible toilet; church tel. 020/7427-0133, [www.stbrides.com](http://www.stbrides.com)).

- **St. James at Piccadilly**, with concerts on Mon, Wed, and Fri at 13:10 (**AE, AI+A, AT+A**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, 2 ramps lead from Piccadilly to the church, then a few steps inside; suggested donation—£3, info tel. 020/7381-0441, [www.st-james-piccadilly.org](http://www.st-james-piccadilly.org)).
- **St. Martin-in-the-Fields**, offering free concerts on Mon, Tue, and Fri at 13:00 (**AE, AI, ♥**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; concerts are accessible but toilet and box office are not, so call ahead for tickets, box office tel. 020/7839-8362, church tel. 020/7766-1100, [www.smitf.com](http://www.smitf.com)).

St. Martin-in-the-Fields also hosts fine **evening concerts** by candlelight (see accessibility information above; £8–18, Thu–Sat at 19:30, sometimes also on Tue or Wed, box office tel. 020/7839-8362).

At St. Paul's Cathedral (**AE, AI, AL, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible, except for dome), **evensong** is held Monday through Saturday at 17:00 and on Sunday at 15:15. At Westminster Abbey (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, loaner wheelchairs), it's sung weekdays at 17:00 (but not on Wed) and Saturday and Sunday at 15:00. Free **organ recitals** are held on Sunday at Westminster Abbey (17:45, 30 min, tel. 020/7222-7110) and at St. Paul's (17:00, 30 min, tel. 020/7236-4128).

For a fun **classical event** (mid-July–early Sept), attend a “Prom Concert” (shortened from “Promenade Concert”) during the annual festival at the Royal Albert Hall (**AE, AI, AL, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible, loaner wheelchairs). Nightly concerts are offered at give-a-peasant-some-culture prices to “Promenaders”—those willing to stand throughout the performance (£4 standing-room spots sold at the door, £7 restricted-view seats, most £22 but depends on performance, Tube: South Kensington, tel. 020/7589-8212, [www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com)).

Some of the world's best **opera** is belted out at the prestigious Royal Opera House, near Covent Garden (**AE, AI, AT, AL**, Level 1—Fully Accessible, call ahead to reserve wheelchair space, use accessible Bow Street entrance; box office tel. 020/7304-4000, [www.royalopera.org](http://www.royalopera.org)), and at the less-formal Sadler's Wells Theatre (**AE, AI, AT, AL**, Level 1—Fully Accessible, call ahead to reserve wheelchair space; Rosebery Avenue, Islington, Tube: Angel, info tel. 020/7863-8198, box office tel. 0870-737-7737, [www.sadlerswells.com](http://www.sadlerswells.com)).

## SLEEPING

London is expensive. Cheaper rooms are relatively dumpy. Don't expect £90 cheeriness in a £60 room. For £70 (\$125), you'll get a double with breakfast in a safe, cramped, and dreary place with minimal service and

### Sleep Code

**(£1 = about \$1.80, country code: 44, area code: 020)**

**Sleep Code:** **S** = Single, **D** = Double/Twin, **T** = Triple, **Q** = Quad, **b** = bathroom, **s** = shower only. Unless otherwise noted, credit cards are accepted, and prices include a generous breakfast and all taxes.

difficult accessibility. For £90 (\$160), you'll get a basic, clean, reasonably cheery double in a usually cramped, cracked-plaster building with a private bath, or a soulless but comfortable room without breakfast in a huge, mostly accessible Motel 6-type place. My London splurges, at £100–150 (\$180–270), are spacious, thoughtfully appointed, and fully accessible. Competition softens prices, especially for multi-night stays. Hearty English or generous buffet breakfasts are included unless otherwise

noted, and TVs are standard in rooms.

Reserve your London room with a phone call or e-mail as soon as you can commit to a date. To call a London hotel from the United States or Canada, dial 011-44-20 (London's area code without the initial zero), then the local eight-digit number. Some hotels will hold a room until 16:00 without a deposit, although most places will ask you for a credit-



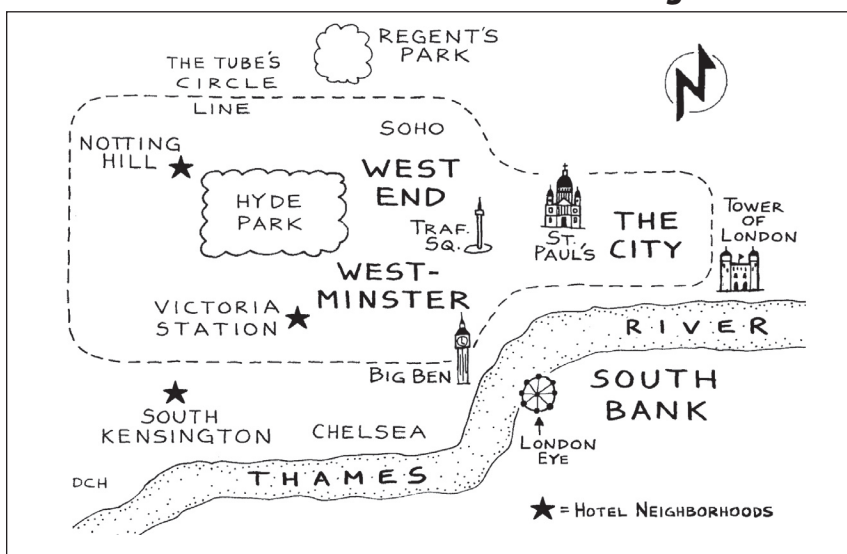
card number. The pricier ones have expensive cancellation policies (such as no refund if you cancel with less than 2 weeks' notice). Some fancy £120 rooms rent for a third off if you arrive late on a slow day and ask for a deal.

For more options, check out *Access in London*, with information on accessible accommodations, pubs, and toilets in London (£10, by Gordon Couch, William Forrester, and Justin Irwin; [www.accessproject-phsp.org](http://www.accessproject-phsp.org)).

### Big, Cheap, Modern Hotels

These places—popular with budget tour groups—are well-run and offer elevators and all the modern comforts in a no-frills, practical package. Though not quaint, these hotels offer the best (and cheapest) accessibility in London. Some of the more forward-thinking hotel chains (such as

## London's Hotel Neighborhoods



Ibis, Travel Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Comfort Inn, Thistle, and Forte Travelodge) have made it corporate policy to provide adapted facilities for persons with limited mobility.

With the notable exception of the Premier Travel Inn London County Hall, the following listings are often located on busy streets in dreary train-station neighborhoods, so use common sense after dark and wear your money belt. The doubles for £75–100 are a great value for London. Mid-week prices are generally higher than weekend rates. Online bookings are often the easiest way to make reservations, and will get you a discount if you're staying at a Jurys or a Travelodge.

### Level 1—Fully Accessible

**Premier Travel Inn London County Hall (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB),** literally down the hall from a \$400-a-night Marriott Hotel, fills one end of London's massive former County Hall building. This place is wonderfully located near the base of the London Eye Ferris Wheel and across the Thames from Big Ben. Its 300 slick rooms come with all the necessary comforts (Db-£87–90 for 2 adults and up to 2 kids under age 15, couples can request a bigger family room—same price, breakfast extra, book in advance, no-show rooms are released at 15:00, elevator, non-smoking rooms, 500 yards from Westminster Tube stop and Waterloo Station, Belvedere Road, you can call central reservations at 0870-242-8000 or 0870-238-3300, you can fax 020/7902-1619 but you might not

get a response, it's easiest to book online at [www.premiertravelinn.com](http://www.premiertravelinn.com)). There is a special accessible entrance and lift at the rear of the hotel, and there are 16 specially adapted rooms for travelers who use wheelchairs.

**Other Premier Travel Inns:** These other locations in London are less central, but have at least one room per hotel that is fully adapted (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB; figure £75–85 per room, breakfast extra): **Premier Travel Inn King's Cross** (276 large rooms, 14 of which are accessible; non-smoking rooms, 24-hour reception, elevator, just east of King's Cross station at 26–30 York Way, tel. 0870-990-6414, fax 0870-990-6415); **London Euston** (big, blue, Lego-type building on handy but noisy street and packed with families on vacation, 141 Euston Road, Tube: Euston, tel. 0870-238-3301); **London Kensington** (11 Knaresboro Place, Tube: Earl's Court or Gloucester Road, tel. 0870-238-3304); and **London Putney Bridge** (farther out, 3 Putney Bridge Approach, Tube: Putney Bridge, tel. 0870-238-3302). Avoid the **Tower Bridge** location, which is an inconvenient half-mile roll or stroll from the nearest Tube stop. For any of these, call 0870-242-8000, fax 0870-241-9000, or best, book online at [www.premiertravelinn.com](http://www.premiertravelinn.com).

**Jurys Inn Islington** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) rents 200 compact, comfy rooms near King's Cross station (Db/Tb-£100, some discounted rooms available online, 2 adults and 2 kids—under age 12—can share 1 room, breakfast extra, non-smoking floors, 60 Pentonville Road, Tube: Angel, tel. 020/7282-5500, fax 020/7282-5511, [www.jurysdoyle.com](http://www.jurysdoyle.com)). Built less than 10 years ago, this hotel has 20 fully adapted rooms. The main entrance is also fully accessible.

