

London, England

Overview

Introduction

If you're visiting London, England, for the first time, you may arrive expecting a European city that overflows with pomp and pageantry. Few visitors to London will fail to be impressed by the grandeur and craftsmanship of such monumental sights as Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral, but that's just the historical foundation of today's modern, vibrant city.



Cosmopolitan London has every visitor attraction from Bengali markets to designer boutiques to world-class art exhibitions to hand-written Beatles lyrics at the British Library. London offers the best of British food, fashion and cultural pursuits, but its multicultural population gives it an international flair, as well. London has a lively mix of languages, dress, festivals and bustling street life.

As for sightseeing, visitors to London can admire orchids at Kew Gardens, gaze on the crown jewels at the Tower of London, learn about millennia of history at the British Museum and witness spectacular views of the city from the London Eye Ferris wheel—all in a day. An interest in the arts or royalty may be what draws you to the capital of England, but you don't have to be an avid theatergoer or a history buff to enjoy yourself thoroughly.

Sporting and cultural events take place across the capital, showing off this festive city at its best. London is a place you will want to visit again and again, and each time you visit, the city will have something new to offer.

Highlights

Sights—Westminster Abbey; St. Paul's Cathedral; the Tower of London and Tower Bridge; Shakespeare's Globe Theatre; the view from the London Eye.

Museums—The Victoria and Albert Museum, especially its British Galleries; works by Turner at the Tate Britain; antiquities at the British Museum; art collected by the first Duke of Wellington at Apsley House; the Tate Modern; Impressionist paintings at the National Gallery and the Fragonards at The Wallace Collection.

Memorable Meals—Eclectic and delicious vegetarian fare at The Gate; pub lunch at the Salisbury in the West End's theater district; afternoon tea at the English Tea Room at Brown's Hotel; dim sum at Hakkasan; fabulous French cuisine amid quirky decor at Les Trois Garçons; all-day dining at The Wolseley; Indian cuisine at Tamarind and an elegant late night assignation in the Oscar Wilde Bar at the historic Cafe Royal.

Late Night—Drinks at Baltic; jazz at Ronnie Scott's; dancing at megaclub Fabric; a performance in the West End; cabaret and cocktails at Circus.

Walks—Through Hyde Park or St. James' Park; along the Jubilee Walkway from Lambeth Bridge to Tower Bridge; any Original London walking tour; exploring the grounds at Kew Gardens; up Primrose Hill for a panoramic view of London.

Especially for Kids—Simulators at the London Transport Museum; the ZSL London Zoo; the giant, animatronic T. Rex at the Natural History Museum; the Science Museum; Warner Brothers Studios Harry Potter Tour.

Geography

London sprawls along both banks of the River Thames. Orientation is by boroughs (Westminster and the City are the central boroughs) or by areas, such as Piccadilly Circus and Covent Garden. Locals use postal districts, or "postcodes" (Mayfair, Oxford Street and Park Lane, for instance, are in W1—that is, West 1; Bloomsbury and part of the City are in WC2, or West Central 2; Central Kensington falls within W8; South Kensington and Knightsbridge are in SW7). Postcodes are also becoming the quickest way of finding places, as they can be put into smartphone maps and online journey planners.

Central London can be divided into the West End (theaters, shops, restaurants, entertainment); the City (businesses, law courts, ancient buildings and ultramodern architecture); and Westminster (government offices, famous landmarks such as Big Ben). Across the river is the South Bank, with its arts venues and concert halls. Slightly beyond the reaches of central London, some of the districts that have experienced regeneration include Notting Hill, W11 (on the fringes of the West End); Greenwich, SE10 (south of the river); Hoxton and Shoreditch in N1 and EC2; Eastside, E1 (just north and east of Liverpool Street railway terminus); and the Olympic Park area called Stratford City (with the new postcode E20).

History

Although there is some evidence of Celtic settlements along the Thames, London's first known permanent settlers were the Romans, who established a stronghold there in AD 43. The city walls (parts of which can be seen today) were built after Londinium was burned to the ground by the Iceni tribe in AD 60. Viking and Saxon invaders were next to put down roots. And it was the Viking warrior Canute who first declared London the capital of England in 1016, a position it has held ever since.

The London we know today began to take shape in the 11th century, when Edward the Confessor commissioned the original building of Westminster Abbey. Shortly after its completion, William the Conqueror launched the Norman invasion in 1066 and seized the English throne. His fortress formed the core of the Tower of London. In the 1300s, bubonic plague, called the "Black Death," wiped out about half the city's inhabitants, reducing its population to around 50,000. Under Tudor rule in the 16th century, however, London tripled in size.

Also during that time, the English church separated from Rome, and religious persecution was rampant. That century also ushered in one of London's greatest artistic periods: The reign of Elizabeth I was the age of Shakespeare and other artists whose work is still admired today. In 1666, the Great Fire destroyed much of inner London (a happier consequence is that it also put an end to the worst plague outbreak, the Great Plague of 1665). The ambitious rebuilding process, spearheaded by architect Christopher Wren, destroyed virtually all that remained of medieval London. During the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, London continued to grow and prosper under the reign of Queen Victoria. But just as the rich were getting richer, social divisions were becoming wider, with slums dramatically on the increase.

World War II brought devastation to London again—mainly during 57 consecutive days of bombing in 1940 (a period known as the Blitz). After the war, mass immigration from Britain's former colonies

signaled the beginning of the multiculturalism seen throughout the city today. The 1960s were modern London's golden age, with much of the world seeking to emulate its swinging rhythm and freewheeling fashions and design. After a subsequent boom-and-bust period, there is now an unmistakable self-confidence in London, which prevails despite the world's current economic woes.

In honor of the millennium, a number of new landmarks were built, including the Millennium Bridge, a pedestrian-only route across the Thames, which leads to the Tate Modern art gallery, the huge Ferris wheel known as the London Eye, and the O2 Arena. More construction coincided with the city's hosting of the 2012 Olympic Games. With new hotels, galleries, stadiums and museums, the city is as vibrant as it has ever been.

Potpourri

Contrary to reputation, London's annual rainfall is less than that of New York, Sydney or Tokyo. However, London's problem is not total rainfall but the high number of days on which there is some rainfall.

One of London's newest skyscrapers, opened in 2014, is the Leadenhall (colloquially called "The Cheese grater" because of its sloping shape). 80% of its components were pre-fabricated off-site and two new cranes, able to lift 50 tons/45 tonnes, had to be built especially to complete this massive skyscraper.

In 2012, London became the only city to host the modern Olympic Games for the third time. It also staged the summer Olympic Games in 1908 and 1948.

Aldwych Tube Station makes frequent appearances in TV shows such as *Sherlock* and *Mr Selfridge*. It also sheltered people from the Blitz during World War II.

There was once a Tube station on the Central line between Tottenham Court Road and Chancery Lane. The station is still there, but trains don't stop. Keep your eyes open and you may glimpse the ghostly platforms.

London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is the site of the largest-ever planting project in the U.K., with more than 4,000 trees, 74,000 dry-land plants, 60,000 bulbs and 350,000 wetlands plants.

Cleopatra's Needle, on the Victoria Embankment near the Golden Jubilee Bridges, is one of a trio of Egyptian obelisks from the Egyptian city of Heliopolis that were made around 1450 BC. The others are in Paris and New York. None of them has any connection with Cleopatra.

The winter of 1683-84 saw one of the most famous of London's "frost fairs." From December to February, the Thames was completely frozen, and the town responded with an ongoing midwinter party in the middle of the river. At one point, a whole ox was roasted on the ice. Virginia Woolf writes about the fairs in her novel *Orlando*, published in 1928.

See & Do

Sightseeing

The sights of London embrace 2,000 years of history—the tramp of Roman legions, strolling players in the age of Shakespeare, plagues, royal pomp and circumstance, the Great Fire, the architectural heritage of the Georgian era, the squalid alleyways of Dickens' time, Victoria's great age of railways and trade, and the Blitz of World War II. In a city of more than 600 art galleries, 250 museums and countless places of

interest, considerable planning is needed for sightseeing. The city's tourist attractions are sights you've heard about all your life. You won't have time to see them all, but some are absolute musts.

The Tower of London (dating from 1078) is always popular—get there early if you can, because waits of up to three hours aren't unusual in summer. Huge St. Paul's Cathedral, designed by 17th-century architect Christopher Wren, can take hours to wander through if you're in the right mood. The other famous church, Westminster Abbey, is where royals are crowned and married and England's notables are buried.

Across the street from the abbey is the clock tower attached to the Houses of Parliament; this is commonly known as Big Ben, which is actually the nickname of the Great Bell of this famous chiming clock that everyone watches (on TV) to see in the new year. Don't expect to see everything in a few hours at the British Museum—there are too many treasures to explore and too many other people. Art lovers will find paradise at Tate Britain and the Tate Modern, not to mention the National Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Fans of the literary arts should treat themselves to a tour of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and the British Library. And for great perspective, take a ride on the giant London Eye Ferris wheel. Beloved by locals and visitors alike, it offers fantastic bird's-eye views of the city.

The River Bus service on the Thames—part of London's transport network—is a great way for visitors to venture farther afield. Kew Gardens (officially, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew) and Hampton Court Palace are accessible by river from Westminster Pier. Immerse yourself in tranquility at the former, royal prosperity at the latter. You can also get boats in the other direction to Tower Bridge and Greenwich.

If you've seen all the major sights or just want to escape the crowds for a while, visit the Dulwich Picture Gallery, Sir John Soane's museum (open during extensive renovations through 2016) or 18 Stafford Terrace. They're some of our favorite off-the-beaten-track spots in the city.

To make the most of your visit, consider buying a London Pass. Valid for one to six days (with prices £49-£81 adults without transport, £58-£199 with transport), it offers free entry to more than 60 London attractions, including the Tower of London, St. Paul's Cathedral and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. Phone 020-7293-0972. <http://www.londonpass.com>.

Historic Sites

18 Stafford Terrace

18 Stafford Terrace (Tube station: Kensington High Street)
London, England W8 7BH

Phone: 020-7602-3316

<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/museums/18staffordterrace.aspx>

This perfectly preserved example of a Victorian town house is the home of the former Punch cartoonist Linley Sambourne. The rooms remain largely untouched by modernization. (The higgledy-piggledy layout was once the height of chic.)

Open mid-September to mid-June. Visits by guided tour only. Costumed interpreters lead tours Saturday and Sunday at 1, 2:15 and 3:30 pm; a conventional tour runs at 11:15 am. Conventional tours also offered Wednesday at 11:15 am and 2:15 pm; other weekday visits by appointment only. £8 adults. Tour-group size is limited to 24, so advance booking is recommended.

Apsley House

149 Piccadilly (Tube station: Hyde Park Corner)
London, England W1J 7TN

Phone: 020-7499-5676

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/apsley-house>

Also known as No. 1, London (it was the first building after the Knightsbridge tollgate), this magnificent palace, which overlooks Wellington Arch, was once the home of the first Duke of Wellington. Damask-covered walls, elaborate Oriental carpets and ornate furniture are the setting for some exquisite paintings by Velazquez, Goya, Correggio and Rubens.

April-October Wednesday-Sunday and bank holidays 11 am-5 pm, November-March Saturday and Sunday 10 am-4 pm. £6.70 adults. £8.20 for a combination ticket that includes Wellington Arch. Family tickets available for £22.40.

Banqueting House

The corner of Horse Guards Avenue and Whitehall (Tube station: Westminster, Charing Cross or Embankment)
London, England SW1A 2ER

Phone: 020-3166-6000

<http://www.hrp.org.uk/BanquetingHouse>

Built in the early 1600s, it's the only remaining piece of Whitehall Palace, which was destroyed by fire in 1698. Upstairs is a grand hall that was designed for court ceremonies—its ceiling is adorned with paintings by Rubens. A short film and an excellent audioguide are included in the admission price. A program of lunchtime concerts is held there (check the website for more information). The venue is frequently used for official functions and may close on short notice; it's advisable to call in advance to avoid disappointment.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm (last admission 4:20 pm). £6.60 adults.

Buckingham Palace: Changing of the Guard

The Forecourt, The Mall (Tube station: Victoria, Hyde Park Corner or Green Park)
London, England SW1A 1AA

<http://www.changing-the-guard.com>

A ritual that is one of the most famous aspects of the royal residence, the Changing of the Guard ceremony is a sober occasion full of military pomp and grandeur. The guards, in their trademark red jackets and bearskin hats, are real soldiers—the Household Division is made up of seven regiments. Arrive early to get a good viewing spot.

The changing usually takes place May-July daily at 11:30 am, although the guards start arriving at 11:15 am and the ceremony is over by noon. The rest of the year the ceremony is usually held every other day. Check the website for the official schedule. Free.

Buckingham Palace: Queen's Gallery

The Forecourt, The Mall (Tube station: Victoria, Hyde Park Corner or Green Park)
London, England SW1A 1AA

Phone: 020-7766-7300

<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk>

The gallery features rotating exhibitions of art, furnishings, jewelry and manuscripts from the royal collection.

Open daily 10 am-5:30 pm (last admission one hour before closing). Closed 25-26 December. There are other occasional closures; see website or call in advance. Timed-entrance tickets (every 15 minutes) £16.75 adults (includes an audioguide). Tickets are available by phone, from the reception desk at the gallery or online.

Buckingham Palace: Royal Mews

Buckingham Palace Road (Tube station: Victoria, Hyde Park Corner or Green Park)
London, England SW1A 1AA

Phone: 020-7766-7300

<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk>

Take a tour of one of the world's finest examples of a working stable. In addition to the 30 or so carriage horses housed there, visitors can see a permanent display of state vehicles, including the magnificent Golden State Coach.

Open April-October daily 10 am-5 pm (last admission 4:15 pm), November-March Monday-Saturday 10 am-4 pm (last admission 3:15 pm). Closed on select dates; see website or call for details. £9 adults (includes an audio guide).

Buckingham Palace: The State Rooms

The Forecourt, The Mall (Tube station: Victoria, Hyde Park Corner or Green Park)
London, England SW1A 1AA

Phone: 020-7766-7300

<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk>

The royal residence, built in 1705, opens during late summer at the Queen's discretion. The palace, which was refaced with a rather forbidding facade in Victorian times, still has an interior that is overpoweringly baroque. The gardens and 19 rooms are available to view, including the Throne Room, Ballroom and State Dining Room.

Timed-entrance tickets (every 15 minutes) help control the flow of visitors. You can purchase advance tickets by phone or online or from the ticket office daily 9 am-4 pm.

Open August 9:30 am-7:30 pm (last admission 5:15 pm) and September 9:30 am-6:30 pm (last admission 4:15 pm). £20.50 adults (includes an audioguide). The palace is open in winter for guided tours on selected dates, announced on the website, for a fee of £75.

Chiswick House

Burlington Lane (Tube station: Turnham Green, then a 20-minute walk)
London, England W4 2RP

Phone: 020-8742-3905

<http://www.chgt.org.uk>

This Roman-style Palladian villa with Italianate classical gardens was built in the early 18th century for the third Earl of Burlington. Visitors can expect sumptuous interiors, beautiful painted and gilded ceilings, a collection of paintings that includes eight old masters and, in the gardens, statuary and half-hidden temples. A £12-million refurbishment to the gardens restored them to their original glamour.

Gardens open year-round 7 am-dusk; house open April-October Sunday-Wednesday including bank holidays 10 am-5 pm. Admission to the house is £6.10 adults; admission to the gardens is free.

City Hall

The Queen's Walk (Tube station: London Bridge or Tower Hill and then a 10- to 15-minute walk)
London, England SE1 2AA

Phone: 020-7983-4000

<http://www.london.gov.uk>

The splendidly original, not-quite-egg-shaped glass home of the mayor and the London Assembly is a Norman Foster design. Weekday visitors can explore the exhibition space and walk to the second floor, which offers a view of the Assembly Chamber.

Parts of City Hall are open Monday-Thursday 8:30 am-6 pm and Friday 8:30 am-5:30 pm. Free.

Eltham Palace

Eltham (less than a mile/kilometer from Eltham Station)
London, England SE9 5QE

Phone: 020-8294-2548

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/elthampalace>

The Great Hall of this medieval palace was built for Edward IV in the 1470s, and Henry VIII lived there as a child. The palace is surrounded by a moat, and there are 19 acres/8 hectares of lovely gardens. Attached to the medieval hall is a stunningly well-preserved early-20th-century art-deco house, built for textile magnates Stephen and Virginia Courtauld.

Under extensive renovation; currently open only on Sunday 10 am-4 pm. After renovations are complete, it will be open April-October Sunday-Wednesday 10 am-5 pm, November-March Sunday 10 am-4 pm. £10.20 adults.