**Hotel Ibis London Euston** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), which feels a bit classier than a Premier Travel Inn, is located on a quiet street a block behind and west of Euston Station (380 rooms, Db-£70–80, breakfast extra, no family rooms, non-smoking floor, 3 Cardington Street, tel. 020/7388-7777, fax 020/7388-0001, [www.ibishotel.com](http://www.ibishotel.com), [h0921@accor-hotels.com](mailto:h0921@accor-hotels.com)). The hotel has eight accessible rooms (4 twins and 4 doubles). The main entrance on Cardington Street is fully accessible.

**Travelodge London Islington** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is another typical chain hotel with lots of cookie-cutter rooms, two of which are accessible and on the ground floor (Db-£60–80, some £26 rooms available online only for scattered dates, breakfast extra, family rooms, non-smoking rooms, just south of King's Cross Station at 100 King's Cross Road, tel. 0870-191-1773, fax 020/7833-8261, [www.travelodge.co.uk](http://www.travelodge.co.uk)). Other Travelodge London locations are at **King's Cross**, **Covent Garden**, **Liverpool Street**, and **Farringdon**. For all the details on each, see [www.travelodge.co.uk](http://www.travelodge.co.uk).

**Thistle Hotels:** This chain operates elegant hotels in London with wonderful amenities for travelers who use wheelchairs (**AE, AI, AL, AR, AB**). The beautifully located **Thistle Royal Horseguards** in Westminster has an accessible restaurant and two adapted rooms that include roll-in showers—call ahead to reserve (Db-£184, much cheaper off-season, 2 Whitehall Court, Tube: Westminster, tel. 0870-333-9122, [www.thistlehotels.com](http://www.thistlehotels.com)). **Thistle Charing Cross** combines Old World elegance with reasonable prices (and 2 fully adapted rooms—book ahead) in a great location connected to Charing Cross Station (Db-£163, much cheaper off-season, on the Strand, Tube: Charing Cross, tel. 0870-333-9105, [www.thistlehotels.com](http://www.thistlehotels.com)).

## Level 2—Moderately Accessible

**Premier Travel Inn London Southwark** (**AE, AI, AL, AR, AB+A, ♥**), with 55 rooms, is near Shakespeare's Globe on the South Bank (Db for up to 2 adults and 2 kids-£83-85, Bankside, 34 Park Street, tel. 0870-990-6402, [www.premiertravelinn.com](http://www.premiertravelinn.com)). This surprising little gem offers good accessibility except for the bathrooms, which are suitable, but not adapted.

## Victoria Station Neighborhood (Belgravia)

The streets behind Victoria Station teem with budget B&Bs. It's a safe, surprisingly tidy, and decent area without a hint of the trashy, touristy glitz of the streets in front of the station. West of the tracks is Belgravia, where the prices are a bit higher and your neighbors include Andrew Lloyd Webber and Margaret Thatcher (her policeman stands outside 73 Chester Square). East of the tracks is Pimlico—cheaper and just as handy, but the rooms can be a bit dowdier. Decent eateries abound (see “Eating,” page \*TK).

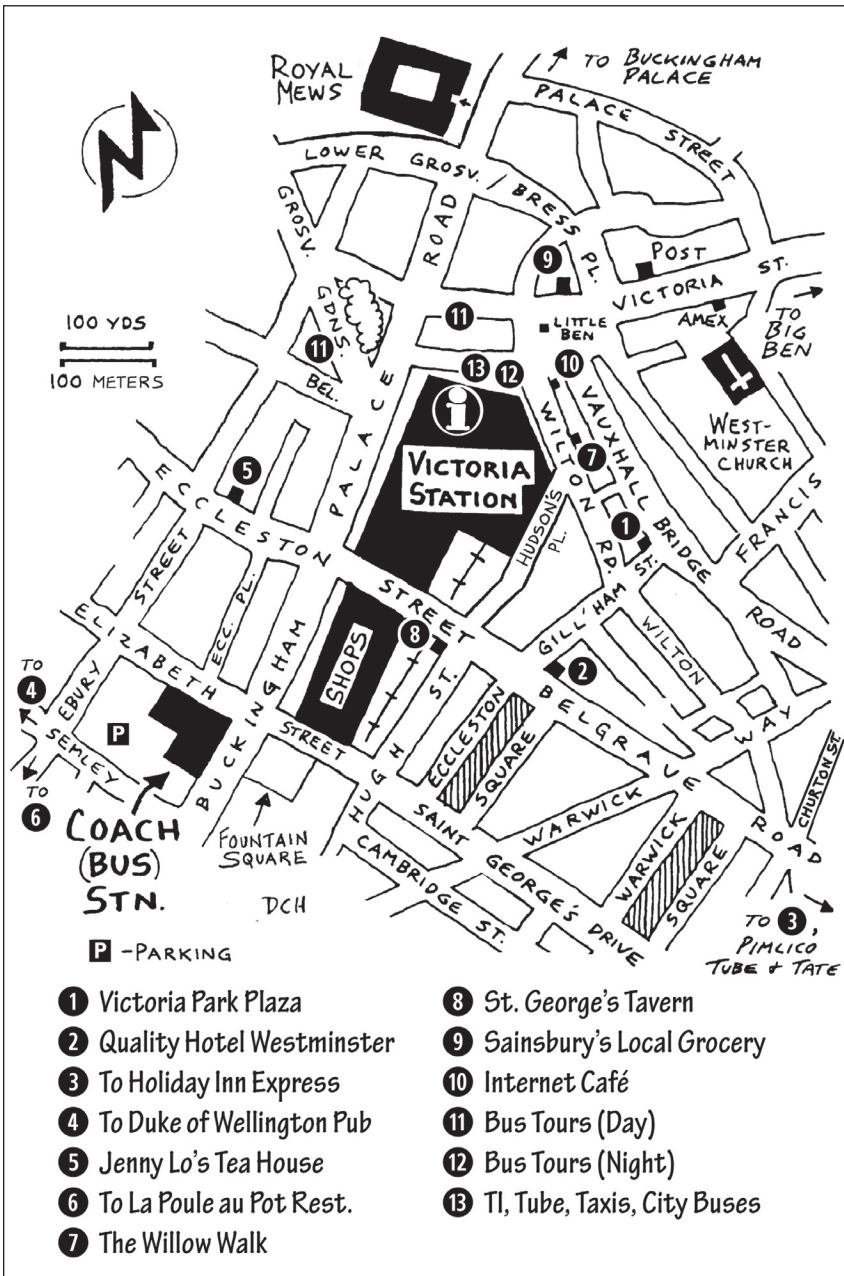
All the recommended hotels are near the Victoria Tube, bus, and train stations. On hot summer nights, request a quiet back room. Near the station are two places to get online that are accessible (**AE, AI**) but lack accessible toilets (though you can use the one inside the station): **Access Internet** (9-13 Wilton Road, tel. 020/7976-5943) and **Victoria Village Webspot Café** (across from Victoria Station at 164 Victoria Street, tel. 020/7168-8841).

## Level 1—Fully Accessible

**Victoria Park Plaza** (**AE, AI, AL, AR, AB**) is ideally situated 50 yards from Victoria Station. While on the higher side for room expense (call and check for “bargain rates”), the hotel is excellent for wheelchair users



## Victoria Station Neighborhood



who need fully adapted rooms (Sb-£119, Db-£200, apartments available, elevator, 239 Vauxhall Bridge Road, tel. 020/7769-9999, fax 020/7769-9820, [www.victoriaparkplaza.com](http://www.victoriaparkplaza.com), [vppres@parkplazahotels.co.uk](mailto:vppres@parkplazahotels.co.uk)).

**Quality Hotel Westminster (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB)** is big, modern (but with tired carpets), well-located, and a good bet for no-nonsense “chain” comfort (Db-£145, accessible room costs £90 when reserved ahead, check for various Web specials, drop-ins can ask for “saver prices” on slow days, breakfast extra or bargained in, non-smoking floor, elevator, 82 Eccleston Square, tel. 020/7834-8042, fax 020/7630-8942, [www.hotels-westminster.com](http://www.hotels-westminster.com), [winchesterhotel17@hotmail.com](mailto:winchesterhotel17@hotmail.com)). A new lift on the front steps has greatly improved access.