Houses of Parliament

Parliament Square (Tube station: Westminster)
London, England SW1A 0AA

Phone: 020-7219-4144 for tour tickets

<http://www.parliament.uk>

The impressive Victorian Gothic architecture of the Houses of Parliament includes the landmark clock tower commonly known as Big Ben (which is the name of its biggest bell—the tower itself is officially called Elizabeth Tower, as a tribute to the Queen in honor of her Diamond Jubilee in 2012). When Parliament is in session, visitors can get close to the action by sitting in on debates in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords at Westminster. You will need to line up for entry to the public galleries (usually Monday-Thursday when Parliament is sitting) and be prepared for a long wait, although queues tend to be shorter for the House of Lords. During the summer recess (late July-early October), the buildings are open for tours, and Saturday tours are given year-round. Certain tours (Big Ben, for example) are available only to U.K. residents.

Tours must be booked ahead by phone or online through Ticketmaster. £18 adults (with audioguide).

Kensington Palace

Kensington Gardens (Tube station: Queensway or High Street Kensington)
London, England W8 4PX

Phone: 0844-482-7777

<http://hrp.org.uk/kensingtonpalace>

Originally a Jacobean mansion, Kensington was remodeled as a royal palace by Christopher Wren when William and Mary took the throne in 1689. It was the childhood home of Queen Victoria and the official residence of Prince Charles and Diana, Princess of Wales, after their marriage in 1981. It remained Diana's home until her death in 1997. Prince William, the Duchess of Cambridge and their son, Prince George, now live there. Many of the public rooms are again on show after a recent £12-million restoration. Explore the King's and Queen's State Apartments, changing exhibitions that highlight royal themes such as Queen Victoria or the dresses of Princess Diana, and the beautiful palace gardens.

Palace and Orangery open daily March-October 10 am-6 pm, November-February 10 am-5 pm. £16.50 adults. Last entry one hour before closing.

Kenwood House

Hampstead Lane (Tube station: Golders Green or Archway, then 210 bus to Kenwood)
London, England NW3 7JR

Phone: 020-8348-1286

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/kenwoodhouse>

Situated on 112 acres/45 hectares of beautiful, landscaped grounds by Hampstead Heath, neoclassical Kenwood House contains the Iveagh Bequest, one of the finest art collections in London, including works by Turner, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Gainsborough and Vermeer.

Open daily 10 am-5 pm. Closed 24-26 December and 1 January. Free.

London Eye

Westminster Bridge Road (Tube station: Waterloo or Westminster)
London, England SE1 7PB

Phone: 0800-093-0123 for information or 0871-781-3000 for bookings

<http://www.londoneye.com>

Built to celebrate the millennium, the London Eye is a 440-ft-/135-m-high Ferris wheel that offers a superb, one-rotation, 30-minute bird's-eye view of London. The 32 passenger capsules (one for each borough of London) are enclosed for comfortable year-round operation. Located on the South Bank, almost opposite the Houses of Parliament, it's the highest observation wheel in Europe and the tallest cantilevered observation wheel in the world. Advance booking is highly recommended if you're planning to ride during peak times: weekends, holidays and summer. If you haven't planned ahead, tickets are available from 9:30 am at County Hall 30 minutes before each ride, but queues can be long, especially in the summer months.

Open daily 10 am-8:30 pm, till 9 pm April-June and 9:30 pm July and August. Closed on Christmas Day. Tickets from £29.50 adults and children (those younger than age 4 ride for free). Order tickets online to receive a 10% discount.

London Millennium Footbridge

Upper Thames Street (Tube station: Cannon Street, St. Paul's and Blackfriars, then a four to eight-minute walk)
London, England EC4

<http://cityoflondon.gov.uk>

Officially opened in 2000 for the millennium, this pedestrian bridge is a popular shortcut between the area near St. Paul's Cathedral and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and Tate Modern on the South Bank. From the bridge, you can look back for a fabulous view of St. Paul's.

Free.

Marble Hill House

Richmond Road (Tube station: Richmond, then a 25-minute walk)
Twickenham, England

Phone: 020-8892-5115

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/marblehillhouse>

This 18th-century Thames-side villa in the attractive suburb of Richmond was built for the mistress of George II, Henrietta Howard. It is where she entertained her circle of friends, literary men and courtiers. There is hand-painted Chinese wallpaper in the dining parlor and some fine paintings in the Georgian villa, which is surrounded by 66 acres/27 hectares of parkland and picturesque Richmond village.

The park is open daily 7 am-5 pm, but entry to the house is by guided tour only. Tours take about 90 minutes and are available April-October Saturday at 10:30 am and noon; Sunday at 10:30 am, noon, 2:15 and 3:30 pm. £5.90 adults.

Ranger's House The Wernher Collection

Chesterfield Walk, Blackheath (Tube station: Cutty Sark (Docklands Light Railway); Overground train: Greenwich and Blackheath from Victoria, London Bridge or Charing Cross stations)
London, England SE10 8QX

Phone: 020-8294-2548

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/rangers-house-the-wernher-collection>

Tucked away and easy to miss on the edge of Greenwich Park, this 1720s villa was once home to the "Ranger of Greenwich Park" (an aristocratic title rather than a job description—it was a royal home until 1902). Minutely carved and painted ivories, old-master paintings, enamels, Renaissance bronzes, spectacular jewelry and more than 700 works of art collected by the diamond magnate Sir Julius Wernher (1850-1912) are on display in the 12 paneled rooms.

April-September Sunday-Wednesday guided tours only at 11:30 am and 2 pm. October-March by appointment only. May be closed late July to mid-August—call in advance. £6.90 adults.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

21 New Globe Walk (Tube station: London Bridge or Mansion House)
London, England SE1 9DT

Phone: 020-7902-1400

<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com>

This is a complete reconstruction of the original Globe Theatre, which was destroyed by fire in 1613. The original theater sat 300 ft/90 m from where the current structure is located. Open-air performances are

held May-October. The Globe Exhibition, situated beneath the theater itself, offers a fascinating glimpse of Elizabethan theater and audiences, and it explains the design and reconstruction of the new Globe. You can also tour the theater when it's not being used for performances.

Mid-October to mid-April, theater tour and exhibition daily 9 am-5:30 pm. Mid-April to mid-October, exhibitions Monday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm, Sunday 9 am-5:30 pm; theater tours Monday 9:30 am-5 pm, Tuesday-Saturday 9:30 am-12:30 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-10:30 or 11:30 pm. Tours begin every 15-30 minutes. £13.50 adults.

Somerset House and The Courtauld Gallery

The Strand (Tube station: Charing Cross, Embankment, Temple or Covent Garden)
London, England WC2R 1LA

Phone: 020-7845-4600 for Somerset House or 020-7848-2526 for The Courtauld Gallery

<http://www.somersethouse.org.uk>

This 18th-century palace on the banks of the Thames was designed by William Chambers. The program at Somerset House includes a series of public events in the spectacular courtyard with its well-known fountains, including ice skating, open-air films, concerts and family events, as well as a variety of exhibitions spanning design, fashion, architecture and photography in the Embankment Galleries. In addition, the building is home to The Courtauld Gallery (<http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery>), one of the world's finest small museums. The elegant and intimate galleries house such iconic paintings as Edouard Manet's *Bar at the Folies Bergere*, Vincent Van Gogh's *Portrait with Bandaged Ear* and Lucas Cranach's *Adam and Eve*. It has one of the most important collections of European paintings and drawings in Britain, ranging from the Renaissance to the 20th century, including an outstanding collection of Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings.

Daily 10 am-6 pm (till 9 pm on certain Thursdays at the Courtauld Gallery; last admission 30 minutes before closing). Embankment Galleries entrance fee varies according to exhibition; Courtauld Gallery £7 adults.

St. Paul's Cathedral

Ludgate Hill (Tube station: St. Paul's)
London, England EC4M 8AD

Phone: 020-7246-8350

<http://www.stpauls.co.uk>

The fifth cathedral structure built on this site is Christopher Wren's masterpiece. (His original model for the cathedral can be seen in the Trophy Room.) Inside the great dome is the acoustically fascinating Whispering Gallery; at the top of the dome is the Golden Gallery, with panoramic views of central London.

Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-4 pm (with occasional changes to accommodate special services). Guided tours (included in entry price, numbers limited) at 10 and 11 am, 1 and 2 pm. £16 adults. Audio tours and multimedia guides also available at no additional cost.

Tower Bridge

Tower Bridge Road (Tube station: Tower Hill or London Bridge)
London, England SE1 2UP

Phone: 020-7403-3761

<http://www.towerbridge.org.uk>

London's most famous bridge contains an on-site exhibition relating its history from Victorian times to the present day. Visit the Victorian Engine Rooms to marvel at the original steam engines that powered the bridge, and stroll across the high-level covered walkways to see sweeping views of the city, from Docklands to Westminster. Visit the website for bridge lift times.

April-September daily 10 am-6 pm, October-March 9:30 am-5 pm (last admission 30 minutes before closing). £8 adults.

Tower of London

Tower Hill (Tube station: Tower Hill)
London, England EC3

Phone: 0844-482-7777 for information, or 0844-482-7799 for tickets

<http://hrp.org.uk/toweroflondon>

At various times in its history, the tower has served as castle, prison, royal mint, observatory, place of execution and even a zoo. It's now the home of the crown jewels (in the Jewel House). There are also permanent exhibitions of crowns and diamonds in the Martin Tower, and armor and armaments in the Royal Armouries. The Tower is immensely popular and crowded. Arrive early and allow two to three hours to see everything. Free tours given by the Beefeaters, or Yeomen Warders, have long been popular for their delightful tales of the Tower's history. For a special treat, witness the free Ceremony of the Keys, a 700-year-old ritual performed every night at evening lockup (make requests in writing, including a self-addressed envelope and two International Reply Coupons, at least two to three months in advance to: The Ceremony of the Keys, HM Tower of London, London EC3N 4AB; see website for further details).

March-October Sunday and Monday 10 am-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Saturday 9 am-5:30 pm; November-February Sunday and Monday 10 am-4:30 pm, Tuesday-Saturday 9 am-4:30 pm (last admission 30 minutes before closing). £22 adults.

Trafalgar Square

At the intersection of Pall Mall, Whitehall and the Strand (Tube station: Charing Cross or Leicester Square)
London, England WC2

<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/arts-culture/trafalgar-square>

The heart of the city is still a busy traffic interchange, but less so now since much of the northern side has become pedestrian-oriented. It is surrounded by such grand historic buildings as St. Martin-in-the-Fields church and the National Gallery. The square is dominated by Nelson's Column with four bronze lions and fountains. There are four plinths for statues, with bronzes on three of them. The fourth plinth was intended for an equestrian statue, but it stood empty for many years; it is now used to exhibit specially commissioned artworks. Since feeding the pigeons became illegal in 2003 (you face a fine of up to £500) and the mayor brought in hawks to scare the birds away, the feathered population has all but disappeared. This is where Londoners traditionally go to demonstrate or celebrate, such as for New Year's Eve shenanigans.

Wellington Arch

Hyde Park Corner (Tube station: Hyde Park Corner)
London, England W1

Phone: 020-7930-2726

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/wellington-arch>

Take an elevator up to the balconies below the *Angel of Peace* bronze statue (the largest bronze sculpture in Europe) on this famous London landmark for far-reaching views across the Royal Parks to the Houses of Parliament. History and heritage exhibitions are staged in the Quadriga Gallery.

Wednesday-Sunday and bank holidays 10 am-5 pm (till 4 pm in winter). £4.20 adults.

Westminster Abbey

Parliament Square (Tube station: St. James' Park or Westminster)
London, England SW1P 3PA

Phone: 020-7222-5152

<http://www.westminster-abbey.org>

This magnificent Gothic building is where England's kings and queens are crowned, interred and wed. The original building was completed in 1065 (you can see traces of that structure in the Undercroft), and the existing church was built in the 13th century. Poet's Corner is where many British literary figures are buried or commemorated. Guided 90-minute tours, accompanied by a verger, are available for £3, and audio guides are free at the information desk. If you want to get a real feel for the church, you might attend a Sunday service, although tourists are frowned upon at this time, and you'll be asked to leave if you take photos. St. Margaret's Church, a part of the abbey complex, is also worth a visit (free).

Monday-Friday 9:30 am-3:30 pm (Wednesday till 6 pm), Saturday 9:30 am-1:30 pm, Sunday open worship only, but hours do vary seasonally, so always call or check the website before you go. £18 adults.

Museums

British Library

96 Euston Road (Tube station: Kings Cross, St. Pancras, Euston or Euston Square)
London, England NW1 2DB

Phone: 019-3754-6060

<http://www.bl.uk>

In the exhibition area you'll find an unparalleled array of historical documents and cultural masterworks, all in their original form. The manuscript of *Beowulf*, first editions of Shakespeare, the Magna Carta—they're all there in the permanent collection. Also on display are the earliest known biblical fragments, medieval manuscripts, the recording of Nelson Mandela's trial speech, and hand-penned works by everyone from Galileo to James Joyce to John Lennon. The library also holds rotating exhibits from its vast archives.

Monday-Thursday 9:30 am-8 pm, Friday 9:30 am-6 pm, Saturday 9:30 am-5 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. Free. Guided tours of public areas are available for £8 adults Monday-Saturday at 10:30 am and 3 pm, Sunday and bank holidays at 11:30 am and 3 pm. Tours can be booked online or by phone.

British Museum

Great Russell Street (Tube station: Holborn, Russell Square, Goodge Street or Tottenham Court Road)
London, England WC1B 3DG

Phone: 020-7323-8299 for information, 020-7323-8181 for bookings

<http://www.britishmuseum.org>

In a classical columned and domed 1857 building, this museum accommodates one of the world's greatest collections of antiquities (and a vast crowd of visitors). You'll have to walk more than 2 mi/3 km to take in all 94 galleries. The Great Court is a dramatic space—the tessellated glass roof makes it the biggest covered square in Europe. Be sure to stop at the controversial and beautiful Elgin Marbles, which were stripped from the Parthenon in Athens by Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin and ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, in 1806. Greece has been lobbying for their return for decades.

Daily 10 am-5:30 pm (Friday until 8:30 pm); Great Court daily 9 am-6 pm (Friday till 8:30 pm). Free except for special exhibitions; multimedia tours £5 adults; free introductory tours of various collections (30-40 minutes) throughout the day. See timetable on arrival.

Churchill War Rooms

King Charles Street (Tube station: Westminster or St. James' Park)
London, England SW1A 2AQ

Phone: 020-7930-6961

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/churchill-war-rooms>

Preserved to look just as they did during World War II, the Churchill War Rooms give insight into the lives of Winston Churchill—the greatest Briton ever, according to a nationwide poll—and his team during the Blitz. You can see Churchill's bedroom and the nucleus of the site, the Map Room. The museum, located in a large open area built under the courtyard, is the first to give a complete account of Churchill's life.

Daily 9:30 am-6 pm, with last admission at 5 pm. Closed 24-26 December. £17.50 adults.

Dennis Severs' House

18 Folgate St. (Tube station: Liverpool Street)
London, England E1 6BX

Phone: 020-7247-4013

<http://www.dennissevershouse.co.uk>

A California collector and artist, Dennis Severs turned his house into a still-life drama based on generations of a fictitious family. This wonderfully atmospheric town house provides a walking tour through the 18th and early-19th centuries, from scullery to smoking room to boudoir. Less than pristine (dampness rises from the walls), the museum evokes a lived-in home, and night visits—lit only by candles—are strangely moving.

Open Sunday noon-4 pm, and the first and third Monday of the month noon-2 pm. It's best to contact the house before visiting. Evening visits Monday year-round and Wednesday October-March 6-9 pm. See website for additional evening tours. Reservations are required for the evening candlelight tours. £10-£17.50, depending on type of tour.

Design Museum

28 Shad Thames (Tube station: Tower Hill or London Bridge)
London, England SE1 2YD

Phone: 020-7940-8790

<http://www.designmuseum.org>

This museum, dedicated to 20th- and 21st-century consumer-product design, is located on the riverfront beside Tower Bridge and displays the sophisticated, the quirky and the downright unusual. Changing exhibitions range from classic furniture to classic cars. Children are given free Design Action Packs,

which include creativity exercises and treasure trails. It's a great break from the historical side of London, and the in-house shop is a treat.

Daily 10 am-5:45 pm (last admission 30 minutes before closing). £12.40 adults.

Dickens House Museum

48 Doughty St. (Tube station: Russell Square or Chancery Lane)
London, England WC1N 2LX

Phone: 020-7405-2127

<http://www.dickensmuseum.com>

This black-brick town house is where Dickens and his family lived for several years during the 1830s while he wrote *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*. Much of the original furniture has been retained, as well as items from Dickens' other homes. The museum underwent a massive renovation in 2012, opening the kitchen and attic of Dickens' home to the public for the first time. Interesting annotations provide a fascinating glimpse into the author's day-to-day routine.