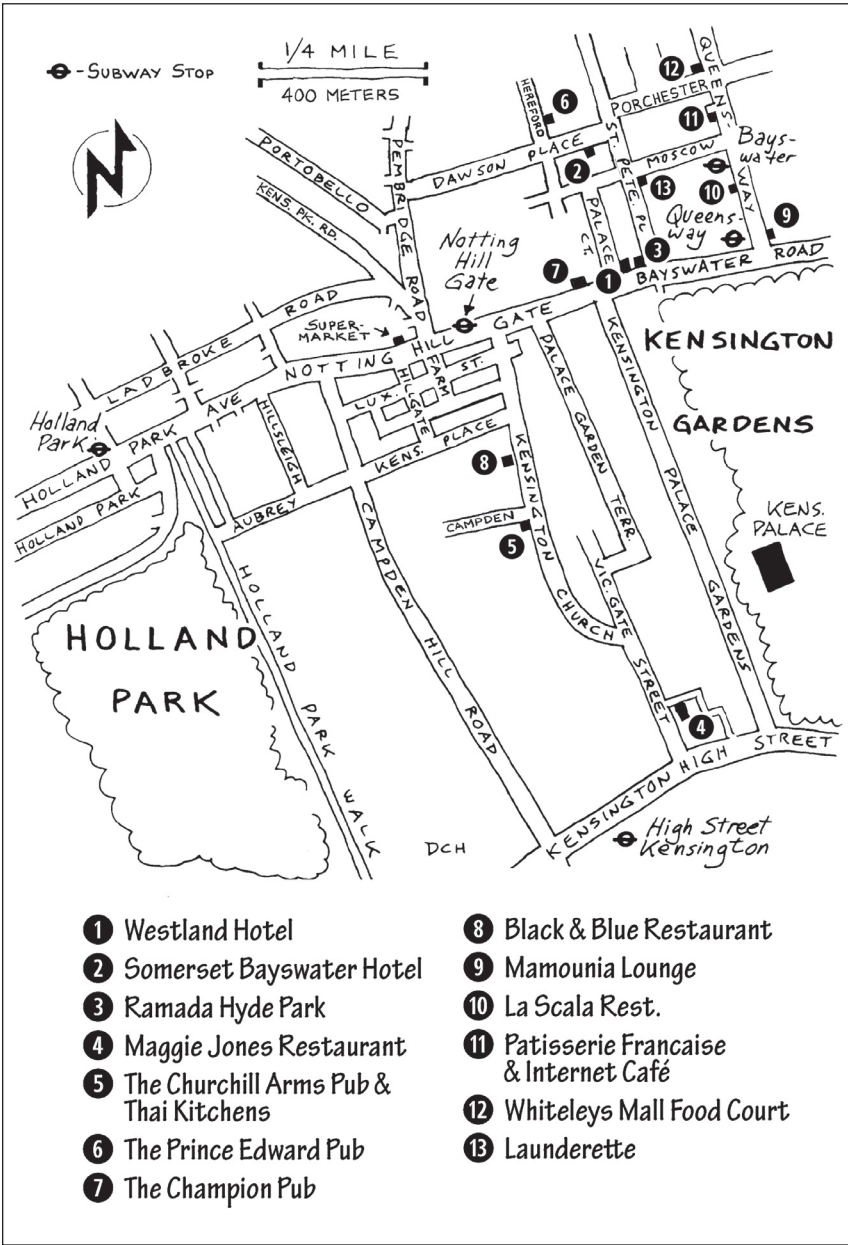
**Holiday Inn Express Belgravia (AE, AI, AR, AB)** fills an old building with 52 fresh, modern, and efficient rooms (rack rate: Db-£114, actual price often £80—especially Sun or if booked online; family rooms, up to 2 kids free, non-smoking floor, elevator, Tube: Pimlico, 106 Belgrave Road, tel. 020/7630-8888, fax 020/7828-0441, [www.hiexpressvictoria.co.uk](http://www.hiexpressvictoria.co.uk), [info@hiexpressvictoria.co.uk](mailto:info@hiexpressvictoria.co.uk)). The hotel has only one fully adapted room (with a roll-in shower)—call ahead to reserve it. The entry ramp for wheelchair users is to the right side of the main door, and the staff will assist in your arrival. For those who enjoy and trust the Holiday Inn Express chain, note that all of the Express hotels have at least one wheelchair-accessible room (in London, call 0800-434-040 for reservations).

## Notting Hill Neighborhood

Residential Notting Hill has quick bus and Tube access to downtown, and, for London, is very “homely.” It’s also peppered with trendy bars and restaurants, and is home to the historic Coronet movie theater, as well as the famous Portobello Road Market (see “Shopping,” page \*TK).

Popular with young international travelers, Bayswater’s Queensway Street is a multicultural festival of commerce and eateries (see “Eating,” page \*TK). The neighborhood does its dirty clothes at **Galaxy Launderette (AE, AI+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 2” entry step and tight interior; £4 self-serve, £8 full-serve, daily 8:00–20:00, corner of St. Petersburg Place and Moscow Road at 65 Moscow Road, tel. 020/7229-7771)**. For Internet, **En Crypt (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible)** has 70 terminals with reasonable prices in the back of a newsstand (123 Queensway Street, tel. 020/7727-6122).

# Notting Hill Neighborhood



### Level 1—Fully Accessible

**Somerset Bayswater Hotel** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is elegantly modern, with five fully adapted rooms, a special lift for wheelchair users, and an adapted toilet in the lobby (Db-£75–125, 42 Prince's Square, Tube: Bayswater, tel. 020/7985-1188, fax 020/7985-1189). The parent company, Citadines, runs apartment hotels all over Europe with fully accessible rooms ([www.citadines.com](http://www.citadines.com)).

**Ramada Hyde Park** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is a tidy, efficient American-style hotel with 80 rooms, of which five are fully accessible (roll-in showers). It's conveniently located across from the beautiful Kensington Gardens (Db-£178, much cheaper off-season, £10 more for breakfast, 150 Bayswater Road, Tube: Bayswater, tel. 020/7229-1212, fax 020/7229-2623, [www.ramadajarvis.co.uk](http://www.ramadajarvis.co.uk)). Ramada hotels are located all over the U.K., and all have fully accessible rooms.

### Level 2—Moderately Accessible

**Westland Hotel** (AE+A, AI, AL, AR, AB+A) is comfortable, convenient, and hotelesque, with a fine lounge and spacious rooms. Rooms are recently refurbished and quite plush. Their £105 doubles (less your 10 percent discount—see below) are the best value (Sb-£88–99, Db-£105, deluxe Db-£121, cavernous deluxe Db-£138, sprawling Tb-£132–154, gargantuan Qb-£150–175, Quint/b-£165–187, 10 percent discount with this book if claimed upon arrival; elevator, free garage with 6 spaces; between Notting Hill Gate and Queensway Tube stations; 154 Bayswater Road, tel. 020/7229-9191, fax 020/7727-1054, [www.westlandhotel.co.uk](http://www.westlandhotel.co.uk), [reservations@westlandhotel.co.uk](mailto:reservations@westlandhotel.co.uk)). They can cover the three 6" steps with a removable ramp. Past wheelchair users have stayed on the ground floor, where there is one suitable room. Call ahead to alert the staff of your needs.

## Other Neighborhoods

### Level 1—Fully Accessible

**In South Kensington: Jurys Kensington Hotel** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is big, stately, and impersonal, with a greedy pricing scheme—but it offers decent accessibility (Sb/Db/Tb-£100–220 depending on “availability,” ask for a deal, breakfast extra, piano lounge, non-smoking floor, elevator, Queen's Gate, tel. 020/7589-6300, fax 020/7581-1492, [www.jurysdoyle.com](http://www.jurysdoyle.com), [kensington@jurysdoyle.com](mailto:kensington@jurysdoyle.com)). Some travelers have reported having difficulty with the access here, as many accessibility features have been retrofitted.

**Near London Zoo and Regent's Park: Swiss Cottage Holiday Inn Express** (AE, AI, AT, AB, AR, ♥) is a contemporary hotel built in 2004. Four of its 230 rooms are fully adapted, including roll-in showers, pull cords, and adapted toilets and sinks (Db-£89.50, cheaper with 14-day advance booking, 152–156 Finchley Road, directly across from Finchley Road Tube station, 10 minutes by bus or train to central London, tel. 020/7433-6666, fax 020/7433-6667, [www.expressbyholidayinnsc.com](http://www.expressbyholidayinnsc.com), [reservations@expressbyholidayinnsc.com](mailto:reservations@expressbyholidayinnsc.com)).

**Near Gatwick Airport: London Gatwick Airport Premier Travel Inn** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), at the airport, rents cheap rooms, eight of which are accessible (Db-£58, £2.50 accessible shuttle bus from airport, tel. 0870-238-3305, [www.premiertravelinn.com](http://www.premiertravelinn.com)). **Gatwick Travelodge** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), two miles from the airport, has budget rooms, five of which are accessible (Db-£50, £3 accessible shuttle from airport, breakfast extra, Church Road, Lowfield Heath, Crawley, tel. 0870-191-1531, [www.travelodge.co.uk](http://www.travelodge.co.uk)). **Thistle London Gatwick** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), once a Tudor coaching inn, is within easy reach of the Surrey and Sussex countryside, yet convenient to Gatwick Airport (Db-£117, much cheaper off-season, Brighton Road, Tube: Gatwick, tel. 0870-333-9134, [www.thistlehotels.com](http://www.thistlehotels.com)).