Open daily 10 am-5 pm (last admission 30 minutes before closing). £8 adults.

Dulwich Picture Gallery

Gallery Road, Dulwich Village
London, England SE21 7AD

Phone: 020-8693-5254

<http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk>

Designed by Sir John Soane in 1811, this gallery houses a magnificent collection of paintings by old masters, including Rembrandt, Rubens and Canaletto. Three critically acclaimed international loan exhibitions are held each year. Its reputation as one of the world's finest small museums is well deserved. Free tours Saturday and Sunday at 3 pm (with paid admission).

Tuesday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 11 am-5 pm (last admission is at 4:30 pm). Closed Monday except for bank holidays. £6 adults (£11 special exhibitions).

Guildhall Gallery and Roman Amphitheater

Guildhall Yard, east side (Tube station: Mansion House, St. Paul's, Bank or Moorgate)
London, England EC2V 5AE

Phone: 020-7332-3700

<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk>

This gallery displays about 250 works at a time from a collection of more than 4,000 works of art spanning the 17th century to the present day. Among the highlights are collections of Victorian paintings and London pictures, and there are temporary exhibitions throughout the year. More impressive still are the remains of a Roman amphitheater discovered in 1988.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm (last admission 4:30 pm), Sunday noon-4 pm (last admission 3:45 pm). Closures are sometimes required at short notice for state functions. Free except for ticketed exhibitions. Free guided tours every Friday at 12:15, 1:15, 2:15 and 3:15 pm.

London Transport Museum

Covent Garden Piazza (Tube station: Covent Garden, Leicester Square or Piccadilly Circus)
London, England WC2E 7BB

Phone: 020-7379-6344

<http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk>

The history of the London Underground (the subway, known to Londoners as the Tube), trains and the bright-red double-decker buses is brought to life with full-scale models, interactive displays and costumed guides. The brilliant KidZones and simulators make it a great place to take children.

Saturday-Thursday 10 am-6 pm, Friday 11 am-6 pm (last admission 5:15 pm). £15 adults.

Madame Tussaud's

Marylebone Road (Tube station: Baker Street)
London, England NW1 5LR

Phone: 0871-894-3000 for bookings

<http://www.madametussauds.com/London>

The original. If you're fascinated by likenesses of the great and famous in wax, this is the place. The eerie Chamber of Horrors and interactive experiences such as the Spirit of London are crowd pleasers.

Opening times vary during holiday periods, but it's generally open daily 9:30 am-5 pm (at peak times 9 am-7 pm). £30 adults.

Museum of London

150 London Wall (Tube station: Barbican, Moorgate, Bank or St. Paul's)
London, England EC2Y 5HN

Phone: 020-7001-9844

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk>

This is probably the most comprehensive city museum in the world. Permanent exhibitions include recent archaeological discoveries from Roman times and the London Before London gallery, which tells the story of the Thames Valley and its people from 450,000 BC to the arrival of the Romans in AD 50. It has refurbished its Modern London section, creating five new interactive galleries including a reconstructed Georgian pleasure garden.

Open daily 10 am-6 pm (galleries begin closing at 5:40 pm). Free except for special exhibitions.

National Gallery

Trafalgar Square (Tube station: Charing Cross or Leicester Square)
London, England WC2

Phone: 020-7747-2885

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk>

This is a treasure house filled (in gallery after gallery) with the U.K.'s major collection of paintings, executed by many famous artists—too much to take in on a single visit. Daily free guided tours on a variety of interesting themes. See the website or call for current program. A range of audio tours is available for £4. The themed trails are a great introduction to the collection for families. You can also create your own trail in the ArtStart room in the Sainsbury Wing, where you can also find lots of interactive information about the collection.

Daily 10 am-6 pm (Friday till 9 pm). Closed 24-26 December and 1 January. Free except for special exhibitions.

National Portrait Gallery

2 St. Martin's Place (Tube station: Leicester Square or Charing Cross)
London, England WC2H 0HE

Phone: 020-7306-0055

<http://www.npg.org.uk>

Five floors of famous faces, both paintings and photographs, are arranged in chronological order, from the likes of William Shakespeare to Mick Jagger. The Portrait Restaurant on the fifth floor offers stunning views of London and serves modern British fare.

Daily 10 am-6 pm (Thursday and Friday till 9 pm). Free except for special exhibitions.

Natural History Museum

Cromwell Road (Tube station: South Kensington)
London, England SW7 5BD

Phone: 020-7942-5000

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk>

Particularly noteworthy for its extensive dinosaur collection and exciting displays—including a near-life-size animatronic T. Rex complete with lifelike movement and swamp breath—this museum is always a big hit with kids. You can also take a guided tour of the museum's Darwin Centre. In summer, be sure to visit the Wildlife Garden.

Daily 10 am-5:50 pm. Last admission 5:30 pm. Free except for some temporary exhibitions.

Ripley's Believe It or Not

The London Pavilion, 1 Piccadilly Circus (Tube station: Piccadilly Circus)
London, England W1J 0DA

Phone: 020-3238-0022

<http://www.ripleyslondon.com>

The bizarre world of Robert Leroy Ripley has a home in London. Ripley traveled the world taking back curiosities, often of a freakish nature, and the London branch of the museum chain has its fair share of them, including shrunken heads, dinosaur eggs and a statue of the Beatles made out of chewed gum.

Daily 10 am-midnight (last entry 10:30 pm). £26.95 adults.

Royal Academy of Arts

Burlington House (Tube station: Piccadilly Circus or Green Park)
London, England W1J 0BD

Phone: 020-7300-8000

<http://www.royalacademy.org.uk>

The Royal Academy of Arts mounts a number of large-scale exhibitions throughout the year. Its annual Summer Exhibition is justly acclaimed, and paintings on display then can be purchased. Long lines are typical for major exhibitions, but you can order timed-entrance tickets in advance or book on the website.

Open daily 10 am-6 pm (Friday till 10 pm). Access to the John Madejski Fine Rooms (permanent collection) is by a free guided tour that lasts one hour. (Tour offered Tuesday at 1 pm, Wednesday-Friday at 1 and 3 pm, and Saturday at 11:30 am.) Fees vary by exhibition, but are usually £10.

Royal Museums Greenwich

Park Row; Docklands Light Railway station: Cutty Sark (Greenwich)
London, England SE10 9NF

Phone: 020-8858-4422 or 020-8312-6565

<http://www.rmg.co.uk>

Four outstanding museums are set in the historic buildings of the Greenwich UNESCO World Heritage site. The National Maritime Museum is one of the largest of its kind in the world, with everything from boats and navigational equipment to displays on explorers, sea trade, the Titanic, and the Nelson gallery's memorabilia from the heroic admiral and the Battle of Trafalgar. In a nearby dry dock, the 1869 sailing ship *Cutty Sark*, the last of the great tea clippers, was gutted by fire in 2007. Now restored, its decks and cargo hold offer a glimpse of life at sea. The Queen's House, which lodges the museum's fine-art collection, is a 17th-century architectural masterpiece designed by Inigo Jones.

Atop the hill in Greenwich Park is the Royal Observatory, which is bisected by the prime meridian. Visitors can literally stand with one foot in the Eastern Hemisphere and one in the Western. They can also see John Harrison's clocks, made famous in Dava Sobel's best-selling book *Longitude*, and other displays. The Peter Harrison Planetarium is spectacular, although not recommended for children younger than 5.

Daily 10 am-5 pm (last admission one hour before closing). Check website for late openings in peak season. National Maritime Museum open until 9 pm Thursday. Museum admission is free. Planetarium shows £6.50 adults, £4.50 children. Cutty Sark £13.50 adults, £7 children.

Science Museum

Exhibition Road (Tube station: South Kensington)
London, England SW7 2DD

Phone: 020-7942-4000 or 0870-870-4868

<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk>

Its changing exhibitions, interactive displays and up-to-the-minute accounts of science will keep children entertained for hours. Even adults admit they thoroughly enjoy this place. There's also plenty to do with virtual voyages on motion-ride simulators and an IMAX cinema.

Daily 10 am-6 pm, till 7 pm on school holidays. Closed 24-26 December. Free admission. IMAX films £11 adults. Simulator rides £6 adults. Combined IMAX 4-D Cinema and simulator tickets £22.50 adults.

Sir John Soane's Museum

13 Lincoln's Inn Fields (Tube station: Holborn or Chancery Lane)
London, England WC2A 3BP

Phone: 020-7405-2107

<http://www.soane.org>

Sir John Soane (1753-1837) was the architect who designed the Bank of England. His home is filled with astonishing art and artifacts drawn from several thousand years of history, from ancient Egypt to Renaissance Italy. It includes a fine assortment of neoclassical sculpture, but the highlight is the collection of paintings, with works by Canaletto and Hogarth (see his famous series *A Rake's Progress*).

The museum remains open in the midst of a major restoration program, in phases, the last to be completed by 2016. During this time, there may be some room closures.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm (also open 6-9 pm the first Tuesday of the month, when parts of the museum are illuminated by candlelight). Free. Museum tours Saturday at 11 am cost £10 (limited availability; ticket sales from 10:30 am). Booking essential for groups of six or more.

Tate Britain

Millbank (Tube station: Pimlico)
London, England SW1P 4RG

Phone: 020-7887-8888

<http://www.tate.org.uk>

The original Tate gallery displays British art from 1500 to the present. The galleries are organized in broadly chronological order, featuring the world's largest collection (in the Clore Gallery) of the works of Joseph Turner, one of Britain's most revered painters. The Late at the Tate evenings on select Fridays offer performances, talks, music and films along with extended access to the galleries.

Daily 10 am-6 pm, last admission to exhibitions 5:15 pm. Closed 24-26 December. Free except for special exhibitions.

Tate Modern

Bankside (Tube station: St. Paul's or Southwark)
London, England SE1 9TG

Phone: 020-7887-8888

<http://www.tate.org.uk>

In a stunning venue (a former power station) worth visiting just for its design, this art museum is one of London's top attractions. The sheer scale of the building allows many pieces in the Tate collection to be on permanent display. The massive turbine hall is so big that pieces of art are specially commissioned for it. Even if you're not a big fan of modern art, plan to spend some time there. The gift shops are excellent, as well.

Daily 10 am-6 pm (Friday and Saturday till 10 pm). Last admission to exhibitions 5:15 pm (Friday and Saturday 9:15 pm). Closed 24-26 December. Free except for special exhibitions.

The Wallace Collection

Hertford House, Manchester Square (Tube station: Bond Street)
London, England W1U 3BN

Phone: 020-7563-9500

<http://www.wallacecollection.org>

The Wallace Collection is considered one of the finest collections of art ever assembled by one family. Especially noteworthy are the 18th-century French paintings, miniatures and other works of art, along with paintings by such masters as Rembrandt, Titian, Rubens and Velazquez. They are beautifully displayed in an intimate setting. The restaurant is worth a visit on its own, as it is set in a grand covered indoor courtyard.

Daily 10 am-5 pm. Closed 24-26 December. Free.

The Wellcome Collection

183 Euston Road (Tube station: Euston Square, Warren Street, King's Cross)
London, England NW1 2BE

Phone: 020-7611-2222

<http://www.wellcomecollection.org>

Sir Henry Wellcome, the U.S.-born pharmacist and founder of independent scientific research charity the Wellcome Trust, was an eclectic collector and passionate advocate of the links between science and other disciplines. The Wellcome Collection explores human well-being through medicine, art and society. The collection features both temporary and permanent sci-art exhibitions (including much of Sir Henry's original collection) alongside a revolving program of live events and debates, and is quite simply one of the most exciting things to hit London's museum world in decades.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Thursday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm. Free.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Cromwell Road (Tube station: South Kensington)
London, England SW7 2RL

Phone: 020-7942-2000

<http://www.vam.ac.uk>

This museum of art and design occupies some 7 mi/11 km of galleries devoted to everything from architecture to high fashion. Some galleries cover specific materials (stained glass or tapestries, for example), and others are dedicated to specific world regions. The British Galleries feature stunning displays of British work, including fully furnished period rooms. If you're interested in miniature portraits or works by Constable, don't leave without visiting the two adjacent galleries on Level 3. The Medieval and Renaissance Galleries display more than 1,800 objects from the period of AD 300-1600.

Daily 10 am-5:45 pm (Friday till 10 pm). Closed 24-26 December. Free except for special exhibitions.

Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum

Church Road, Wimbledon
London, England SW19 5AE

Phone: 020-8946-6131

http://www.wimbledon.com/en_GB/museum_and_tours

The history of tennis is explored in interactive exhibits and films. Audioguides are available in ten languages.

Museum open daily 10 am-5 pm. Please see website for tour availability. Closed on the day before, the last day and the day after the Championships. During The Championships, the museum is open only to Championships ticket holders; normal museum charges apply. Museum £13 adults, £8 children ages 5-16; museum and tour £24 adults, £15 children ages 5-16. Free for children younger than 5.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Camden and Primrose Hill

These two neighborhoods, nestled side by side, could hardly be more different from one another. On the one side there's Camden, teeming with crowds on its weekend market days, which center around Camden Lock on the edge of the Regent's Canal, and home to one of London's grittier alternative scenes (think piercings, platform shoes and punk hairdos). On the other side, there's Primrose Hill, with its chic boutiques and restaurants, which run the length of Regent's Park Road, and high quota of celebrity residents. Pay a visit to both for insight into how two vastly different London neighborhoods can happily coexist.

Greenwich

Just south of the Thames and in the shadow of the famous *Cutty Sark* sailing ship, Greenwich throbs with history. Weekends show it in its best light, as the seemingly endless stream of people visits its antiques and crafts markets (on Greenwich High Road and off Stockwell Street). Its semi-isolated location, east of the city center on a small peninsula jutting into the river, makes a visit to Greenwich—home to the Royal Observatory—seem as if you've stepped into the past. The Discover Greenwich center in the Old Royal Naval College acts as a tourist office for the area.

Hampstead

With its adjacent 800-acre/324-hectare open heathland and feeling of being in a quaint village, the backstreets of Hampstead seem far away from the rush and bustle of the rest of London. Popular with writers and actors, it's a wonderful place to spend an afternoon dining in one of the many open-air restaurants and cafes, browsing in small boutiques in the lanes off Hampstead High Street or exploring the often untamed expanse of Hampstead Heath, where you will find natural bathing ponds if you fancy a dip. If you cross to the east side of the Heath, you'll come across Highgate Cemetery, which is filled with elaborate crypts and stonemasonry (<http://highgate-cemetery.org>). It's the resting place of some famous people, including Karl Marx and George Eliot. Hampstead is north of central London, accessible via the Underground (Hampstead) or the Overground (Hampstead Heath).

Hoxton and Shoreditch

The center of London's cutting-edge art and media scene, these East London boroughs have undergone remarkable regeneration. In the streets surrounding the bustling revamped Spitalfields Market—filled with stalls run by young designers and makers—lies an eclectic mixture of warehouse-cum-art-galleries, designer furniture and clothing shops, trendy eateries, and traditional pubs and cafes. Brick Lane, which transforms into a bustling bric-a-brac market on Sunday, is now a trendy stretch of cafes, boutiques, vintage stores and galleries that run into adjoining Cheshire Street. Heading north, the center of Hoxton is Hoxton Square itself, where on summer evenings the crowds from the square's numerous bars and restaurants or visitors to an evening viewing at one of the area's many art galleries (including the White Cube) spill onto its green lawn.

Notting Hill

Home to Europe's largest street carnival and the excellent Portobello Road market, Notting Hill should be on every visitor's agenda. Shabby eclecticism and super-chic wealth continue to survive side by side, adding to the area's charm. For a glimpse into the lifestyle of the well-heeled locals, head to the affluent area around Westbourne Grove and Ledbury Road. For a bit less flash, visit Goldburne Road, which the Portuguese community loves for two great patisseries. Notting Hill is slightly west of central London, accessible via the Underground.

Soho

With some of the city's best nightlife centered there, along with numerous restaurants and fashion shops, it's an ideal spot for visitors to gauge London's diversity. Soho's buzz is best experienced between Wardour and Greek streets, where the neighborhood's slightly seamy reputation clashes with the wealthy media types who work and play there. On nice summer days, Soho Square offers a small oasis of calm away from all the bustle. The best Underground station for Soho is Tottenham Court Road (currently undergoing renovations, check <http://www.tfl.gov.uk> for updates before you travel) or Leicester Square.

Stratford

The 2012 Olympics brought a flurry of development to this busy East London area, including the building of Westfield Stratford City, Europe's largest urban shopping center. It includes hundreds of shops, more than 50 places to eat, three hotels and the U.K.'s largest casino, as well as a cinema and entertainment area.

Adjacent is the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, where the Olympic and Paralympic Games were held. Stratford International station provides fast railway access to St. Pancras International. The area can also be reached easily from north, south and central London on the Underground, Overground and Docklands Light Railway.

Parks & Gardens

The Princess Diana Memorial Walk charts a 7-mi/11-km path that links a number of London's parks. It begins at Hyde Park Corner and continues through Hyde Park, Green Park and St. James' Park, taking in Horse Guards, Buckingham Palace, Kensington Palace and the Royal Albert Hall along the way. Simply follow the series of 80 plaques set in the ground. <https://www.royalparcs.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/things-to-see-and-do/self-guided-walks/the-diana-princess-of-wales-memorial-walk>.

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

Off Park Lane and Bayswater Road (Tube station: High Street Kensington, Lancaster Gate, Bayswater, Queensway, Marble Arch or Hyde Park Corner)
London, England W2

Phone: 0300-061-2000

<https://www.royalparcs.org.uk>

The grounds where royalty once hunted boar are now landscaped parkland with avenues of trees, and the site of a long-vanished river is now the Serpentine, an ornamental lake. On the western edge of Kensington Gardens is Kensington Palace (part of the palace is open to the public; part is reserved exclusively for members of the royal family). There is also a large playground and Princess Diana memorial there, and there is a memorial to the victims of the 7 July 2005 bombings. You'll see cyclists and in-line skaters in much of Hyde Park (cycling isn't permitted at other parks), and in the summer, you can swim in the Serpentine Lido (hardened swimmers swim in the lake year-round). At Speaker's Corner, near Marble Arch, all forms of humanity vent their obsessions on Sunday morning.

Hyde Park open 5 am-midnight, Kensington Gardens 6 am-9 pm. Swimming £4.

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

East End

London, England E20

Phone: 800-072-2110

<http://queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk>

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park opened in April 2014 after being re-imagined and reconstructed to change its function after the conclusion of the London 2012 Olympic Games. It is now a public park open to everyone, and the ArcelorMittal Orbit is undeniably the standout feature there. At about 376 ft/116 m tall, it is Britain's largest piece of public art. Created by artist and sculptor Sir Anish Kapoor and structural engineer Cecil Balmond of Arup Group Ltd., the engineering marvel seems to symbolize the entire area's aspirations: The red metal twists and turns in a straining ascent to the sky and then shouts its importance to the surrounding neighborhood when reaching the top. On a clear day, you can see nearly all the way to England's south coast from the top. The view encompasses Canary Wharf and its unique skyscrapers, the Crystal Palace transmitting station, and the chalk hills of the North and South Downs.

St. James' Park and Green Park

The Mall (Tube station: St. James' Park, Westminster, Green Park, Victoria or Charing Cross)

London, England SW1

Phone: 0300-061-2350

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk>

St. James' is the oldest royal park. It has an ornamental lake, intimate promenades, daily bandstand performances and views of Buckingham Palace. Just across the Mall (the avenue leading to the gates of Buckingham Palace) is the plainer but equally pleasant Green Park, once a popular spot for duels, but now more popular for sunbathing and picnicking.

Daily 5 am-midnight.

The Regent's Park

Chester Road (Tube station: Regent's Park, St. John's Wood or Baker Street)

London, England NW1

Phone: 0300-061-2300

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk>

Once a hunting ground on the wrong side of town, The Regent's Park is now a lush haven of stylish gardens, playing fields, the London Zoo and an open-air theater. The park has woodlands, grassland and wetland, and is well-equipped with a boating lake, playgrounds, running paths, tennis courts, sports center, cafes and refreshment stands. Live music and Shakespeare are performed at the open-air theater during the summer months. To the north of the park is Primrose Hill, which has great views over Westminster and the city.

Open daily from 5 am, closing times vary by month.

The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Kew Road (Tube station: Kew Gardens)
Richmond, England TW9

Phone: 020-8332-5655

<http://www.kew.org>

Kew Gardens (as most people call it), west of London, displays a marvelous array of specimens that were first planted in the 17th and 18th centuries. Orchids and palms are nurtured in the hothouses. Kew Palace, the oldest surviving building in the Gardens and once the family home of George III and Queen Charlotte, is open to the public during the summer months (April-September).

Open April-August Monday-Friday 9:30 am-6:30 pm; Saturday, Sunday and public holidays 9:30 am-7:30 pm. Glass House closes at 5:30 pm. The rest of the year, the gardens close one to two hours earlier (last admission is 3:45 pm October-February). See website for detailed hours for galleries and attractions. Gardens £15 adults, free for children younger than 17. Palace £6 adults, free for children younger than 17.

Performing Arts

London is one of the great centers of cultural entertainment. It is the most important theater city in the world, with real competition coming only from New York. The combined output of West End and fringe theaters adds up to some 600 new dramatic productions each year. Some of our favorite venues include the Bush Theatre, one of London's most consistently interesting fringe theaters; the Donmar Warehouse, which stages cutting-edge new works; and the Tricycle Theatre, an intimate theater known for raising questions about humanity.

With top orchestras and dozens of chamber and choral ensembles, the city also offers a wealth of classical music. The Royal Albert Hall in Kensington is the scene of the famous "proms"—the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts. London's top-notch orchestras also perform at the modernized Royal Festival Hall (phone 020-7960-4200; <http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk>) and the Barbican Centre (phone 020-7638-8891; <http://www.barbican.org.uk>).

London has a strong tradition of concerts performed in churches: St. Paul's Cathedral is famed for choir and organ recitals, and St. Martin-in-the-Fields and St. John's Smith Square offer full programs of classical music year-round. Wigmore Hall, a richly ornate venue, hosts excellent chamber groups, and Banqueting House's lunchtime concert season is definitely worth checking out.

London's opera and ballet companies survive on minuscule funds but still manage world-class productions. The Royal Opera House in Covent Garden covers two urban blocks. Its barrel-vaulted glass roof is an architectural sight to behold, and the rooftop loggia offers views of the piazza below. Sadler's Wells is undoubtedly London's premier dance venue. It hosts productions by major ballet and contemporary dance troupes from around the world.

The city also has cutting-edge roots and world-music festivals and performances. The Royal Festival Hall hosts the Meltdown festival every June, when leading artists (in recent years, Nick Cave and David Bowie) choose their favorite bands and solo artists. At the Barbican Centre, the repertoire ranges from pop, rock and world music to electronic and experimental music events.

Dance

English National Ballet

London, England

Phone: 020-7581-1245 for information

<http://www.ballet.org.uk>

Though much of its season is spent touring the country, the troupe's December performances in London theaters are a winter highlight. In summer, you might be able to catch a performance at Royal Albert Hall.

Royal Ballet

Covent Garden (Tube station: Covent Garden)

London, England WC2E 9DD

Phone: 020-7304-4000

<http://www.roh.org.uk>

This highly acclaimed troupe performs year-round at the Royal Opera House.

Sadler's Wells

Rosebery Avenue (Tube station: Angel)

London, England

Phone: 0844-412-4300

<http://www.sadlerswells.com>

The dance company has been located in Islington, near Angel, since 1683 and now also champions the latest in contemporary choreography, presenting work in its historic Sadler's Wells Theatre in Rosebery Avenue as well as nearby in the studio theatre, the Lilian Baylis Studio, and in the West End at The Peacock Theatre.

The Place

17 Duke's Road (Tube station: Euston or Russell Square)

London, England WC1H 9PY

Phone: 020-7121-1100

<http://www.theplace.org.uk>

A leading light on London's contemporary dance scene, and home to the London Contemporary Dance School and the Richard Alston Dance Company, The Place is Britain's busiest dance theater with a year-round program of cutting-edge dance from Britain and around the world.

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Creekside (Docklands Light Railway station: Cutty Sark; trains from Central London to Deptford or Greenwich)

London, England SE8 3DZ

Phone: 020-8305-4444

<http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk>

Set in an award-winning modern building, this dance school has a small theater that showcases new and established contemporary dance talent.

Music

London Symphony Orchestra

Barbican Centre, Silk Street (Tube station: Barbican or Moorgate)
London, England EC2Y 8DS

Phone: 020-7588-1116 for information, or 020-7638-8891 for tickets

<http://www.iso.co.uk>

The symphony performs at the Barbican Centre September-July. Concerts are also performed at the LSO St. Luke's—a restored church in East London and the symphony's home. The varied year-round program features community projects, classical evening performances and free "Discovery Friday" lunchtime concerts in St. Luke's. Other lunchtime concerts £10 adults. LSO St. Luke's is located at 161 Old St., London EC1V 9NG (Tube station: Old Street).

Philharmonia Orchestra

Belvedere Road (Tube station: Temple, Embankment or Charing Cross)
London, England SE1 8XX

Phone: 020-7921-3900, or 0800-652-6717 for the box office

<http://www.philharmonia.co.uk>

This popular touring orchestra performs in London at the Royal Festival Hall.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

16 Clerkenwell Green (administrative offices)
London, England

Phone: 020-7608-8800

<http://www.rpo.co.uk>

The orchestra performs year-round at Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall and other performance centers in London.

Opera

English National Opera

St. Martin's Lane (Tube station: Covent Garden)
London, England WC2N 4ES

Phone: 020-7845-9300

<http://www.eno.org>

Based in the beautifully restored Coliseum, this company stages productions that are more adventurous than traditional. Operas are sung in English.

Performances are held year-round.

Royal Opera

Covent Garden (Tube station: Covent Garden)
London, England WC2E 9DD

Phone: 020-7304-4000

<http://www.roh.org.uk>

Its productions are among the best in the world. Performances are at the Royal Opera House September-July.

Theater

Almeida Theatre

Almeida Street (Tube station: Highbury & Islington or Angel)
London, England N1 1TA

Phone: 020-7359-4404

<http://www.almeida.co.uk>

A highly regarded independent company that attracts big-name actors and playwrights.

Arcola Theatre

24 Ashwin St., Dalston (Tube station: Dalston Kingsland or Dalston Junction)
London, England E8 3DL

Phone: 020-7503-1646

<http://www.arcolatheatre.com>

One of the largest studio theaters in London, Arcola offers programming with a global context. You may see restaged classics, immersive theater or new writing.

Bush Theatre

7 Uxbridge Road, Shepherd's Bush Green (Tube station: Shepherd's Bush)
London, England W12 8LJ

Phone: 020-8743-3584, or 020-8743-5050 for the box office

<http://www.bushtheatre.co.uk>

An exciting new-writing fringe theater that produces high-quality productions in an intimate setting.

Donmar Warehouse

41 Earlham St. (Seven Dials; Tube station: Covent Garden)
London, England WC2H 9LX

Phone: 0844-871-7624

<http://www.donmarwarehouse.com>

This theater produces six in-house productions a year and serves up some of London's most memorable theatrical experiences.

National Theatre

South Bank (Tube station: Waterloo or Southwark)
London, England SE1 9PX

Phone: 020-7452-3400 for information, or 020-7452-3000 for tickets

<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk>

The National Theatre presents a number of notable productions, including highly acclaimed reworkings of the classics.

Box office Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-8 pm.

Old Vic

Waterloo Road (The Cut; Tube station: Waterloo or Southwark)
London, England SE1 8NB

Phone: 0844-871-7628 for tickets

<http://www.oldvictheatre.com>

It's one of London's oldest theaters, just beyond the South Bank in Waterloo. The Old Vic's boards have been trod by such thespian superstars as Sir Lawrence Olivier, Sir John Gielgud and Dame Judi Dench.

Open Air Theatre

The Ironworks, Inner Circle (Regent's Park)
London, England

Phone: 0844-826-4242

<http://openairtheatre.com>

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre offers a summer season of theatrical performances early June through mid-September.

Royal Court Theatre

Sloane Square (Tube station: Sloane Square)
London, England SW1W 8AS

Phone: 020-7565-5000

<http://www.royalcourttheatre.com>

The resident company presents many of London's leading new productions. The theater is known internationally for nurturing emerging talent. There is also a good bookshop there with scripts of plays that have previously run at the theater.

Box office Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

21 New Globe Walk (Tube station: London Bridge or Mansion House)
London, England SE1 9DT

Phone: 020-7902-1400, or 020-7401-9919 for the box office

<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com>

The resident Globe Players perform fine examples of the bard's work April-October. The open-air theater is a complete reconstruction of the original Globe, which was destroyed by fire in 1613. The theater comes complete with a replica of the original pit, where the audience stands for a bargain price.

The Tricycle

269 Kilburn High Road (Tube station: Kilburn)
London, England NW6 7JR

Phone: 020-7328-1000

<http://www.tricycle.co.uk>

London's premier venue for political and provocative theater. Alongside its own performances, it also receives interesting productions from elsewhere.

Box office open Monday-Friday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 2-8 pm.

Young Vic

66 The Cut (Tube station: Waterloo)
London, England SE1 8LZ

Phone: 020-7922-2922

<http://www.youngvic.org>

The juvenile, smaller sibling of the nearby Old Vic, rebuilt and rejuvenated, offers a range of new and traditional plays and other entertainment.

Shopping

Whatever your budget, London's shopping experience is one of the best in the world. From world-famous department stores such as Harrods and Fortnum & Mason to lowly but lively street markets, you'll discover a kaleidoscope of possibilities. Antiques hounds and book lovers, in particular, will find the city a veritable paradise.

Oxford Street and Regent Street are the main shopping superhighways, but Bond Street is one of our favorites to browse along. The designer venues there attract big spenders. New Bond Street runs just south of Oxford Street; it becomes Old Bond Street—where prices are even higher—just north of Piccadilly. Another good spot is Kensington High Street, which offers a range of national chain stores together with more specialized shops. If you venture farther into South Kensington (Sloane Street, in particular), you'll find high-end boutiques and upmarket department stores.

King's Road in Chelsea is a place for the hip to be seen, browsing the numerous clothing and antiques shops. And parts of Notting Hill have shed their down-at-the-heels charms and now boast some of the city's most exclusive boutiques. For bookshops—new, secondhand and antiquarian—head to Charing Cross Road, between the Leicester Square and Tottenham Court Road Underground stations.

Farther east, the stalls and shops of Spitalfields market are a great place for unique and bespoke items from young designers that you won't find represented on the high street.

Shopping Hours: Generally Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm (till 7 or 8 pm on Thursday). Most major stores in busy shopping or tourist areas are open on Sunday, usually noon-6 pm, with many opening at 11:30 am for browsing. Thursday is late-shopping night for many stores on Oxford Street.

Department Stores

Fenwick

63 New Bond St. (Tube station: Bond Street)
London, England W1A 3BS

Phone: 020-7629-9161

<http://www.fenwick.co.uk>

An upmarket store with a flair for high fashion. The restaurants are excellent as well, making it a popular spot for lunch.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm (Thursday till 8 pm), Sunday noon-6 pm.

Fortnum & Mason

Harrods

87-135 Brompton Road (Tube station: Knightsbridge)
London, England SW1X 7XL

Phone: 020-7730-1234

<http://www.harrods.com>

The London landmark has more than 60 departments for fashion alone and more than 20 restaurants. Check out the glamorous Shoe Salon with the most luxurious brands and designer creations. The marble-floored food hall, crammed with provisions, is an experience all on its own.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 11:30 am-6 pm.

Harvey Nichols

109-125 Knightsbridge (Tube station: Knightsbridge)
London, England SW1X 7RJ

Phone: 020-7235-5000

<http://www.harveynichols.com>

Stylish international clothing, home furnishings and household goods. The food market on the fifth floor includes a cocktail bar, cafe and restaurant.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 11:30 am-6 pm. The fifth-floor cafe opens at 8 am.

John Lewis

300 Oxford St. (Tube station: Oxford Circus)
London, England W1A 1EX

Phone: 20-7629-7711

<http://www.johnlewis.com/our-shops/oxford-street>

A trustworthy London staple, this place says it will never be undersold (it even matches competitors' sale prices). The flagship Oxford Street store is the largest branch in the U.K. and stocks good quality homewares, fashion and electronics.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-8 pm (Thursday till 9 pm), Sunday 11:30 am-6 pm.

Liberty

210-220 Regent St. (Tube station: Oxford Circus)
London, England W1B 5AH

Phone: 020-7734-1234

<http://www.liberty.co.uk>

World-famous for its distinctive fabrics and prints, including an impressive selection of original ties and scarves, Liberty is also a champion of innovative fashion and design.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

Selfridges

400 Oxford St. (Tube station: Bond Street)
London, England W1A 1AB

Phone: 0800-123-400

<http://www.selfridges.com>

One of London's leading department stores and the one favored by many Londoners, Selfridges offers items by many of the country's top clothing and interior designers. The vast cosmetics hall alone is worth the visit, and the new second-floor shoe galleries have an awesome range of brands and styles displayed in their own conceptual spaces.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-9 pm, Sunday 11:30 am-6:15 pm.