**Near Heathrow Airport:** It's so easy to get to Heathrow from central London, I see no reason to sleep there. But for budget beds near the airport, consider **Heathrow Ibis** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB; Db-£68, Db-£45 on Fri–Sun nights, breakfast extra, £3 shuttle bus to/from terminals except T-4, look for G23 “Hopabus” run by National Express, 112 Bath Road, tel. 020/8759-4888 or 0870-540-0400, fax 020/8564-7894, [www.ibishotel.com](http://www.ibishotel.com), [h0794@accor-hotels.com](mailto:h0794@accor-hotels.com)).

## EATING

If you want to dine (as opposed to eat), check out the extensive listings in the weekly entertainment guides sold at London newsstands (or catch a train to Paris). The thought of a £40 meal in Britain generally ruins my appetite, so my London dining is limited mostly to easygoing, fun, but inexpensive alternatives. I've listed places by neighborhood—handy to your sightseeing or hotel—and provided accessibility information for each place.

**Important:** Unless otherwise noted (by AT or AT+A), these restaurants do *not* have accessible toilets. Even if they're otherwise fully accessible, if they don't have an adapted toilet, I consider them Level 2—Moderately Accessible.



Ethnic restaurants—especially Indian and Chinese—are popular, plentiful, and cheap. Most large museums (and many churches) have inexpensive, cheery cafeterias. Of course, picnicking is the fastest and cheapest way to go. Good grocery stores and sandwich shops, fine park benches, and polite pigeons abound in Britain's most expensive city.

## Tipping

Tipping is an issue only at restaurants and fancy pubs that have waiters and waitresses. If you order your food at a counter, don't tip.

If the menu states that service is included, there's no need to tip beyond that. If service isn't included, tip about 10 percent by rounding up. Leave the tip on the table, or hand it to your server with your payment for the meal and say, "Keep the rest, please."

## Pubs

Pubs are a basic part of the British social scene, and, whether you're a teetotaler or a beer guzzler, they should be a part of your travel here.

"Pub" is short for "public house." It's an extended living room where, if you don't mind the stickiness, you can feel the pulse of London. Smart travelers use the pubs to eat, drink, get out of the rain, watch the latest sporting event, and make new friends.

Pub hours vary. The strict wartime hours (designed to keep the wartime working force sober and productive) ended in 1988, and now pubs generally serve beer Mon–Sat 11:00–23:00 and Sun 12:00–22:30 (though pubs can be open later, particularly on Fri–Sat). As it nears closing time, you'll hear shouts of "Last orders." Then comes the 10-minute warning bell. Finally, they'll call "Time!" to pick up your glass, finished or not, when the pub closes.



Children are served food and soft drinks in pubs, but you must be 18 to order a beer. Smoky pubs are becoming a rarity. Many pubs already prohibit smoking, and there's serious talk of requiring any place serving food (pub or restaurant) to be smoke-free by 2008.

A cup of darts is free for the asking. People go to a public house to be social. They want to talk. Get vocal with a local. This is easiest at the bar, where people assume you're in the mood to talk (rather than at a table,



where you're allowed a bit of privacy). The pub is the next best thing to having relatives in town. Cheers!

## Pub Grub

Pub grub gets better each year. It's London's best eating value. For £6–8, you'll get a basic, budget, hot lunch or dinner in friendly surroundings. The *Good Pub Guide*, published annually by the British Consumers Union, is excellent. Pubs attached to restaurants often have fresher food and a chef who knows how to cook.

Pubs generally serve traditional dishes, like fish and chips, vegetables, “bangers and mash” (sausages and mashed potatoes), roast beef with Yorkshire pudding (batter-baked in the oven), and assorted meat pies, such as steak-and-kidney pie or shepherd's pie (stewed lamb topped with mashed potatoes). Side dishes include salads (sometimes even a nice self-serve salad bar), vegetables, and—invariably—“chips” (French fries). “Crisps” are potato chips. A “jacket potato” (baked potato stuffed with fillings of your choice) can almost be a meal in itself. A “ploughman's lunch” is a modern “traditional English meal” of bread, cheese, and sweet pickles that nearly every tourist tries...once. These days, you'll likely find more Italian pasta, curried dishes, and quiche on the menu than “traditional” fare.

Meals are usually served from 12:00 to 14:00 and from 18:00 to 20:00, not throughout the day. There's usually no table service. Order at the bar, then take a seat and they'll bring the food when it's ready (or sometimes you pick it up at the bar). Pay at the bar (sometimes when you order, sometimes after you eat). Again, don't tip unless it's a place with full table service. Servings are hearty, service is quick, and you'll rarely spend more than £8. A beer or cider adds another couple of pounds. (Free tap water is always available.) Pubs that advertise their food and are crowded with locals are less likely to be the kinds that serve only lousy microwaved snacks. Because pubs make more money selling drinks than food, many stop cooking fairly early.

## Beer

The British take great pride in their beer. Many Brits think that drinking beer cold and carbonated, as Americans do, ruins the taste. Most pubs will have **lagers** (cold, refreshing, American-style beer), **ales** (amber-colored, cellar-temperature beer), **bitters** (hop-flavored ale, perhaps the most typical British beer), and **stouts** (dark and somewhat bitter, like Guinness). At pubs, long-handled pulls are used to pull the traditional, rich-flavored “real ales” up from the cellar. These are the connoisseur's

favorites: fermented naturally, varying from sweet to bitter, often with a hoppy or nutty flavor. Notice the fun names. Short-handled pulls at the bar mean colder, fizzier, mass-produced, and less interesting keg beers. Mild beers are sweeter, with a creamy malt flavoring. Irish cream ale is a smooth, sweet experience. Try the draft cider (sweet or dry)...carefully.

Order your beer at the bar and pay as you go, with no need to tip. An average beer costs £2.50. Part of the experience is standing before a line of “hand pulls,” or taps, and wondering which beer to choose.

Drinks are served by the pint (20-ounce imperial size) or the half-pint. (It's almost feminine for a man to order just a half; I order mine with quiche.) Proper English ladies like a half-beer and half-lemonade **shandy**.

Besides beer, many pubs actually have a good selection of wines by the glass, a fully stocked bar for the gentleman's “G and T” (gin and tonic), and the increasingly popular bottles of alcohol-plus-sugar (such as Bacardi Breezers) for the younger, working-class set. **Pimm's** is a refreshing and fruity summer cocktail, traditionally popular during Wimbledon. It's an upper-class drink...a rough bloke might insult a pub by claiming it sells more Pimm's than beer. Teetotalers can order from a wide variety of soft drinks.



## Near Trafalgar Square

These two places are within about 100 yards of Trafalgar Square (see the map on page \*TK).

**Crivelli's Garden Restaurant** (AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible), serving a classy lunch in the National Gallery, is a good place to treat your palate to pricey, light Mediterranean cuisine (£15 lunches, daily 10:00–17:00, first floor of Sainsbury Wing).

**The Lord Moon of the Mall Pub** (AE+A, AI, AT, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) fills a great old former Barclays Bank building a block down Whitehall from Trafalgar Square. They have real ales on tap and good, cheap pub grub, including a two-meals-for-the-price-

of-one deal (£7.50, offer valid Mon–Fri 14:00–21:30, all day Sat–Sun). The pub is kid-friendly and smoke-free throughout (daily 10:00–23:00, 18 Whitehall, tel. 020/7839-7701). The staff will assist your entry; after that, they promise “no worries.”

## Cheap Eating near Piccadilly

Hungry and broke in the theater district? Head for Panton Street (off Haymarket, 2 blocks southeast of Piccadilly Circus) where several hard-working little places compete.

The palatial **Criterion Brasserie** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) serves a special £15 two-course “Anglo-French” menu (or £18 for 3 courses) under gilded tiles and chandeliers in a dreamy Byzantine church setting from 1880. It’s right on Piccadilly Circus but a world away from the punk junk. The house wine is great and so is the food (specials available Mon–Sat 12:00–14:30 & 17:30–19:00, closed Sun, tel. 020/7930-0488). After 19:00, the menu becomes really expensive. Anyone can drop in for coffee or a drink.

**Strada** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) offers designer pizza and retro Italian at restrained prices (£3–12 plates, £8.95 before-theater fixed-price *menu*, Mon–Sat 12:00–23:00, Sun 12:00–22:00, 39 Panton Street, tel. 020/7930-8535).

**Pizza Express** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) combines modern, glassy bistro atmosphere with a fresh, creative menu and reasonable prices (£4–10 pizzas, Mon–Sat 11:30–24:00, Sun 12:00–34:00, 26 Panton Street, tel. 020/7930-8044).

**Wagamama Noodle Bar** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a noisy, pan-Asian, organic slurpathon. As you enter, check out the kitchen and listen to the roar, as benches rock with happy eaters. Everybody sucks. Feel the energy of all this “positive eating” (£12 meals, daily 12:00–23:00, crowded after 20:00, non-smoking, between Haymarket and Regent at 8 Norris Street). Other fully accessible locations are 14 Irving Street (Tube: Leicester Square), 101-A Wigmore Street (Tube: Bond Street), 1 Tavistock Street (Tube: Covent Garden), just west of the Tower of London (Tube: Tower Hill), 26 Kensington High Street (Tube: High Street Kensington), and opposite Vinopolis at 1 Clink Street (Tube: London Bridge). Other central branches are located in basements with no elevator (and are therefore Level 4—Not Accessible), including 10-A Lexington Street in Soho and 4-A Streatham Street near the British Museum.