Galleries

Cork Street, in Mayfair, is the center of London's commercial art world. It is filled with galleries showing contemporary art, with a fair number of Picassos and other masters thrown in for good measure. The free *Galleries* magazine, available online or from galleries around the city, has details of all current shows. <http://www.galleries.co.uk/g-crk.htm>.

Markets

Borough Market

8 Southwark St. (Tube station: London Bridge)
London, England SE1 1TL

Phone: 020-7407-1002

<http://www.boroughmarket.org.uk>

Excellent, fresh British produce—from handmade sausages to award-winning English beers and wines—can be found at this wonderful food market, the city's oldest. In an inner-city location (the movie location for Bridget Jones' flat is around the corner at 8 Bedale St. above the Globe pub), it is a must-visit market for perusing or for lunch—many stalls sell delicious, freshly made filled rolls, burgers and wraps.

Thursday 11 am-5 pm, Friday noon-6 pm, Saturday 8 am-5 pm.

Brick Lane and Sunday UpMarket

Ely's Yard (entrances on Brick Lane and Hanbury Street), The Old Truman Brewery (Tube station: Aldgate East, Old Street or Liverpool Street)
London, England E1 6QL

Phone: 020-7770-6028

<http://www.sundayupmarket.co.uk>

This lively bric-a-brac market spills into the surrounding streets and warehouses every Sunday morning. The main enticement is the huge variety of clothing and exotic foods. The weekly Sunday UpMarket located in the Old Truman Brewery features an enticing array of exotic foodstuffs alongside eclectic arts, fashion and crafts.

Sunday 8 am-2 pm. Sunday UpMarket 10 am-5 pm.

Camden Market

Camden Town (Tube station: Camden Town)
London, England NW1

<http://www.camdenmarkets.org>

Though this sprawling market (the largest in the U.K.) is extremely crowded and increasingly touristy, you can still find hip fashions, jewelry, accessories and antiques there. The best crafts are beyond High Street at the Camden Lock end.

There are always some stalls open throughout the week, but all stalls are open Thursday-Sunday 10 am-5:30 pm.

Columbia Road

Columbia Road (Tube station: Old Street)
London, England E2

<http://columbiaroad.info>

Fantastic early-morning flower market. More than 80 plant stalls, garden shops and cafes with street musicians to serenade you while you roam. Go even if you're not interested in buying.

Sunday 8 am-3 pm.

Dover Street Market

17-18 Dover St. (Tube station: Green Park or Bond Street)
London, England W1S 4LT

Phone: 020-7518-0680

<http://www.doverstreetmarket.com>

Five floors of cutting-edge fashion located in a grungy warehouse in Mayfair may seem like a juxtaposition of styles gone too far, but this brilliant concept store founded by Rei Kawakubo of Commes des Garçons is a winner.

Monday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm.

Petticoat Lane

Middlesex Street (formerly Petticoat Lane) and adjoining streets (Tube station: Liverpool Street or Aldgate East)
London, England E1

A traditional East End market established more than 400 years ago and crammed with inexpensive clothes, leather goods and housewares. It is one of London's most famous markets, even if it's no longer one of the best. With luck, you can find some trendy fashion bargains among the chaff.

Monday-Friday 10 am-4:30 pm, Sunday (best market day) 9 am-2 pm.

Portobello Road

Portobello Road, Golborne Road and Colville Terrace (Tube station: Notting Hill Gate or Ladbroke Grove)
London, England W11

<http://www.portobelloroad.co.uk>

Saturday is when the famous antiques market takes place (8 am-5 pm), but there's something going on every day. Dealers in every antique and collectible are represented. You can download or order a copy of the printed guide from the website.

Monday-Wednesday, Friday and Saturday you'll find general goods, including fresh produce 8 am-6:30 pm, Thursday till 1 pm. The flea market takes place on Saturday 8 am-2 pm.

Spitalfields

Entrances off Commercial and Brushfield streets (Tube station: Liverpool Street or Aldgate East)
London, England E1 6BG

<http://www.oldspitalfieldsmarket.com>

Excellent range of handmade crafts, clothing, housewares and jewelry, including original designs and collectibles, in a redeveloped Victorian covered market. Sunday is the busiest day, when the organic-foods market is open. The Thursday antiques market is also popular, with other specialist stalls such as art, books, fashion and music open on different days of the week.

Tuesday-Friday 10 am-4 pm, Sunday 9 am-5 pm; times vary other days of the week.

Shopping Areas

Covent Garden

Enter from James, Russell, King or Southampton streets (Tube station: Covent Garden)
London, England WC2

<http://www.coventgardenlife.com/shopping/shopping.asp>

There are lots of good shops in and around Covent Garden—check out Neal Street for designer names from Guess and O'Neill to Doc Martens. A former fruit-and-vegetable market centered on the first planned piazza in London, this revitalized hot spot has imaginative street entertainment, bars and pubs, exotic eateries and arcades of craft and jewelry shops, boutiques and market stalls. Also many, many tourists.

Oxo Tower

Oxo Tower Wharf (South Bank; Tube station: Waterloo or Southwark)
London, England SE1 9PH

Phone: 020-7021-1600

<http://www.oxotower.co.uk>

The first and second floors of this impressive building are host to 50 designer-maker shops offering contemporary examples of jewelry, glass, ceramics, lighting, furniture and textiles. It's wonderful for browsing or finding a truly special gift, and good photographic exhibitions are staged on the ground floor. The eighth-floor Oxo Tower Restaurant, Bar & Brasserie (run by Harvey Nichols; <http://www.harveynichols.com/oxo-tower-london>) has amazing views.

Shops are generally open daily except Monday 11 am-6 pm.

Savile Row

Savile Row (Tube station: Bond Street or Oxford Circus)
London, England W12 7SL

<http://www.savilerowbespoke.com>

This street is where you go to get a top-quality suit made to order. It's famous, exclusive and expensive. Look for such tailors as Richard Anderson and Kilgour. To check out shirtmaker to the stars William Hunt, stop at Oswald Boateng's on the corner of Vigo Street or Richard James at No. 29.

Westbourne Grove

Notting Hill (Tube station: Notting Hill Gate)
London, England W11

<http://www.westbourne-grove.com>

This West London street (especially the Notting Hill Gate end, plus Ledbury Road and its immediate surroundings) offers a range of antiques, clothing and jewelry stores. Some shops to look for include Aime, as well as Brora, which offers elegant designer cashmeres.

Westfield London

Shepherd's Bush (Tube station: Shepherd's Bush or Wood Lane)
London, England

<http://uk.westfield.com/london>

From designer labels to high-street favorites, this large shopping center has it all. Located in West London's Shepherd's Bush, everything from shopfittings and displays to public areas feature high-design concepts, such as a floor made of recycled trainers (athletic shoes) and a hanging sculpture of acrylic stilettos. It also incorporates the stylish Village, with sparkling chandeliers, a champagne bar and more than 40 top fashion labels from around the world.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-10 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

Whiteley's

Queensway (Tube station: Bayswater or Queensway)
London, England W2 4YN

Phone: 020-7229-8844

<http://www.whiteleys.com>

London's first department store is now a shopping mall with a few bars, restaurants, a bowling alley and a cinema complex. Fashion shows and activities for children often take place in the interior courtyard.

Center open daily 8:30 am-midnight. Shops open Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm; opening times vary for individual shops.

Specialty Stores

Cutler and Gross

16 Knightsbridge Green (Tube station: Knightsbridge)
London, England SW1X 7QL

Phone: 020-7581-2250

<http://www.cutlerandgross.com>

Charmingly eccentric eyewear from this most English of designer duos. There's an astonishing selection of frames for standard eyewear, but it's the sunglasses that can't be beat. Choose from the house collection or pop across the road for a fine vintage selection from designers such as YSL, Christian Dior and Pucci. This is glamour with a capital G.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm.

Darkroom

52 Lamb's Conduit St. (Tube station: Russell Square or Holborn)
London, England WC1N 3LL

Phone: 020-7831-7244

<http://www.darkroomlondon.com>

This concept store—half gallery, half shop—is for aesthetes. It features an eclectic mix of high-end fashion and interior accessories alongside bimonthly art exhibitions.

Monday-Friday 11 am-7 pm, Saturday 11 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm.

Emma Bridgewater

81A Marylebone High St. (Tube station: Bond Street)
London, England W1U 4QL

Phone: 020-7486-6897

<http://www.emmabridgewater.co.uk>

Classic English pottery and home accessories, from cake stands and egg cups to teapots and witty slogans on tea towels (what the British call a dish towel).

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm.

Hamleys

188-196 Regent St. (Tube station: Piccadilly Circus or Oxford Circus)
London, England W1B 5BT

Phone: 371-704-1977

<http://www.hamleys.com>

Children and adults alike will enjoy Europe's oldest and largest toy store. Spanning seven floors, this vibrant store brings back the magic of toys with its colorful displays, dolls, toy demonstrations, a collection of traditional stuffed animals and more.

Monday-Friday 10 am-9 pm, Saturday 9:30 am-9 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

James Smith & Sons

53 New Oxford St. (Hazelwood House; Tube station: Tottenham Court Road)
London, England WC1A 1BL

Phone: 020-7836-4731

<http://www.james-smith.co.uk>

Worth visiting just for the beautiful original 19th-century exterior, James Smith & Sons sells that most London of items, the umbrella. Walking sticks and canes are also available.

Open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10 am-5:45 pm, Tuesday 11 am-5:45 pm, Thursday 10 am-6:45 pm, Saturday 10 am-5:15 pm.

Le Labo

28A Devonshire St. (Tube station: Baker Street)
London, England W1G 6PS

Phone: 020-3441-1535

<http://www.lelabofragrances.com>

Joining New York, Tokyo and LA, London now has its own perfume boutique. This unique upmarket brand sells one-of-a-kind designer-quality fragrances that are mixed and bottled for you upon purchase.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 pm (Thursday till 7 pm), Sunday noon-5 pm.

Lulu Guinness

3 Ellis St. (Tube station: Sloane Square or Knightsbridge)
London, England SW1X 9AL

Phone: 020-7823-4828

<http://www.luluguinness.com>

Stunning handbags, hand-decorated with delicate beadwork, applique and embroidery.

Daily 11 am-10 pm.

Magma

8 and 16 Earham St. (Tube station: Covent Garden)
London, England WC2H 9RY

Phone: 020-7240-7571

<http://www.magmabooks.com>

This place has expanded from its quirky magazine and bookshop featuring international titles and hard-to-get design magazines into a product shop a few doors down. It specializes in unique and interesting things that you never knew you wanted.

Monday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

Mulberry

50 New Bond St. (Tube station: Bond Street)
London, England W1S 1BJ

Phone: 020-7491-3900

<http://www.mulberry.com/store-locator/london-new-bond-street>

Beautifully crafted leather luggage, goods and accessories are the highlights of this thoroughly modern yet traditional English brand.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

Relik

8 Golborne Road (Tube station: Westbourne Park or Ladbroke Grove)
London, England W10 5NW

Phone: 020-8962-0089

<http://www.reliklondon.co.uk>

Located in the shadow of Erno Goldfinger's iconic Trellick Tower and a stone's throw from Portobello Road, this tiny vintage boutique is packed with clothes and accessories from the 1920s on. Expect to find mint-condition goods by designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Pucci and Christian Dior, to name just a few.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm.

Smythson's of Bond Street

40 New Bond St. (Tube station: Bond Street)
London, England W1S 2DE

Phone: 020-7629-8558

<http://www.smythson.com>

Renowned producers of fine stationery, luxury leather goods and accessories. The hand-bound leather books are beautifully crafted.

Monday-Wednesday and Friday 9:30 am-7 pm, Thursday 10 am-8 pm, Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

The Tea House

15 Neal St. (Covent Garden)
London, England WC2H 9P

Phone: 020-7240-7539

<http://www.teahouse ltd.com>

This is a fantastic independent tea shop selling more than 70 varieties of tea in different weights, including whole fruit blends, red bush blends and teas from China, Sri Lanka, Japan and other places. Upstairs is a teapot emporium.

Monday-Wednesday 10 am-7 pm, Thursday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 11 am-7 pm.

Dining

Dining Overview

London is now one of the premier culinary cities of Europe, a result, in part, of the restaurant boom that started in the 1990s. Londoners' interest in food continues unabated, and most of the "celebrity chefs" who have become stars of British television have restaurants there (Jamie Oliver, Angela Hartnett, Antony Worrell Thompson and Gordon Ramsay). Much of the best food borrows flavors and ingredients from around the world—though some so-called British eateries are stunning diners with their quality and innovation and use of local ingredients. Many popular restaurants are high on style, too—sleek and chic in renovated buildings or designer hotels. Old-fashioned pubs that have been given a fresh makeover are also in vogue. Even museums, themselves experiencing renewed popularity, now provide notable eating establishments.

Though variety is the key word, specific areas are best for specific tastes: Chinese is forever associated with Gerrard Street, W1, in Chinatown; for inexpensive Indian food, head for Brick Lane, E1; for Middle Eastern, try Edgware Road, W2. For something inexpensive and filling, head for a pub. For good value, look for pre- and post-theater specials at restaurants in the West End and some of the excellent fixed-price lunchtime menus at many of the city's top restaurants.

Dining out is expensive, but keep in mind that menu prices always include 20% VAT (value-added tax). It's a good idea to reserve a table at all but the most casual, humble restaurants. Most restaurants open for very specific lunch and dinner hours. Lunch is generally served noon-3 pm, and 7-11:30 pm is typical for dinner. Many restaurants offer two dinner seatings most evenings. Note that many of London's most expensive restaurants do offer an affordable way to enjoy their cuisine—a bargain-priced, prix-fixe lunch menu, often costing less than £25 per head.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of dinner for one, including tax but not tip or drinks: \$ = less than £25; \$\$ = £25-£45; \$\$\$ = £46-£70; \$\$\$\$ = more than £70.

Local & Regional

Corrigan's Mayfair

28 Upper Grosvenor St. (Tube station: Marble Arch)
London, England W1K 7EH

Phone: 020-7499-9943

<http://www.corrigansmayfair.co.uk>

Fine dining in a surprisingly relaxed and unpretentious environment. Serving hearty traditional fare created by Irish chef Richard Corrigan, this restaurant has a faultless menu including roast loin of rabbit and butter-poached Dover sole. The starters are especially mouthwatering, and service is friendly.

Monday-Friday noon-11 pm, Saturday 6-11 pm, Sunday noon-9:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Dinner by Heston Blumenthal

66 Knightsbridge (in the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park)
London, England SW1X 7LA

Phone: 020-7201-3833

<http://www.dinnerbyheston.com>

Heston Blumenthal's London restaurant has earned a Michelin star. All the dishes there have been inspired by his digging around in the cupboards of historical British cuisine, with each dish on the menu given a date alongside it. So to start, you could order a 1660 recipe of savory porridge (cod cheeks with pickled beetroot, fennel and garlic) and for the main course you could try a 1780 dish of spiced pigeon. As a bonus, you can watch the goings-on in the kitchen through a glass wall.

Daily noon-2:30 pm and 6-10:30 pm. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Great Queen Street

32 Great Queen St. (Tube station: Covent Garden or Holborn)
London, England WC2B 5AA

Phone: 020-7242-0622

<http://www.greatqueenstreetrestaurant.co.uk>

Top-quality ingredients and excellent, no-nonsense cooking in a relaxed setting make this one of the best spots in town to enjoy modern British dining. Enjoy a wonderfully savory Arbroath smokie, homemade rabbit pie or one of the shared meals, such as the beef-rib-and-chips for two. There is a quick turnaround on tables, so don't go there if you want to linger all evening.

Monday-Saturday noon-2:30 pm and 6-10:30 pm, Sunday 1-4 pm. \$\$\$. Accepts MasterCard and Visa.

J Sheekey

28-34 St. Martin's Court (Tube station: Leicester Square)
London, England WC2N 4AL

Phone: 020-7240-2565

<http://www.j-sheekey.co.uk>

The old-fashioned look of this restaurant, the quality of the food and the fine service make for memorable dining. The menu features British cuisine, emphasizing seafood. Try the Cornish stew, Jersey rock oysters or share a seafood platter.

Daily noon-3 pm and 5 pm-midnight. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Pollen Street Social

8-10 Pollen St. (Tube station: Oxford Circus)
London, England W1S 1NQ

Phone: 020-7290-7600

<http://www.pollenstreetsocial.com>

This is the first solo restaurant venture of Jason Atherton, a talented chef who previously worked with Gordon Ramsay. He has succeeded in creating a place for fine dining without any of the stuffy atmosphere usually associated with it. You can go there for a special occasion or just pop in for a slice of cake. You'll find British ingredients such as line-caught Cornish turbot or West Country ox cheek with tongue and sirloin prepared by a great chef.