## Hip Eating from Covent Garden to Soho

London has a trendy, Generation-X scene that most Beefeater-seekers miss entirely. These restaurants are scattered throughout the hipster, gay, and girlie bar district, teeming each evening with fun-seekers and theater-goers. Even if you plan to have dinner elsewhere, it's a treat to just wander around this lively area. Beware of the extremely welcoming girls that stand outside the strip bars. But if you're curious, head down Great Windmill Street and stop by the door at each of the three bars. Enjoy the sales pitch, but only fools enter—like a fish attracted to a fancy, well-polished lure, you hardly see the hook. Naive guys bite for the “£5 drink and show” and go inside...and then can't get out without emptying their wallets.

**Belgo Centraal** (AE, AI, AL, AT, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible) serves hearty Belgian specialties. It's a seafood, chips, and beer emporium dressed up as a mod-monastic refectory—with noisy acoustics and waiters garbed as Trappist monks. The classy restaurant section is more comfortable and less rowdy, but usually requires reservations. It's often more fun to just grab a spot in the boisterous beer hall, with its tight, communal benches (no reservations accepted). The same menu and specials work on both sides. Belgians claim they eat as well as the French and as heartily as the Germans. Specialties include mussels, great fries, and a stunning array of dark, blond, and fruity Belgian beers. Belgo actually makes Belgian things trendy—a formidable feat (£10–14 meals; open daily until 23:00; Mon–Fri 17:00–18:30 “beat the clock” meal specials for £5–6.30—the time you order is the price you pay—and you get mussels, fries, and beer; no meal-splitting after 18:30, and you must buy food with beer; daily £6 lunch special 12:00–17:00; 2 kids eat free for each parent ordering a regular entrée; 1 block north of Covent Garden Tube station at intersection of Neal and Shelton streets, 50 Earlham Street, tel. 020/7813-2233). People with limited mobility are given priority seating and service.

**Yo! Sushi** (AE, AI, AL, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a futuristic Japanese-food-extravaganza experience. It's not cheap, but it's sure to be memorable, complete with thumping rock music, Japanese cable TV, a 195-foot-long conveyor belt—the world's longest sushi bar—and automated sushi machines. For £1 each, you get unlimited tea or water (from spigot at bar, with or without carbonation). Snag a bar stool and grab dishes as they rattle by (priced by color of dish; check the chart: £1.50–5 per dish, £1.50 for miso soup, daily 12:00–24:00, 2 blocks south of Oxford Street, where Lexington Street becomes Poland Street, 52 Poland Street, tel. 020/7287-0443). If you like Yo!, there are several



locations around town—but most of them are not accessible. There's a branch a block from the London Eye on Belvedere Road, as well as outlets within Selfridges, Harvey Nichols department stores, and Whiteleys Mall on Queensway—see below.

**Soho Spice Indian** (AE, AI, AT, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is where modern Britain meets Indian tradition—fine cuisine in a trendy, jewel-tone ambience. Unlike many Indian restaurants, when you order an entrée here (£10), it comes with side dishes—nan, dal, rice, and vegetables (£7 lunch special, daily 12:00–22:30, non-smoking, 5 blocks north of Piccadilly Circus at 124 Wardour Street, tel. 020/7434-0808). For safety reasons, only one wheelchair user is allowed inside at any given time.

**Y Ming Chinese Restaurant** (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible)—across Shaftesbury Avenue from the ornate gates, clatter, and dim sum of Chinatown—has clean European decor, serious but helpful service, and authentic Northern Chinese cooking (good £10 meal deal offered 12:00–18:00—last order at 18:00, Mon–Sat 12:00–23:30, closed Sun, 35 Greek Street, tel. 020/7734-2721).

**Andrew Edmunds Restaurant** (AE, AI, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, ask for accessible ground-floor table) is a tiny, candlelit place where you'll want to hide your camera and guidebook and act as local as possible. This great little place—with a jealous and loyal clientele—is the closest I've found to Parisian quality in a cozy restaurant in London. The modern European cooking with a creative seasonal menu is worth the splurge (£25 meals, daily 12:30–15:00 & 18:00–22:45, come early or call ahead, 46 Lexington Street in Soho, tel. 020/7437-5708).

**Hummus Bros** (AE, AI, AT+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) serves hummus with fresh, creative toppings from tall copper tureens in a no-nonsense, squeaky-clean setting with communal tables (£1.50–4.50 plates, Mon–Sat 11:00–23:00, closed Sun, 88 Wardour Street, tel. 020/7734-1311).

**The Ship** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a classic pub setting deep in the heart of Soho. Hang out with young locals and enjoy your fish and chips or other pub grub (£5–12 plates, Mon–Sat 12:00–23:00, closed Sun, 116 Wardour Street, tel. 020/7437-8446).

**Polka** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a slick, glassy bistro serving creative nouvelle cuisine with English-Scottish flair (£3–13 dishes, Mon–Sat 12:00–24:00, closed Sun, 58–59 Poland Street, tel. 020/7287-7500).

**Pret a Manger** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a roll-through deli offering fresh, soup, salads, sandwiches, and bakery items.



They also roast their own coffee (indoor and outdoor tables, Mon–Fri 7:30–17:00, closed Sat–Sun, 35 Broadwick Street, tel. 020/7932-5274).

***The Soho “Food is Fun” Three-Course Dinner Crawl:*** For a multicultural, movable feast, consider eating (or splitting) one course and enjoying a drink at each of these places. Start around 18:00 to avoid lines, get in on early specials, and find waiters willing to let you split a meal. Prices, while reasonable by London standards, add up. Servings are large enough to share. All are open nightly. Arrive before 18:00 at **Belgo Centraal** and split the early-bird dinner special: a kilo of mussels, fries, and dark Belgian beer. At **Yo! Sushi**, have beer or sake and a few dishes. Slurp your last course at **Wagamama Noodle Bar** (the most accessible location in this neighborhood is near Piccadilly Circus at 8 Norris Street, described above). Then, for dessert, people-watch at Leicester Square, where the serf’s always up.

## Near Recommended Victoria Station Accommodations

Here are places a couple of blocks southwest of Victoria Station where I’ve enjoyed eating (see map on page \*TK).

**The Duke of Wellington** pub (AE, AI, AT+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is good, if somewhat smoky, and dominated by local drinkers. It’s the neighborhood place for dinner, with woody sidewalk seating and an inviting interior (£6–7 meals, daily specials, Mon–Sat 11:00–15:00 & 18:00–21:00, closed Sun, 63 Eaton Terrace, at intersection with Chester Row, tel. 020/7730-1782). The staff is welcoming and regularly serves local residents who use wheelchairs.

**Jenny Lo’s Tea House** (AE+A, AI, AT, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 3" entry step, large entry door) is a simple, budget place serving up reliably tasty £5–8 eclectic Chinese-style meals to locals in the know. While the menu is small, everything is high quality. Jenny clearly learned from her father, Ken Lo, one of the most famous Cantonese chefs in Britain, whose fancy place is just around the corner (Mon–Fri 11:30–15:00 & 18:00–22:00, Sat 18:00–22:00, closed Sun, cash only, 14 Eccleston Street, tel. 020/7259-0399).

**La Poule au Pot** (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, friendly staff will assist with the 8" entry step), ideal for a romantic splurge, offers a classy, candlelit ambience with well-dressed patrons and expensive but fine country-style French cuisine (£15 lunch, £25 dinners, daily 12:30–14:30 & 18:45–23:00, Sun until 22:00, leafy patio dining, reservations smart, end of Ebury at intersection with Pimlico, 231 Ebury Street, tel. 020/7730-7763).

**The Willow Walk** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) prides itself on prices that are half those of other nearby establishments—not a bad deal, if you're looking for a British Denny's offering a little bit of everything in a modern setting across from Victoria Station (£3-7 meals, daily 9:00–23:00, 25 Wilton Road, tel. 020/7828-2953).

**St. George's Tavern** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a neighborhood hangout right behind Victoria Station, with traditional pub grub in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere (£3–9 plates, Mon–Sat 11:00–23:00, Sun 12:00–22:30, 14 Belgrave Road, tel. 020/7592-9911).

**Food Court:** If you miss America, there's a mall-type, fully accessible **food court** at Victoria Place, upstairs in Victoria Station; **Café Rouge** seems to be the most popular here (£8–11 dinners, daily 9:30–22:30).

**Groceries in and near Victoria Station:** A large and fully accessible grocery, **Sainsbury's Local**, is on Victoria Street in front of the station, just past the buses (daily 6:00–24:00). In the station you'll find another, smaller Sainsbury's (at rear entrance, on Eccleston Street) and a couple other late-hours mini-markets.

## Notting Hill Neighborhood

Queensway Street is a multiethnic food circus, lined with lively and inexpensive eateries. See the map on page \*TK.