Monday-Saturday noon-2:45 pm and 6-10:45 pm. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Roast

The Floral Hall, Stoney Street (Tube station: Southwark or London Bridge)
London, England SE1 1TL

Phone: 20-3006-6111

<http://www.roast-restaurant.com>

What could be more British than a menu dedicated to the nation's favorite Sunday lunch, the roast? Expect to find top-quality joints of meat alongside seasonal offerings and souped-up comfort food such as herring roe on toast. The real star of the show is the setting. The restaurant sits in a glass-walled dome high above buzzing Borough Market and does a roaring trade in cooked breakfasts and leisurely afternoon teas, as well as that all-important roast.

Monday-Friday 7 am-10:45 pm, Saturday 8:30 am-10:46 pm, Sunday 11:30 am-6:30 pm. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Rules

35 Maiden Lane (Tube station: Covent Garden)
London, England WC2E 7LB

Phone: 020-7836-5314

<http://www.rules.co.uk>

London's oldest restaurant, founded in 1798, is alive and well, serving classic British cuisine in traditional, intimate surroundings. It specializes in classic game cookery, oysters, pies and puddings, all well-prepared with fine ingredients.

Daily noon-midnight. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Skylon

Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road (Tube station: Waterloo)
London, England SE1 8XX

Phone: 020-7654-7800

<http://www.skylon-restaurant.co.uk>

This place is set at the front of the refurbished Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank with spectacular views over the river Thames. Signature dishes include poached ox cheeks with potato truffles. Opt for fine modern-European dining in the restaurant or more relaxed brasserie fare in the grill room.

Monday-Saturday noon-10:30 pm, Sunday noon-4 pm. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Smith's of Smithfield

67-77 Charterhouse St. (Tube station: Farringdon or Barbican)
London, England EC1M 6HJ

Phone: 020-7251-7950

<http://www.smithsofsmithfield.co.uk>

This spacious and thoroughly modern restaurant resides in the impressive building of a former meat warehouse in the heart of an ancient and still-thriving meat market. It has comfortable seating, attractive brickwork and big windows, and it offers excellent cafe-style dining. The place takes up five floors with an excellent open terrace on the top. Try the fantastic breakfast offerings downstairs or the wine rooms on the first floor, or head to the sophisticated top-floor dining room for a taste of modern British cuisine and views over the city.

Daily for breakfast (cafe only), lunch and dinner; Sunday for brunch also. \$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

St. John

26 St. John St. (Tube station: Farringdon or Barbican)
London, England EC1M 4AY

Phone: 020-7251-0848

<http://www.stjohnrestaurant.co.uk>

High on quality and low on fuss, St. John offers some of the finest British food in the capital and has built up a fine reputation and loyal following. The restaurant is located in the old packaging room of a former smokehouse, and the bar and bakery are in what was originally the smoking room. One word of warning, however: There are few vegetarian dishes. St. John Bread and Wine, opposite Spitalfields market, serves similar food and sells bread and cakes to take away.

Monday-Friday noon-11 pm. Saturday 6 pm-11 pm, Sunday 12:30 pm-4 pm. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

The Grill at the Dorchester

53 Park Lane (Tube station: Hyde Park Corner or Green Park)
London, England W1K 1QA

Phone: 020-7629-8888

<http://www.thedorchester.com>

This is quality British cuisine in surroundings of pure elegance. It's a good place to try modern takes on British classics, although the menu is wide-ranging. Also in the hotel is the Dorchester's renowned three-Michelin-star French restaurant under chef Alain Ducasse.

Monday-Friday 7 am-10:30 pm, Saturday 7:30 am-10:30 pm, Sunday 7:30 am-10 pm. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cuisines

American

All-Star Lanes

Bloomsbury Place, corner of Great Russell Place and Southampton Row (Tube station: Holborn or Tottenham Court Road)

London, England WC1B 4DA

Phone: 020-7025-2676

<http://www.allstarlanes.co.uk>

London's first boutique bowling venue is also a great spot to go for dinner or a cocktail. Decked out in ultracute, ultrakitsch retro style, it offers American diner classics from burgers and fries to mac-and-cheese, but there's serious quality behind the fun exterior. See the website for other locations throughout London.

Monday-Thursday from 5 pm, Friday from noon, Saturday and Sunday from 11 am. Reservations available online. \$-\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Bodean's BBQ

10 Poland St. (Tube station: Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus)

London, England W1F 8PZ

Phone: 020-7287-7575

<http://www.bodeansbbq.com>

Although there are several locations around the city, the Soho original is the best place to get a barbecue fix in central London. The menu includes American classics such as baby-back ribs, pulled pork, burgers and steaks. A good bet for families.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations available online. \$. Most major credit cards.

Gourmet Burger Kitchen

13 Maiden Lane (Covent Garden; Tube station: Queensway, Covent Garden or Leicester Square)
London, England WC2E 7NE

Phone: 020-7240-9617

<http://www.gbk.co.uk>

With 100% Aberdeen Angus steaks and a number of surprising toppings (the Kiwi Burger features pineapple, beet root and a fried egg), the Gourmet Burger Kitchen offerings are frequently voted the best of their kind in London. Don't forget to try the hand-cut chips; they are divine. Vegetarian options and children's portions available. See website for other locations.

Monday-Saturday 11:30 am-11 pm, Sunday noon-10 pm. \$.

Asian

Ba Shan

24 Romilly St. (Tube station: Leicester Square)
London, England W1D 5AH

Phone: 020-7287-3266

<http://www.bashanlondon.com>

Specializing in *xiao chi*, small snack dishes from northern China, this charming Soho restaurant offers a break from the typical Chinese experience. The food is terrific—all noodles and dumpling skins are handmade—and the pot stickers and steamed buns are not to be missed. The sister restaurant Bar Shu across the road is equally good.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cay Tre

301 Old St. (Tube station: Old Street)
London, England EC1V 9LA

Phone: 020-7729-8662

<http://caytresoho.co.uk>

This trendy but basic Vietnamese cafe serves delicious, inexpensive food—try the hot and spicy stews served in a clay pot or the beef wrapped in rice paper. Generous servings. If this place is full, the same people also run the Viet Grill farther east on Kingsland Road, and there's another branch on Soho's Dean Street.

Daily 11 am-11 pm. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Nobu

19 Old Park Lane (in the Metropolitan Hotel; Tube station: Hyde Park Corner or Green Park)
London, England W1K 1LB

Phone: 020-7447-4747

<http://noburestaurants.com/london/index.html>

Outstanding and inventive Japanese cuisine and impeccable service ensure that this Michelin-starred restaurant lives up to its reputation. Try the signature black cod, the tastebud-tickling Wagyu beef or the

mouthwatering king crab claw in butter *ponzu* sauce. Opt for the sampler menu to try all the best sushi dishes.

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended (taken up to one month in advance). Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Tamarind

20 Queen St. (Mayfair; Tube station: Green Park)
London, England W1J 5PR

Phone: 020-7629-3561

<http://tamarindrestaurant.com>

London's original haute-Indian restaurant is still one of the best in Britain and has a Michelin star to prove it. Tamarind's menu changes seasonally and includes a good selection of kebabs, curries and vegetable options. Sophisticated dining room with excellent service.

Daily noon-2:45 pm and 5:30-11 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Set lunch menus and Sunday tasting menu available. Most major credit cards.

The Cinnamon Club

30 Great Smith St. (Tube station: St. James' Park)
London, England SW1P 3BU

Phone: 020-7222-2555

<http://www.cinnamonclub.com>

The Old Westminster Library has been transformed into a high-class eatery. The roast venison, made with spices from southern Asia, is divine. Be sure to try one of the Asian-themed cocktails in the laid-back bar downstairs before you dine. Private dining rooms are available for small parties.

Monday-Friday 7:30 am-10 pm, noon-2:45 pm and 6-10:45 pm, Saturday noon-2:45 pm and 6-10:45 pm, Sunday noon-4:30 pm and 5:30-9 pm. Reservations available online. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

French

Bar Boulud

66 Knightsbridge (in the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park Hotel; Tube Station: Knightsbridge)
London, England SW1X 7LA

Phone: 020-7201-3899

<http://www.barboulud.com>

A star in London's dining scene is this French-style bistro and wine bar, sister restaurant to chef Daniel Boulud's popular Manhattan eatery. The cuisine, inspired by his native Lyon, features delectable terrines and pates, an array of sausages and hams, and an egalitarian menu that ranges from New York burgers to bistro favorites to steaks and seafood. The extensive wine list includes many wines by the glass. The atmosphere is bright and buzzing, with sleek decor and an open kitchen, and the prices are surprisingly moderate for such quality fare.

Daily noon-1 am. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Club Gascon

57 W. Smithfield (Tube station: Barbican)
London, England EC1A 9DS

Phone: 020-7600-6144

<http://www.clubgascon.com>

A culinary tour of southwestern France through rich but delicious food. The good-value set menus match a glass of wine with each course.

Tuesday-Thursday noon-2 pm and 6.30-10 pm, Friday 6:30-10:30 pm, Saturday 6-10:30 pm.
Reservations available online or by phone. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Galvin Bistrot De Luxe

66 Baker St. (Tube station: Baker Street)
London, England W1U 7DJ

Phone: 020-7935-4007

<http://www.galvinrestaurants.com>

This gem, the founding member of the Galvin Restaurants chain, sits behind an unprepossessing frontage on busy Baker Street. Some of London's best upmarket bistro fare is served in a similarly authentic French setting (think plain-wood paneling and crisp, white tablecloths). Scottish beef owes its mouthwatering tenderness to searing before being slow-roasted (served, of course, with perfectly crisp french fries); this is typical of the care that goes into each dish. The service is exemplary.

Daily noon-2:30 pm and 6-10 pm. Reservations available by phone. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon

13-15 West St. (Tube station: Leicester Square)
London, England WC2H 9NE

Phone: 020-7010-8600

<http://www.joelrobuchon.co.uk>

Forgo the formality of the upstairs "cuisine" restaurant for a place at the sumptuous downstairs bar, where the counter encompasses the busy open-plan kitchen. The Japanese styling of the interior might seem a little incongruous for such high-concept French dining, but the restaurant pulls it off. With individual dishes presented like bespoke pieces of art, this is a sensual, slightly decadent dining experience that's just perfect for special-occasion romance.

Monday-Saturday 11:30 am-3:30 pm and 5:30 pm-midnight, Sunday noon-4 pm and 6:30-10:30 pm.
\$\$\$\$.

Pied a Terre

34 Charlotte St. (Tube station: Goodge Street or Tottenham Court Road)
London, England W1T 2NH

Phone: 020-7636-1178

<http://www.pied-a-terre.co.uk>

This Michelin-starred restaurant is noted for French-inspired cuisine—right down to the escargot and foie gras. There is, quite simply, nothing on the menu we wouldn't recommend, and the atmosphere is as classy as the food. The set-price lunches are a particular bargain.

Monday-Friday noon-2:30 pm and 6-11 pm, Saturday 6-11 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

The Square

6-10 Bruton St. (Tube station: Bond Street or Green Park)
London, England W1J 6PU

Phone: 020-7495-7100

<http://www.squarerestaurant.com>

This stylish and sophisticated restaurant, serving French and British cuisine, has earned two Michelin stars. Specialties include salmon and lobster terrine, veal served four ways and mouthwatering desserts.

Monday-Saturday noon-2:30 pm and 6:30-10 pm, Sunday 6:30-9:30 pm. Reservations available online or by phone. \$\$\$\$.

Fusion

Kopapa

32-34 Monmouth St. (Tube station: Covent Garden)
London, England WC2H 9HA

Phone: 020-7240-6076

<http://www.kopapa.co.uk>

An all-day dining room in Covent Garden run by the fusion king Peter Gordon, the New Zealander who brought us the Sugar Club in the 1990s. He mixes ingredients from across the continents, so don't expect anything usual or traditional there.

Monday-Friday 8 am-11 pm, Saturday 9 am-11 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-10:30 pm. Reservations available online. \$-\$\$.

Moro

34 Exmouth Market (Tube station: Farringdon)
London, England EC1R 4QE

Phone: 020-7833-8336

<http://www.moro.co.uk>

The flavors on the daily-changing menu delight, with signature dishes such as slow-roasted kid goat exemplifying the tasty Spanish and North African fusion that's made the restaurant a leader in its field. In summertime, book an outside table well in advance so you can look upon pretty, cobbled Exmouth Market. If you are short of time, or cash, take a seat at the bar and sample a tapas or two.

Monday-Saturday noon-2:30 pm and 6-10:30 pm, Sunday 12:30-3:15 pm. Reservations available online or by phone. \$\$.

Greek

Lemonia

89 Regent's Park Road (Tube station: Chalk Farm)
London, England NW1 8UY

Phone: 020-7586-7454

<http://www.lemonia.co.uk>

Hugely popular family-run Greek-Cypriot restaurant pleasantly located in leafy Primrose Hill. The food is light and tasty and features classics such as light-as-air calamari and *kleftiko* (slow-roasted lamb in white-wine stock). The vine-laden conservatory is particularly pleasant during the summer months.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for dinner only, Sunday for lunch only. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Italian

Ciao Bella

86-90 Lamb's Conduit St. (Bloomsbury; Tube Station: Russell Square)

London, England WC1N 3LZ

Phone: 020-7242-4119

<http://www.ciaobellarestaurant.co.uk>

A friendly family restaurant with a big heart and hearty portions. In the summer, sit out on the busy terrace and watch the world go by. This is a neighborhood restaurant for upmarket Bloomsbury—stop by after a visit to the British Museum. You'll be greeted with complimentary hunks of parmesan and bulging olives while you choose your order. A resident pianist plays live music every night.

Monday-Saturday noon-11:30 pm, Sunday and holidays noon-10:30 pm. Reservations available by phone. \$-\$\$.

Fifteen

15 Westland Place (Tube station: Old Street)

London, England N1 7LP

Phone: 020-3375-1515

<http://www.fifteen.net>

Jamie Oliver's first restaurant aims for an elegant but rustic style. Not only is the menu interesting and well-executed, but the kitchen also has a chef-training program for underprivileged young people. The atmosphere is relaxed and hip, with a more expensive basement restaurant for special occasions.

Monday-Saturday noon-3 pm and 6-11 pm, Sunday noon-9 pm. Reservations available online or by phone. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Sardo

45 Grafton Way (Tube station: Warren Street)

London, England W1T 5DQ

Phone: 020-7387-2521

<http://www.sardo-restaurant.com>

The decor may be simple, but the authentic Sardinian specialties are delicious and beautifully presented. The relaxed atmosphere and good service make this one of London's most popular Italian restaurants.

Monday-Friday noon-3 pm and 6-11 pm, Saturday 6-11 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Mediterranean

The River Cafe

Rainville Road (Thames Wharf; Tube station: Hammersmith)
London, England W6 9HA

Phone: 020-7386-4200

<http://www.rivercafe.co.uk>

Jamie Oliver is just one of the many alumni to come from this celebrated restaurant, where freshness and seasonality of the ingredients are key. The riverside location and airy dining room are a dream, and the tasty yet uncontrived Mediterranean dishes, though expensive, never fail to impress. The famed and decadently rich Chocolate Nemesis is a must-have dessert.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. Reservations available by phone. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Middle Eastern

Fairuz

3 Blandford St. (Tube station: Bond Street)
London, England W1H 3DA

Phone: 020-7486-8108

<http://www.fairuz.uk.com>

This West End Lebanese restaurant is cozy and rustic, a little neighborhood gem. With a menu of mouthwatering grills, mezés and a range of vegetarian options, this is quite simply a nice place to be.

Daily noon-11 pm. Reservations available by phone. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Maroush I

21 Edgware Road (Tube station: Marble Arch)
London, England W2 2JE

Phone: 020-7723-0773

<http://www.maroush.com>

With more than 50 meze dishes to choose from and belly dancers shaking their stuff nightly, this is a Middle Eastern experience like no other. Every night is party night. But for all the razzmatazz, this is top-notch Lebanese fare, with service and presentation as classy as the food. Entertainment from 9:30 pm.

Daily noon-2 am. Reservations available online. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Momo

25 Heddon St. (Tube station: Piccadilly Circus)
London, England W1B 4BH

Phone: 020-7434-4040

<http://www.momoresto.com>

Great for atmosphere, Moroccan food, downing cocktails and celebrity-watching, this restaurant really buzzes. Momo also happens to be one of central London's most intimate venues for world music, with live

music and DJ sets covering funky jazz, Latin, Brazilian and the house special—Arabic and Algerian music. Moorish decor, cool sofas for lounging, dim lighting.