**Maggie Jones** (AE+A, AI, AT+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, staff will assist your entry up one 6" step; suitable toilet up 3 small steps), exuberantly rustic and very English, serves my favorite £30 London dinner. You'll get fun-loving if brash service, and solid English cuisine, including huge plates of crunchy vegetables—by candlelight. Avoid the stuffy basement on hot summer nights, and request upstairs seating for the noisy but less cramped section. If you eat well once in London, eat here—and do it quick, before it burns down (daily 12:30–14:30 & 18:30–23:00, less expensive lunch menu, reservations recommended, friendly staff, 6 Old Court Place, just east of Kensington Church Street, near High Street Kensington Tube stop, tel. 020/7937-6462).

**The Churchill Arms** pub and **Thai Kitchens** is a local hangout (both AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, enter on Compden Street rather than at corner), with good beer and old-English ambience in front and hearty £6 Thai plates in an enclosed patio in the back. You can eat the Thai food in this tropical hideaway or in the smoky but wonderfully atmospheric pub section. Arrive by 18:00 to avoid a line. During busy times, diners are limited to an hour at the table (daily 12:00–21:30, 119 Kensington Church Street, tel. 020/7792-1246). Local wheelchair users like this welcoming place.

**The Prince Edward** pub (AE, AI, ♡, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) serves good pub grub in a quintessential pub setting (£8–10 meals, daily 12:00–15:00 & 18:00–22:00, closed Sun evenings, plush-pubby indoor seating or sidewalk tables, 2 blocks north of Bayswater Road at the corner of Dawson Place and Hereford Road, 73 Prince's Square, tel. 020/7727-2221).

**The Champion** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a gay-friendly pub with a tantalizing menu. On Sundays, you can get a traditional English roast dinner here. They also serve afternoon tea with scones and fruit (daily 12:00–23:00, on Bayswater Road at the northwest corner of Kensington Gardens, 1 Wellington Terrace, tel. 020/7243-9531).

**Black and Blue** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a trendy bistro serving steaks and burgers to local hipsters. Follow the crowds to the gas torches and patio seating (£10–12 meals, daily 12:00–23:00, 215 Kensington Church Street, tel. 020/7727-0004).

**Whiteleys Mall Food Court** (AE, AI, AT, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible) offers a fun selection of 10 ethnic and fast-food eateries among Corinthian columns in a delightful mall (open daily long hours; options include Yo! Sushi, good salads at Café Rouge, pizza, Starbucks, an Internet café, and a Marks & Spencer for picnics; second floor, corner of Porchester Gardens and Queensway).

**Mamounia Lounge** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a Middle Eastern tea room with cakes, water pipes, and free wireless Internet access (daily 12:00–23:00, 8 Queensway Street, tel. 020/7221-0202).

**La Scala** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), Mamounia Lounge's sister restaurant, serves English breakfast and light snacks (£3–6) in a casual lingering atmosphere (daily 12:00–11:00, free Wi-Fi, 27 Queensway Street, tel. 020/7221-8045).

**Pâtisserie Francaise** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a charming tearoom with exquisite pastry and light lunch in a refined atmosphere (£2–6 dishes, Mon–Wed 7:00–19:00, Thu 7:00–20:00, Sun 8:00–19:00, closed Fri–Sat, 127 Queensway Street, tel. 07958-416-691).

## South Kensington

Popular eateries line Old Brompton Road and Thurloe Street (Tube: South Kensington). See the map on page \*TK. The fully accessible **Tesco Express** grocery store (AE, AI) is handy for picnics (daily 7:00–24:00, 54 Old Brompton Road).

**The Zetland Arms** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) serves good pub meals with a classic pub ambience on the ground floor and a fancier olde English restaurant atmosphere upstairs (same menu throughout, £6–10 meals, hearty £9 specials, table service, Mon–Fri 12:00–22:00, Sat–Sun 13:00–22:30, 2 Bute Street, tel. 020/7589-3813).

**La Bouchee Bistro Café** (AE+A, AI, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, staff will assist with one-step entry) is a classy, hole-in-the-wall touch of France—candlelit and woody—serving early-bird, two-course £10 meals daily until 19:00 and £15 *plats du jour* all *jour* (daily 12:00–15:00 & 17:30–23:00, 56 Old Brompton Road, tel. 020/7589-1929).

**The Khyber Pass Tandoori Restaurant** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is handy, serving tasty Indian cuisine. Locals in the know travel to eat here (£12 dinners, daily 12:00–14:30 & 18:00–23:30, 21 Bute Street, tel. 020/7589-7311).

**Moti Mahal Indian Restaurant** (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a new favorite for value, offering Khyber Pass some competition. You'll find minimalist-yet-classy, mod ambience and attentive service (daily 12:00–23:00, 3 Glendower Place, tel. 020/7584-8428).

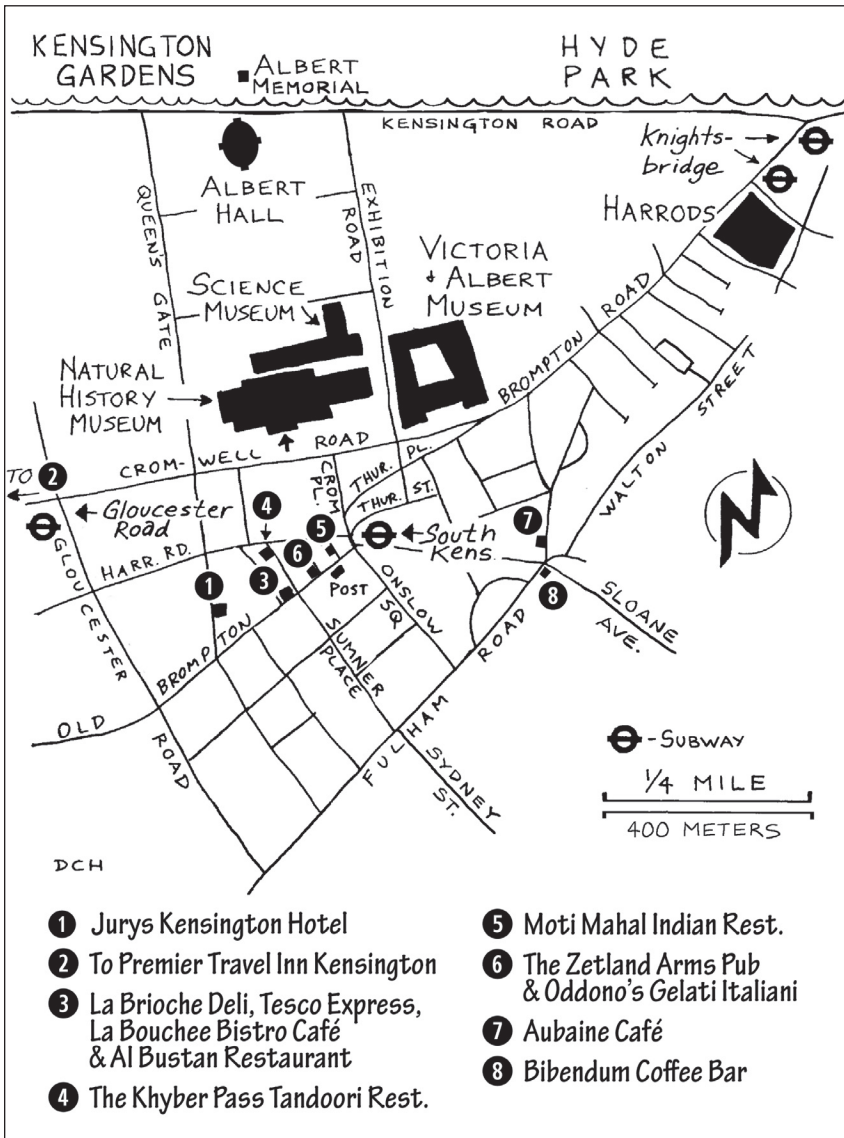
**Oddono's Gelati Italiani** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) has a reputation for serving the best gelato in London. They use all-natural ingredients—the real deal, just like in Italy (Mon–Thu 11:00–23:00, Sat–Sun 11:00–24:00, closed Fri, 14 Bute Street, just around the corner from South Kensington Tube station, tel. 020/7052-0732).

**Aubaine** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) offers a fine French café menu that includes quiches, pastries, salads, and an extensive breakfast menu. Sit inside, or outside on a tree-lined boulevard (£1–9 items, Mon–Sat 8:00–23:00, Sun 9:00–22:00, 260–262 Brompton Road, tel. 020/7052-0100).

**Al Bustan** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a great place for Lebanese tapas, offering reasonably priced ethnic cuisine wrapped in simple elegance (£5–15 dishes, daily 12:00–22:00, 68 Old Brompton Road, tel. 020/7584-5805).

**Bibendum Coffee Bar** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible)—named for the “tire man” Michelin mascot—features an exotic selection of flowers, fresh seafood, sandwiches, and soups, plus a coffee bar. It's housed the ornate Art Deco tiled-and-wrought-iron original Michelin Tyre store (£3–12 items, Mon–Fri 12:00–14:30 & 19:00–23:30, Sat–Sun 12:30–15:00 & 19:00–22:30, coffee bar open Mon–Fri 8:00–17:00, Sat–Sun 9:00–12:00, 81 Fulham Road, tel. 020/7581-5817).

## South Kensington Neighborhood



**La Brioche** (AE+A, AI, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a deli serving made-from-scratch cuisine that will knock your knickers off (£3–8 for a little of this and that, Mon–Sat 9:00–19:00, closed Sun, 40 Old Brompton Road). The staff will come out and help you make your choice or assist you over the entry step, then they'll package your order up for you to take away.

## Elsewhere in London

*Between St. Paul's and the Tower:* **The Counting House** (AE, AI, AL, AT, ♡, Level 1—Fully Accessible), formerly an elegant old bank, offers great £7 meals, nice homemade meat pies, fish, and fresh vegetables (Mon–Fri 12:00–21:00, closed Sat–Sun, gets really busy with the buttoned-down 9-to-5 crowd after 12:15, near Mansion House in The City, 50 Cornhill, tel. 020/7283-7123).

## TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

### Heathrow Airport

Heathrow Airport is the world's fourth busiest. Think about it: 63 million passengers a year on 425,000 flights from 170 destinations riding 90 airlines, like some kind of global maypole dance. While many complain about Heathrow, I think it's a great and user-friendly airport. Read signs, ask questions. Most of the airport is Level 1—Fully Accessible.

For Heathrow's airport, flight, and transfers information, call the switchboard at 0870-000-0123 ([www.baa.com](http://www.baa.com)). It has four terminals: T-1 (mostly domestic flights, with some European), T-2 (mainly European flights), T-3 (mostly flights from the United States), and T-4 (British Air transatlantic flights and BA flights to Paris, Amsterdam, and Athens). Taxis know which terminal you'll need.

Each terminal has an airport information desk, car-rental agencies, exchange bureaus, ATMs, a pharmacy, a **VAT refund desk** (tel. 020/8910-3682; you must present the VAT claim form from the retailer here to get your tax rebate on items purchased in Britain, see page \*TK for details), and a **baggage-check desk** (£6/day, daily 6:00–23:00 at each terminal). Get online 24 hours a day at Heathrow's **Internet cafés** (T-4, mezzanine level) and at wireless "hotspots" in its departure lounges (T-1, T-3, and T-4). There are **post offices** in T-2 and T-4. Each terminal has cheap **eateries** (such as the cheery Food Village self-service cafeteria in T-3). The **American Express** desk, in the Tube station at Terminal 4 (daily 7:00–19:00), has rates similar to the exchange bureaus upstairs, but doesn't charge a commission (typically 1.5 percent) for cashing any type of traveler's check.

Heathrow's small **TI**, even though it's a for-profit business, is worth a visit to pick up free information: a simple map, the *London Planner*, and brochures (daily 8:30–18:00, near T-3 in Tube station, follow signs to Underground; bypass queue for transit info to reach window for London questions).

If you're taking the Tube into London, buy a one-day Travelcard pass to cover the ride (see below).



## Getting to London from Heathrow Airport

**By Taxi:** This is the simplest door-to-door option for wheelchair users and other travelers with limited mobility (see “Getting around London,” page \*TK). Taxis from the airport cost about £45. For four people traveling together, this can be a deal. Hotels can often line up a cab back to the airport for about £30. For the cheapest taxi to the airport, don’t order one from your hotel. Simply flag down a few and ask them for their best “off-meter” rate.

**By Airport Shuttle Bus:** Hotelink (AE+A, AI+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) offers door-to-door service, but the passenger must be able to make transfers to get into the bus (Heathrow-£17 per person, Gatwick-£22 per person, book the day before departure, buy online and save £1–2, tel. 01293/532-244, [www.hotelink.co.uk](http://www.hotelink.co.uk), [reservations@hotelink.co.uk](mailto:reservations@hotelink.co.uk)).

**By Tube (Subway):** For £3.80, the Tube takes you the 14 miles to downtown London in 50 minutes on the Piccadilly Line, with stops (among others) at South Kensington, Leicester Square, and King’s Cross Station (6/hr; depending on your destination, may require a change). Even better, buy a One-Day Travelcard that covers your trip into London and all your Tube travel for the day (£12 covers peak times, £6 “off-peak” card starts at 9:30, less-expensive Travelcards cover the city center only—see page \*TK for details). Buy it at the Tube station ticket window. You can generally hop on the Tube at any terminal, but for most of 2006, Terminal 4’s Tube station will be closed for renovation. You can still catch the Tube by taking a shuttle bus (from stop D) to the nearest station (allow 15 extra min). While the Tube stations at the airport are fully accessible, most other stations on that line (Piccadilly) are not (though you can transfer to the accessible Jubilee line at the Green Park stop). Remember that even so-called “accessible” stations often have a 4" to 12" gap between the platform and the train—so a taxi might work better for someone using a wheelchair. The Accessible Tube Map, showing which stops are accessible, can be found in the front of this book, at the London TI, or online at [www.thetube.com](http://www.thetube.com).

If taking the Tube to the airport, note that Piccadilly Line cars post which airlines are served by which terminals.

**By Heathrow Express Train:** This slick train service (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) zips you between Heathrow Airport and London’s Paddington Station. These trains are wheelchair-accessible and equipped with adapted toilets. You will arrive at Paddington Station on tracks 6–8 (accessible toilet near track 1), and the Express Service Agents are available to assist you. At Paddington Station, you’re close

to the city center (handy for an accessible taxi ride) and in the thick of the Tube system (although, unfortunately, Paddington's Tube station is not accessible). It's only 15 minutes to downtown from Terminals 1, 2, and 3, and 20 minutes from Terminal 4 (at the airport, you can use the Express as a free transfer between terminals). Buy your ticket to London before you board, or pay a £2 surcharge to buy it on the train (£14, but ask about discount promos at Heathrow ticket desk, kids under 16 ride half-price, under 5 ride free, covered by BritRail pass, 4/hr, daily 5:10–23:30, tel. 0845-600-1515, [www.heathrowexpress.co.uk](http://www.heathrowexpress.co.uk)). For one person on a budget, combining the Heathrow Express with a taxi ride (between your hotel and Paddington Station) is nearly as fast and half the cost of taking a cab directly to (or from) the airport. For groups of three or more, a taxi is faster and easier, as well as cheaper.

## Gatwick Airport

More and more flights, especially charters, land at the fully accessible Gatwick Airport, halfway between London and the southern coast (recorded airport info tel. 0870-000-2468).

**Getting to London:** A fully accessible express train shuttles conveniently between Gatwick and London's Victoria Station (see below for accessibility information on Victoria Station; £13, £24 round-trip, 4/hr during day, 1–2/hr at night, 30 min, runs 5:00–24:00 daily, can purchase tickets on train at no extra charge, tel. 0845-850-1530, [www.gatwickexpress.co.uk](http://www.gatwickexpress.co.uk)). If you're traveling with three others, buy your tickets at the station before boarding, and you'll travel for the price of two. The only restriction on this impressive deal is that you have to travel together. So, if you see another couple in line, get organized and save 50 percent.

Victoria Station (**AE, AI, AL, AT**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) has an accessible lift, accessible snack shops, accessible toilet and showers, and a drop-in Medi Centre doctor's office. At the station, follow signs to the taxi queue and catch a taxi to your hotel. Victoria Station's Tube station is mostly suitable for wheelchair users, but not fully adapted.

## London's Other Airports

London's other three major airports are fully accessible: **Stansted** (tel. 0870-0000-303, [www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/stansted](http://www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/stansted)), **Luton** (tel. 01582/405-100, [www.london-luton.com](http://www.london-luton.com)), and **London City Airport** (tel. 020/7646-0088, [www.londoncityairport.com](http://www.londoncityairport.com)). Taking a taxi is the easiest way to get into the city from any airport.

## Discounted Flights from London

Although **bmi british midland** has been around the longest, the other small airlines generally offer cheaper flights. A visit to [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net) sorts the many options offered by the myriad discount airlines, enabling you to see the best schedules for your trip and come up with the best deal. For accessibility details for specific flights, contact each airline company.

With **bmi british midland**, you can fly inexpensively to destinations in the U.K. and beyond (fares start around £30 one-way to Edinburgh, Paris, Brussels, or Amsterdam; or around £50 one-way to Dublin; prices can be higher, but there can also be much cheaper Internet specials—check online). For the latest, call British tel. 0870-607-0555 or U.S. tel. 800-788-0555 (check [www.flybmi.com](http://www.flybmi.com) and their subsidiary, **bmi baby**, at [www.bmibaby.com](http://www.bmibaby.com)). Book in advance. Although you can book right up until the flight departs, the cheap seats will have sold out long before, leaving the most expensive seats for latecomers.

With no frills and cheap fares, **easyJet** flies from Luton, Stansted, and Gatwick. Prices are based on demand, so the least popular routes make for the cheapest fares, especially if you book early (tel. 0905-821-0905 to book by phone, 65p per minute, or do it free online at [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)).