Monday-Saturday noon-2:30 pm and 6:30-11:30 pm, Sunday 6:30-11 pm. Reservations available online. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Tas

72 Borough High St. (Tube station: London Bridge)
London, England SE1 1XF

Phone: 020-7403-7200

<http://www.tasrestaurants.co.uk>

Named after a traditional cooking pot used for preparing stews, Tas is a stylish, reasonably priced venue to indulge in *guvec* stews, fish dishes, lots of veggie dips and lean kebabs. Live music, sometimes Turkish but not exclusively, adds to the experience. The formula is so successful that there are other locations around the city—in Waterloo, Farringdon and Bloomsbury—and there is a spin-off—Tas Pide—that specializes in tasty, Turkish-style pizzas (check website for locations).

Monday-Saturday noon-11:30 pm, Sunday noon-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Spanish

Barrafina

54 Frith St. (Tube station: Tottenham Court Road, Oxford Circus or Leicester Square)
London, England W1D 4SL

<http://www.barrafina.co.uk>

Diners line up around the block to get a seat at the L-shaped bar of this splendid little tapas restaurant in the heart of Soho—plan your visit with this in mind. Even if you do have to wait, you're likely to have a fine old time chatting to fellow would-be diners and enjoying a cold beer or glass of sherry. Either way, it's well worth the sacrifice, because this is one of the most authentic tastes of Spain you're likely to find in London.

Monday-Saturday noon-3 pm and 5-11 pm, Sunday 1-3:30 pm and 5:30-10 pm. Reservations not accepted. \$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Security

Etiquette

Many people stereotype the British as being prim, proper and perhaps a bit stuffy. It's far from an accurate picture, but in most business situations, especially, you can expect a certain emphasis on reserve and conservative behavior. The British value politeness and courtesy, though humor is a staple of society. Maintaining a respectful, formal demeanor is likely to work to your advantage, at least until your business relationship is better developed. This includes e-mail correspondence where a salutation and sign-off are still expected (no kisses or smiley faces).

Appointments—Having an intermediary will likely provide easier access to companies in England. Schedule business meetings in advance and be punctual.

Personal Introductions—A handshake and a nod are common. Address people as they are introduced to you. Use your acquaintance's last name until instructed to do otherwise. Titles are important: If a person is introduced to you with a title, use it.

Negotiating—Meetings will have a formal atmosphere, especially early in the relationship. The decision-making process may be slower than what you're used to, but do not attempt to rush the pace. Expect the conversation to be direct, sometimes even blunt. However, the British have a wonderful, self-deprecating humor that will inevitably demonstrate itself.

Business Entertaining—Business lunches and dinners are common, although dinners tend to be more social than business occasions. Follow your host's lead in what topics to discuss. Dress conservatively. Some professions, such as media and fashion, are less formal than others, and smart-casual attire is the norm.

Body Language—Your British acquaintances will probably keep their distance with little physical contact during conversation. Most people are very conservative with regard to gestures and physical expressiveness.

Gift Giving—Gifts are generally not part of most business dealings. If you're invited to a home, a bottle of wine is expected; a gift of chocolates, flowers or liquor will be appreciated.

Conversation—The British often poke fun at themselves, but they may take offense at outsiders who criticize them. Be aware of the differences between England and the other areas that make up the U.K. (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Though united politically, each has its own culture, and lumping them together or confusing them with each other will please no one. Personal questions are usually reserved for later meetings. If your English usage arises from the U.S., remember that some words have different meanings in the U.K.

Personal Safety

London is a safe city by most standards—you'll enjoy a far greater degree of personal security in parks and on public transport than in many other large cities. Petty crime can be a problem, however, and it's wise to be extra careful with your wallet or purse, particularly on public transport and in restaurants, pubs and bars—keep your bags with you at all times.

Also be careful in crowded tourist spots such as Piccadilly Circus and Oxford Street (a favorite of pickpockets—petty thieves who steal wallets and other precious items from handbags and rucksacks). Sad to say, but tourists are sometimes targets for petty crime. Although sometimes it's impossible, avoid looking too much like a visitor if you can—keep items such as cameras, guidebooks and maps out of sight. With a little planning and a general awareness of your environment, you should be all right.

At night it's best to avoid dark alleys or places where there are few people. Avoid unlicensed minicabs, which are not always safe. It's fair to say that the likelihood of coming face-to-face with crime is greater in some of the areas beyond the center, particularly to the east and south. Up-and-coming areas such as Brixton and Hackney are generally higher in crime, but this is mainly targeted at cars and buildings. Stick to the areas where the crowds are, however, and you shouldn't have any trouble at all.

Since the July 2005 Underground and bus bombings, there has been a great increase in security measures, not just on public transport, but around the city generally. Sniffer dogs and random searches have been introduced in strategic places, occasionally including the entrances to Underground stations. Be prepared to cooperate with these procedures, although they are not causing excessive delays to people's journeys. It would be wise, however, to allow a little extra time getting to and from airports. You should be vigilant at all times, report any suspicious activity and do not leave possessions unattended anywhere. If you do find yourself, or someone else, in trouble, then dial the emergency number 999, which will get you through to the police, ambulance and fire service.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Excellent medical and dental facilities are available, and the food and tap water are safe to consume. No vaccinations are required to enter the U.K. For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

In addition to the 24-hour emergency care available at hospitals, look for Medicentres, private walk-in doctors' offices located at major rail terminals (including Victoria and Waterloo) that are designed for tourists and commuters. The most central Medicentre is located at Victoria Station Concourse, London SW1V 1JT, and is open Monday-Friday 8 am-8 pm, Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 10 am-4 pm. Phone 020-7510-0314. <http://www.medicentre.co.uk>.

Pharmacies (usually called chemists) take turns staying open late, with lists for a given evening posted in pharmacy windows. However, even these close at midnight.

Visitors from the European Economic Area and Switzerland who have a European Health Insurance Card can receive health care free or at a reduced charge, but visitors from all other countries should take out travel insurance to cover their stay, as they will be expected to pay for services, medications and hospital stays.

Disabled Advisory

The London Underground offers wheelchair access, but not all stations are step-free, and there is often a gap between the train and the platform. Staff members should always be available to help. Up-to-the-minute advice is available from Transport Information Centers and printed on Underground maps. For brochures, timetables or a guide in braille or audio versions, contact TFL Access and Mobility, London Regional Transport, 172 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1 9TN (phone 0343-222-1234; <http://www.tfl.gov.uk>). Many guides can be downloaded or ordered online. A guide to step-free stations is available at <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/step-free-tube-guide-map.pdf>.

The Access Project produces the Access in London reference guide for travelers with disabilities, available for a £10-£15 donation (<http://accessinlondon.org>). Another good resource is <http://www.inclusivelondon.com>, which provides information on accessible hotels, restaurants, pubs and attractions. The artsline website gives advice on accessible facilities at arts venues and theaters. <http://www.artsline.org.uk>.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do buy an A-Z: The little map books are invaluable. But don't refer to them as an "A through Zee" unless you want to get laughed at: It's called the "A to Zed." There's a mobile version available to download at <http://www.az.co.uk>.

Do purchase a Visitor Oyster Card for flexible public transportation in and around London. This card allows you to take as many (bus, Underground, tram, light railway and inner-city train) journeys as you like without paying more than the cost of a daily Travel Card. Available at most Tube stations. <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/visiting-london/visitor-oyster-card>.

Don't be afraid to ask for directions. Despite their demeanor, most Londoners, including the police, will be only too happy to share their knowledge of the best way to get from one place to another.

Do stand on the right side going up or down escalators—the left is reserved for people walking.

Don't expect any consistency in metric/imperial measurements. Temperature is almost always centigrade, but distance is always in miles. Petrol (gasoline) is bought in liters, but fuel efficiency is discussed in miles per gallon. Beer is definitely in pints (which is bigger than an American pint), but wine and spirits are measured in centiliters. Most food is weighed in kilograms, but people are still weighed in stones and pounds.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Passports but not visas are required for Australian, Canadian and U.S. travelers. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier prior to departure.

Population: 10,189,300.

Languages: English.

Predominant Religions: Christian, although all major religions are represented.

Time Zone: Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

Voltage Requirements: 240 volts.

Telephone Codes: 44, country code; 020, area code;

Money

Taxes

A 20% value-added tax (VAT) is levied on most purchases, including hotel and restaurant bills, but services consumed within the U.K. are not eligible for a refund. Nonresidents may receive a VAT refund on goods bought from shops running the VAT Retail Export Scheme. Stores taking part in the scheme will ask to see your passport and then give you a refund form (Customs Form VAT 407) to fill out in front of them (they may deduct an administrative fee, too). At the airport, take your forms to the customs desk and

present them, as well as the purchased goods, to process the refund. For more information, call the VAT and Excise Helpline. Phone 0845-010-9000.

Tipping

For taxi drivers and in restaurants, tip anything up to 15%; 10% is the norm, with a little more for good service. Sometimes an optional service charge of 10%-15% (often 12.5%, but it's hard to figure that on the fly) is included on the bill at a restaurant, so check first. There's no tipping at counter-service establishments such as pubs, although if you feel it warrants it, an offer to buy the bar attendant a drink is often appreciated.

Weather

There is no season when the weather is predictably wonderful. In May and October, day temperatures can be cool, but they have occasionally been known to be very warm; June-September it's more reliably warm, although June can often be rainy. Average temperatures run 43 F/6 C in January, 72 F/22 C in July. Summer heat waves have become common, and August can be very hot and humid. Though it rains more in other parts of the country, London typically gets some rainfall half the days of the year—especially in winter. Take along an umbrella and sweater no matter when you go.

What to Wear

There are few formalities in London, where practically anything goes. Business occasions do call for a suit and tie for men and appropriate business attire for women. The most expensive restaurants and upscale hotel dining rooms expect patrons to dress appropriately, with jacket and tie sometimes required, but smart-casual dress is acceptable in most other establishments. Some nightclubs will turn you away if you are wearing sneakers and blue jeans. Take a sweater or light rain jacket even in summer, as the weather can turn chilly year-round.

Transportation

Getting to know London's sprawl takes practice. Get a good map of the city center, and for farther afield, a copy of *A-Z* (pronounced "A to Zed")—a well-known street directory and map sold at newsstands and bookshops—is a worthwhile investment. Also available online at <http://www.az.co.uk>.

London's vastness may overwhelm and its traffic induce despair, but central London is a walking city. Stroll through quiet tree-shaded squares, unexpected nooks and corners, and great parks. And if you don't feel up to walking (or if it's raining, which is not uncommon), the London Underground—which locals call "the Tube"—is efficient and easy to use. The ubiquitous double-decker buses are less agreeable to use, but at least give the benefit of seeing the city while you ride. For live travel updates, visit <http://www.tfl.gov.uk>.

You can also now take advantage of bicycle hire from as little as £2 per day; look for the stands of blue Barclay's Bicycles and follow the instructions on the displays. For more information, visit <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/modes/cycling/barclays-cycle-hire?intcmp=2295>.

All of London's airports have frequent 24-hour shuttle services into the city. When traveling to and from the airports, allow some extra time to reach your final destination.

Bus

Most national and international coaches arrive at Victoria Coach Station, about 1,200 ft/372 m south of Victoria Station. 164 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1. Tickets can be purchased at the station or direct from coach operators.

The bus lines to know are National Express, which offers extensive service throughout Britain (phone 0871-781-8178; <http://www.nationalexpress.com>); Megabus, offering inexpensive travel around Britain (phone 0871-266-3333 for information or 0900-160-0900 for bookings; <http://www.megabus.com/uk>); and Eurolines, with daily departures to the Continent (phone 0871-8717-8177; <http://www.eurolines.com>).

Car

We strongly recommend against renting a car for getting around London: Traffic can be a nightmare, and parking is worse.

Drivers also pay a congestion charge of £10 per day to take their cars into the city center (<http://www.tfl.gov.uk>). If you do rent a car, the payments can be made at designated parking garages and newsagents. It must be paid even if you just drive through and don't park the car.

In central London, short-term metered parking spaces are both difficult to find and expensive; wheel clamping is prevalent, and fines are exorbitant. Parking is available in underground garages—look for yellow NCP (National Car Park) signs—though it costs from £8 (for four hours) up to about £50 (nine to 24 hours). <http://www.ncp.co.uk>.

If you're traveling in other parts of England, make London your first or last stop and rent a car only for the time you'll be out of the city. The steering wheel on British cars is on the right, and you drive on the left. Manual transmissions are standard. Avoid bus-only lanes (usually near the side, with a broad white dividing line—the lanes are often painted red). Road signs are in miles. The M25 motorway encircles London, and (clockwise from north) the M1, M3, M4, M11, M20, M26, M23 and M40 motorways radiate outward.

Keep in mind that it is illegal to use a handheld phone while driving, and seatbelts are mandatory.

The legal age for driving in the U.K. is 17, and you must have held a license for at least one year. The minimum age for renting a car in the U.K. is normally 21, but you will be charged more if you are younger than 25—or older than 75.

Public Transportation

For information and advice on reaching your destination by bus, light rail, Tube or water taxi, call the London Transport Authority's 24-hour information line or use the journey planner on the website (this can also be downloaded as an app to a smartphone). Service disruptions are common, especially on Sunday and during public holidays. Free public transport maps are available from information offices at train and Tube stations. Phone 0343-222-1234. <http://www.tfl.gov.uk>.

Travelcards, which you can buy at Tube stations and many newsagents, can be used interchangeably for the Tube, buses, Docklands Light Railway and trains to outer suburbs and satellite towns. You can get them for peak or off-peak travel over one day, one week or one month. A one-day Travelcard allows unlimited travel throughout the network for £12. Tickets can be ordered in advance online or purchased at Tube station ticket offices and tourist information centers. <https://www.visitbritainshop.com/usa/london-travelcard>.

Most people use the Oyster card, a reusable smart card that allows you to pay as you go; it offers the cheapest fares for both Tube and buses and can also be loaded with a Travelcard. They can be bought at special ticket stops, Tube ticket stations and online. Special Oyster cards for visitors can be bought in advance. You will need to pay a £3 refundable deposit for the card itself. For more information, or to purchase a card, visit <https://www.visitbritainshop.com/usa/london-visitor-oyster-card>.

Buses

Most of the city's buses are still of the red double-decker variety. Sadly, London's beloved Routemasters—the classic jump-on/jump-off double-decker buses with a conductor—have been retired, except for a few that run on two Heritage Routes. However, a modernized version, generally called the New Routemaster, is being brought into service on some routes.

Buses are now cash-free. You will need an Oyster card or Travelcard to travel. The fare is £1.50 with an Oyster card, and children younger than 11 travel free. The maximum you'll pay per day using an Oyster card is £4.40.

Buses are very frequent to most destinations, and you shouldn't have to wait long; however, traffic can slow your journey down, and unfortunately you can't use your ticket on more than one bus if you have to change.

An infrequent night-bus service supplements the day timetable (look for routes beginning with the letter N). Green buses provide a service to outer London and surrounding towns. London, England. Phone 0343-222-1234. <http://www.tfl.gov.uk>.

Docklands Light Railway

Also known as the DLR, this rapid transit system runs from the Bank Underground station in the city to the redeveloped Docklands area and extends to Stratford International. Although there's not much to see once you get to the Docklands, the automatic train (which runs on an elevated rail in places) offers an impressive view of the most modern part of the city. Be aware that it's very crowded during the business rush hours and when ExCeL Exhibition & Conference Centre is holding events. London, England. Phone 0343-222-1234. <http://www.tfl.gov.uk>.

Subway

The London Underground, colloquially known by Londoners as the Tube, is the system of subways that burrow beneath the center of London and out to the suburbs. Though occasionally plagued with delays and escalator closures, the Underground is a quick and safe means of getting around. One-way fares in the center are £2.10 if paid for with an Oyster card, and you'll never pay more than £12 (the equivalent of a Travelcard) in any one day. Children younger than 11 travel free. Most stations are equipped with ticket-vending machines that take credit cards, banknotes and coins, and give change, and you can use these machines to top up your Oyster card with credit. London, England. <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tube>.

Water Buses

Big, fast, comfortable cruisers carry passengers swiftly along the Thames with stops in the center of London, including the Tower of London, Bankside and Westminster Abbey, as well as farther to such places as Kew Gardens, Hampton Court, Canary Wharf and Greenwich. A handful of boat operators are used, and timetables vary by route. Fares also vary, generally £5.50-£8.25 for one-way commuter services. Oyster pay-as-you-go cards can be used to pay the fare on all Thames Clippers and will get you a 10% discount; Oyster cards loaded with a Travelcard can get you 30% off the regular fare with some operators. London, England.