**Ryanair** is a creative Irish airline that prides itself on offering the lowest fares. It flies from London (mostly Stansted airport) to often obscure airports in Dublin, Glasgow, Frankfurt, Stockholm, Oslo, Venice, Turin, and many others. Sample fares: London–Dublin—£60 round-trip (sometimes as low as £15), London–Frankfurt—£67 round-trip (Irish tel. 0818-303-030, British tel. 0871-246-0000, [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)). Because they offer promotional deals any time of year, you can get great prices on short notice. Be aware of their stiff fees for extra baggage. You can carry on only a small daybag and check 15 kilograms—about 33 pounds—of baggage for free. You'll pay €7 per extra kilo. If you're packing an extra 10 kilos, a cheap €30 flight skyrockets to €100.

**Virgin Express** is a British-owned company with good rates (book by phone and pick up ticket at airport an hour before your flight, [www.virgin-express.com](http://www.virgin-express.com)). Virgin Express flies from London Heathrow and Brussels. From its hub in Brussels, you can connect cheaply to Barcelona, Madrid, Nice, Malaga, Copenhagen, Rome, or Milan (round-trip from Brussels to Rome for as little as £105). Their prices stay the same whether or not you book in advance.

## Crossing the Channel by Eurostar Train

The fastest and most convenient way to get from the Eiffel Tower to Big Ben is by rail. Eurostar, a joint service of the Belgian, British, and French railways, is the speedy passenger train that zips you (and up to 800 others in 18 sleek cars) from downtown London to downtown Paris (12–15/day, 2.75 hrs) faster and easier than flying. The actual tunnel crossing is a 20-minute, black, silent, 100-mile-per-hour non-event. Your ears won't even pop. Eurostar trains also run directly from London to Disneyland Paris (1/day direct, more often with transfer at Lille).

In London, the Eurostar uses the fully accessible **Waterloo Station** (in 2007, the Eurostar terminal will likely change to London's St. Pancras Station, also fully accessible). Check in at least 30 minutes in advance for your Eurostar trip. It's very similar to an airport check-in: You pass through airport-like security, show your passport to customs officials, and find a TV monitor to locate your departure gate. There are a few airport-like shops, newsstands, horrible snack bars, and cafés (bring food for the trip from elsewhere), pay-Internet terminals, and a currency-exchange booth with rates about the same as you'll find on the other end.

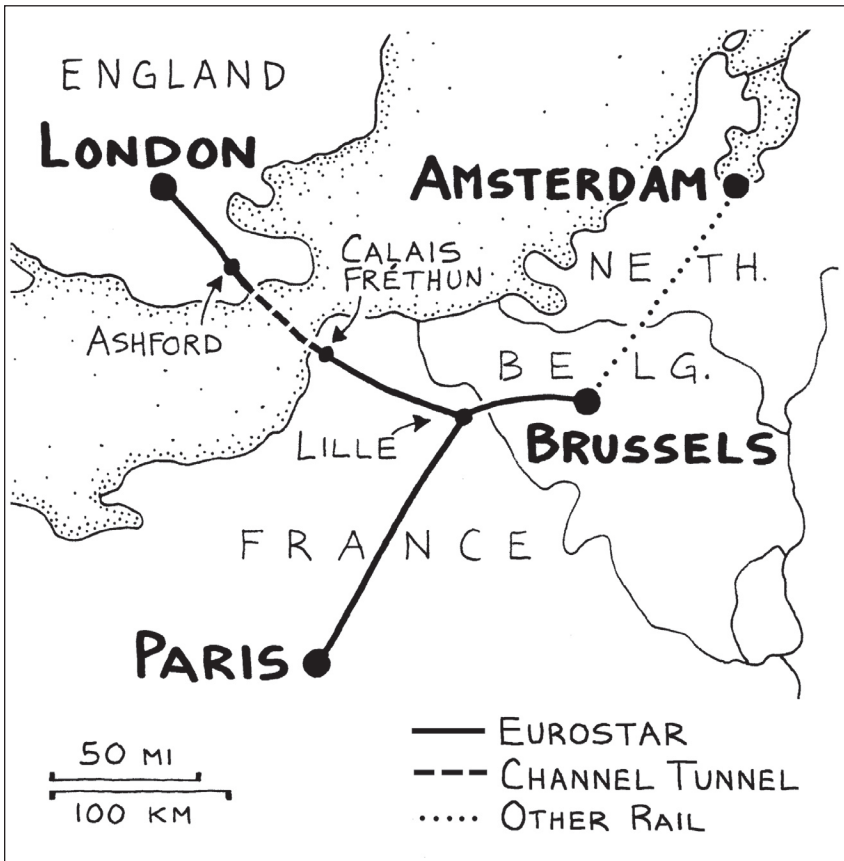
**Getting between London's Train Stations:** London has several different train stations, and all of them are connected by the fully adapted Stationlink bus (**AE, AI, Level 1**—Fully Accessible, low-floor buses with ramps and wide aisles). There are two routes: #205 (Paddington, Marylebone, Euston, St. Pancras, King's Cross, Liverpool Street, and Whitechapel) and #905 (Paddington, Victoria Coach Station, Victoria, Waterloo, London Bridge, Fenchurch Street, and Liverpool Street). Each bus runs twice a day in each direction.

## Access

All Eurostar terminals (**AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1**—Fully Accessible) feature elevators with controls at wheelchair height, ramps with handrails and landings, ramps and wheelchairs for boarding and disembarking (upon request), accessible toilets, and wheelchair-accessible check-in booths.

Eurostar trains themselves are also fully accessible to wheelchair users (**AE, AI, AT, Level 1**). The wheelchair user (and a companion) pay for second ("standard") class, but ride in the accessible first-class cabin (cars 9 and 10 have spaces reserved for wheelchair users and their companions, and there is an adapted toilet between these two cars). To take seats in second class, you must be able to walk a minimum of 200 yards. Wheelchair users should arrive 45 minutes before departure, so the staff

## Eurostar Routes



can assist with ramps and alert appropriate personnel. Eurostar provides a free assistance service for wheelchair users (arrange when you book ticket, must book at least 48 hours in advance: call French tel. 08 92 35 35 39, British toll-free tel. 0870-518-6186, or British tel. 1233/617-575).

### Eurostar Fares

Channel fares (essentially the same between London and Paris or Brussels) are reasonable but complicated. Prices vary depending on when you travel, whether you can live with restrictions, and whether you're eligible for any discounts (youth, seniors, and railpass holders all qualify). Rates are lower for round trips and off-peak travel (midday, midweek, low-season, and low-interest). For specifics, visit [www.ricksteves.com/rail/eurostar.htm](http://www.ricksteves.com/rail/eurostar.htm).

Note that **wheelchair users** and their companions pay second-class

fares, but ride in accessible first class (see “Access,” above).

As with airfares, the most expensive and flexible option is a **full-fare ticket** with no restrictions on refunds (even refundable after the departure date; for a one-way trip, figure around \$375 in first class, \$255 second class). A first-class ticket comes with a meal (a dinner departure nets you more grub than breakfast)—but it’s not worth the extra expense.

Also like the airlines, **cheaper tickets** come with more restrictions—and are limited in number (so they sell out more quickly; for second-class, one-way tickets, figure \$90–200). Non-full-fare tickets have severe restrictions on refunds (best-case scenario: you’ll get 25 percent back; but with the cheapest options, you’ll get nothing). But several do allow you to change the specifics of your trip once before departure.

Those traveling with a railpass for Britain, France, or Belgium should look first at the **passholder** fare, an especially good value for one-way Eurostar trips (around \$75). In Britain, passholder tickets can be issued only at the Eurostar office at the terminal (Waterloo Station in 2006, probably changing to St. Pancras from 2007 on) or the American Express office in Victoria Station—not at any other stations. You can also order them by phone (see below), then pick them up at the Eurostar terminal (see below).

## Buying Eurostar Tickets

Refund and exchange restrictions are serious, so don’t reserve until you’re sure of your plans. If you’re confident about the time and date of your crossing, order ahead from the U.S.. Only the most expensive ticket (full fare) is fully refundable, so if you want to have more flexibility, hold off—keeping in mind that the longer you wait, the more likely the cheapest tickets will sell out. (You might end up having to pay for first class.)

You can check and book fares by phone or online in the U.S. (order online at [www.ricksteves.com/rail/eurostar.htm](http://www.ricksteves.com/rail/eurostar.htm), prices listed in dollars; order by phone at U.S. tel. 800/EUROSTAR) or in Britain (British tel. 08705-186-186, [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com), prices listed in pounds). While tickets are usually cheaper if purchased in the U.S., fares offered in Europe follow different discount rules—so it can be worth it to check [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com) before buying. If you buy from a U.S. company, you’ll pay for ticket delivery in the United States. In Europe, you can buy your Eurostar ticket at any major train station in any country or at any travel agency that handles train tickets (expect a booking fee).

Remember that Britain’s time zone is one hour earlier than France’s. Times listed on tickets are local times (departure from London is British time, arrival in Paris in French time).