Taxi

Taxis are plentiful in London in the regulated form of the distinctive black cab (which is occasionally maroon or white or covered with advertisements). Hail them when the yellow "Taxi" sign is illuminated, or book them (at greater expense) by calling Radio Taxis at 020-7272-0272 (<http://www.radiotaxis.co.uk>). There are taxi ranks at major train stations such as Victoria, St. Pancras, Kings Cross and Waterloo, as well as all sorts of other unexpected places, such as in Tottenham Court Road and Russell Square. You can also now tweet a black cab by following @tweetalondoncab (and waiting for it to follow you back), and sending a direct message requesting a cab. <http://tweetalondoncab.co.uk>.

Drivers of black cabs are put through an arduous examination, known as The Knowledge, which ensures that they know every street and building on their turf. Fares are metered but complex, taking both time and distance into account. You may ask the driver for an approximate fare before getting in, but don't expect him to guarantee the price or to take you without turning on the meter. Most accept credit cards.

Licensed "minicabs" (usually just ordinary saloon cars) offer a cheaper alternative and may be easier to find in outlying areas. Ask for a local recommendation—by a hotel, for example. You will find a list of recommended firms on the Transport for London website at <http://www.tfl.gov.uk>. Minicabs may not be metered, and fares can sometimes be negotiated. Unlicensed minicab drivers sometimes seek passengers on the street in central London—it's illegal for them to do so, and you would be ill-advised to accept a ride.

Train

In the great age of steam, the Victorians built a series of imposing railway stations around the fringes of central London, with lines slicing boldly outward through the suburbs to the far corners of the island. They include the following: Euston (trains to the Midlands, north England and eastern Scotland); St. Pancras (trains to northwest England, as well as Eurostar to the English Channel and the Continent); King's Cross (trains to the Midlands, north England, western Scotland); Paddington (trains to western England, Wales); Victoria (trains to the south); Charing Cross (trains to southeast England); and Waterloo (trains to the southwest, including the south coast). Discounts available for booking online. For information on train services, phone 0845-748-4950. <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk> or <http://www.thetrainline.com>.

Eurostar

This high-speed train now delivers travelers from London's St. Pancras Station to the Gare du Nord in Paris, generally in about 2 hours and 20 minutes, sometimes less. The speed and convenience of international travel via the 31-mi/50-km Channel Tunnel (or "Chunnel") makes it easy for visitors to spend a day or two in Paris, while using the London area as a base. You can get a train to Brussels or Lille, even to the very gates of Disneyland Paris, should you wish. Fares vary depending on trains and times. St. Pancras Station, London, England. <http://www.eurostar.com>.

Southampton, England

Overview

Introduction

The port city of Southampton is protected from English Channel storms by the Isle of Wight. Much battered over the centuries—and particularly during World War II—it presents a patchy mosaic, but the historic parts near the waterfront are well worth seeking out.



Spend some time walking the city walls and seeing the archaeology and maritime museums, the *Mayflower* memorial (it, as well as the *Titanic*, sailed from Southampton; the *Mayflower* returned to Plymouth for repairs and began its trans-Atlantic crossing from there), the old Norman arches (called the Bargate) and the Medieval Merchant's House. One of our favorite sights in town is the well-preserved Tudor House.

Other highlights of the area include nearby Winchester (a Roman and medieval town with an outstanding cathedral) and the New Forest. The forest is a great spot for cycling or walking, and within its borders is Beaulieu, a grand estate with an ancient abbey and a fantastic car museum.

Southampton is located 70 mi/115 km southwest of London.

Port Information

Location

Southampton is an important embarkation point for cruises from the U.K. There are four separate cruise terminals, each with their own berths. Passengers arriving to the train station, airport or bus station will need to take a 5- to 10-minute taxi ride to the appropriate cruise terminal.

The terminal facilities vary by location, but generally include taxi service, and a bar or cafe. The *Mayflower* terminal is the only terminal with a viewing gallery.

Channel Islands, United Kingdom

Overview

Introduction

The Channel Islands are geographically much closer to France than to England. Though they've been in the British domain since the Norman conquest, their culture and cuisine show the influence of both countries. The two main islands have established themselves as a tax-free shopping zone (a nice reprieve from the double-digit value-added tax in England). A whole week is needed to explore them, and a lot of your time will be spent on ferries.



The two most popular islands are Jersey and Guernsey. Other Channel Islands—Sark, Alderney and Herm—are much smaller, and only people who have a lot of time and a strong interest in the islands' culture will want to visit them.

Jersey—A sunny climate attracts visitors to the largest and most populous of the Channel Islands. A drive around the island reveals wildflowers, sand dunes, soaring cliffs, isolated beaches, castles, manor houses, forts and grazing Jersey cows. Quaint **St. Helier**, on the southeastern side, is the capital; plan some time there to visit the markets and enjoy the architecture. Jersey also has many wonderful museums: Our favorites include St. Peter's Bunker (World War II museum), the Motor Museum, the Battle of Flowers Museum and the Jersey Museum. Also visit the zoo, St. Matthew's Church and the Eric Young Orchid Foundation. *35 mi/55 km west of France's Normandy coast.*

Guernsey—Slightly quieter than Jersey, it's a bit like the richer parts of rural England were 20 years ago. While there, observe the French influence and sample the farm-fresh produce. Visit the shipwreck museum at Fort Grey, the "Little Chapel" in St. Andrews parish, Hauteville House (Victor Hugo's home), Cornet Castle and the Sausmarez Manor Exotic Woodland Gardens. The island also has a few interesting sights related to German occupation in World War II. Be sure to walk the cliff-top paths along the coast: One vantage point near Icart Point caught Renoir's eye. The island's main city, **St. Peter Port**, is built on a hillside. Explore its narrow streets and lovely architecture. *25 mi/40 km northwest of Jersey.*

Cork, Ireland

See & Do

Sightseeing

Cork is Ireland's second-largest city and the incredible selection of things to do and see there reflects it perfectly. From centuries-old cathedrals and castles to modern high streets, artisan markets and attractions that introduce you to Cork's troubled past, there is something for everyone in Ireland's second city.



Home to one of Ireland's most famous attractions, Blarney Castle, known for giving visitors and locals the gift of the gab, as well as the newly renovated Blackrock Castle and Observatory, which is now one of Ireland's foremost spots for stargazing, the city is rich in historic sites and attractions.

Historic Sites

Blackrock Castle

Castle Road
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-432-6120

<http://www.bco.ie>

Blackrock Castle was constructed in the 16th century, commissioned by Queen Elizabeth I, to defend against pirates and other undesirables in port. Today, it operates as a living history museum and observatory. Take a tour of the castle and dungeons during the afternoon, check out the world-renowned universe exhibit, and stick around for star-gazing with the Cork Astronomy Club in the evening.

Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 11 am-5 pm. 6.50 euros adults.

Blarney Castle

Blarney Castle
Blarney, Ireland

Phone: 21-438-5252

<http://www.blarneycastle.ie>

Just a few miles/kilometers northwest of Cork is Blarney Castle. The castle is home to the Blarney Stone, which is said to give the gift of gab to all who kiss it. Long ago, a witch told a shy, tongue-tied lord of the castle that his fear of public speaking would vanish if he kissed the stone: According to legend, he did so and became a great orator. Today thousands of tourists take their lives in their hands and lean out over the castle walls to repeat the feat.

After a romantic encounter with the stone, visit the lovely garden and nearby Blarney House (Victorian decor and chandeliers made from Waterford crystal). Get there early to avoid the crowds and dress casually—depending upon the weather, Blarney Stone-kissing can be a damp, dirty business.

Daily 9 am-5:30 pm; open late in the summer. 12.50 euros adults.

Lusitania Monument

Casement Square (take the commuter train from Kent station in Cork to the seaside town of Cobh)
Cobh, Ireland

This somber monument, created by sculptor Jerome Connor, marks the sinking of the passenger liner *Lusitania* by a German U-boat torpedo just off the Kinsale coast in 1915. More than 1,190 of the 1,960 people on board perished, and its sinking helped prompt the U.S. to enter World War I.

6.05 euros adults.

St. Anne Shandon Church

Saint Ann's Mews Shandon
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 021-450-5906

<http://www.shandonbells.ie>

St. Anne's was built in 1722 and remains one of Cork's most iconic structures, famous for its red sandstone and ashlar limestone, clock and 18th-century bells. The church's beautiful interior is worth checking out, but the real draw is the ringing of the Shandon bells. Don't leave before you've had a chance to ring them yourself.

Summer hours Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 11:30 am-4:30 pm; check website for winter hours. 5 euros adults.

St. Finbarre's Cathedral

Bishop Street
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 021-496-3387

<http://www.cathedral.cork.anglican.org>

Believed to have been founded in 606 AD as a monastery, the cathedral has gone through almost a dozen iterations to its present-day form. The current building, completed in 1879, is made of Cork limestone, Bath stone and red Cork marble. Visitors can see stone carved heads that were part of the medieval cathedral and browse the gift shop for local souvenirs.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-5:30 pm, Sunday 12:30-5 pm. 5 euros adults.

University College Cork

College Road
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 021-490-3000

<http://www.ucc.ie>

There's a lot more to do on University College Cork's campus than admire the stunning 18th-century buildings and explore its famous Stone Corridor. You can stroll through the gardens or art galleries, drop by the Crawford Observatory, and indulge in some shopping and sweets afterward. Be sure to stop in the visitors center to get a map so you don't miss anything.

Museums

Cobh Heritage Center

Lower Road (off Westbourne Place)
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-3591

<http://www.cobhheritage.com>

Set in the old Victorian railway station, the heritage center's key exhibition is The Queenstown Story, which looks at the history of emigration from Cobh between 1848 and 1950, and the experience of the 2.5 million Irish immigrants who left these shores. There are also exhibits on the *Titanic*, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the convict ships bound for Australia, as well as a restaurant and a currency exchange.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm in summer, reduced hours in winter. 9.50 euros adults.

Cobh Museum

High Road
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-4240

<http://www.cobhmuseum.com>

Located in the former Scots Presbyterian Church directly across from the cruise terminal, this small museum contains photographs and artifacts on the town's history. It also stages special themed exhibitions and has a small genealogical reference area where you can research family history.

April-October Monday-Saturday 11 am-1 pm and 2-5:30 pm, Sunday 2:30-5:30 pm. 4 euros adults.

Cork Butter Museum

The Tony O'Reilly Centre
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-430-0600

<http://www.corkbutter.museum>

Cork Butter Museum, which dates back as far as 1849, documents the long history of butter production in County Cork. In the 19th century, Cork was the largest exporter of butter in the world. Located in Shandon, where Ireland's largest open-air butchery used to operate, the Butter Museum makes for an interesting glimpse into Cork's past and the city's dependence on farmers.

Daily 10 am-5 pm. 4 euros adults.

Cork City Gaol

Convent Avenue, Sunday's Well
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 021-430-5022

<http://www.corkcitygaol.com>

Opened in 1824, the Cork City Gaol is now a living history museum where visitors can experience a day in the life of a prisoner, or perhaps meet a prisoner on one of the haunted night tours. Daytime tours are

also offered, as well as admittance to the radio museum. Don't leave the Gaol without asking a guide about "the great escape."

Daily 9:30 am-5 pm. 8 euros adults.

Lifetime Lab

O'Connell Square, Shandon
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-494-1500

<http://www.lifetimelab.ie>

An interactive science museum located in the beautifully restored old waterworks buildings on the banks of the River Lee. The building itself dates back to the 1700s and now houses unique exhibitions that teach children about their environment and how to make a difference.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-5 pm. 3.50 euros adults.

The Titanic Experience

White Star Line Building, 20 Casement Square
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-4412

<http://www.titanicexperiencecobh.ie>

Set in the former ticket office of the White Star Line, this interactive museum recreates the experience of the 123 passengers who set sail from Cobh on the *Titanic*. Your boarding card (entry ticket) lets you follow the fate of one of the passengers, from embarkation to life on board to the chilling last moments of the sinking ship.

Daily 10 am-5:30 pm, extended hours in the summer. 9.50 euros adults.

Religious Sites

St. Colman's Cathedral

5 Cathedral Terrace
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-3222

<http://www.cobhcathedralparish.ie>

After a steep walk uphill, you'll be rewarded with a splendid view of the town and its harbor from this granite cathedral. Designed in the neo-Gothic style by the British architect E. W. Pugin, it was built between 1867 and 1915. It contains a 49-bell carillon, the largest in the British Isles—and Ireland's largest bell—weighing 3.6 tons. There are guided tours of the cathedral on Sunday afternoons (call for times), and hour-long recitals on Sunday afternoons.

Daily 8 am-6 pm. Free.

Wineries, Breweries & Distilleries

Franciscan Well Brewery

14 N. Mall
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-421-0130

<http://www.franciscanwellbrewery.com>

Founded in 1998, the Franciscan Well Brewery in Cork city is one of Ireland's longest-established craft breweries and has been recognized as the best craft brewery in Ireland. What makes this craft brewery extra special is that it is located on the site on an old Franciscan Friary which dates back over 800 years to 1214 and was founded by the King of South Munster. Brewery and tasting tours run Monday-Friday from 6.30 pm.

The Jameson Experience

Distillers Walk
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-461-3594

<https://www.jamesonwhiskey.com>

Although the Jameson Irish Whiskey story began in Dublin in 1810, operations were moved to the East Cork town of Midleton in 1975, and Jameson has been distilled there ever since. The Jameson Experience, located at the Old Midleton Distillery, is one of Cork's top attractions and includes a guided tour of the distillery, a short film about the history of Jameson and a free signature Jameson drink. There is also the chance to taste some of Jameson's premium whiskeys.

Daily 10 am-6 pm. 16 euros adults.

Shopping

Shop for hand-cut crystal, Irish whiskey and liqueurs, handmade sweaters and other woolens, beautiful linens, Belleek china, silver and gold jewelry with fabulous Gaelic and early Christian designs, gold Claddagh rings, blackthorn walking sticks, peat carvings, pottery, lace, Donegal tweed and tin whistles. Prices are also good on eiderdowns and copper kitchenware.

CDs of Irish music (from traditional to rock) make wonderful souvenirs. There are also great bookstores (look for books of Irish poetry and history) and antiques shops.

Bookstores

The Time Traveller's Book Shop

Wandesford Quay
Cork, Ireland

<http://www.timetraveller.ie>

If you are looking for signed, out of print or first edition books while in Ireland, this magical store is your answer. This is the only specialty antiquarian book business that deals with books made in the 16th to 21st centuries. The store is part shop and part gallery.

Monday-Saturday 11 am-6 pm.

Vibes and Scribes

21 Lavitt's Quay
Cork, Ireland

<http://www.vibesandscribes.ie>

There are numerous big-name book stores in town, but this is the only independent book shop. A mixture between a book store and a craft shop, it is by far Cork's most loved second-hand book store.

Department Stores

Brown Thomas

Cork, Ireland

<http://www.brownthomas.com>

This beautiful storefront is located on St. Patrick's Street, Cork's main thoroughfare, and is home to the world's top designer labels from Prada and Gucci to the latest designs by Victoria Beckham and Diane Von Furstenberg. There are different levels for cosmetics, shoes and bags, ladies fashion, men's fashion and household items.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 9:30 am-8 pm, Thursday 9:30 am-9 pm, Sunday 11 am-7 pm.

Debenhams

St. Patrick's Street
Cork, Ireland

<http://www.debenhams.ie>

Located in Merchants Quay shopping center, which is the largest in the city, this is one of Ireland's biggest department stores with names such as Oasis, Warehouse and Topshop as well as leading cosmetics brands such as Mac, Benefit and Urban Decay.

Monday-Thursday and Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Friday 9 am-9 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

Markets

The Coal Quay Market

Each Saturday, this food market takes place in the same spot where locals have sold their wares for hundreds of years. The market now attracts many artisans from around Cork County who bring their freshly baked goods and delicious home cooked meals to lucky shoppers. A true taste of Cork artisan cuisine.

The English Market

Prince's St.
Cork, Ireland

<http://www.englishmarket.ie>

Much more than your average food market, this beautiful Victorian Market dates back to the 18th century, while its present-day buildings were built in 1862 by Sir John Benson. Walking through is a feast for all the senses. Local delicacies include freshly caught fish, fruit and vegetables from local farmers and Clonakilty Blackpudding, which is popular all over Ireland.

Monday-Saturday 8 am-6 pm.

Specialty Stores

Blarney Woolen Mills

Blarney
Cork, Ireland

<http://www.blarney.com>

Located right next to Blarney Castle and operating since 1790, this is one of the best stores in Ireland to buy authentic Irish wool products such as Aran Sweaters and warm wool scarves as well as one-off Irish gifts such as pieces of Waterford Crystal or Celtic jewelry.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm.

Christy's Irish Store

Cobh Heritage Center, Lower Road (off Westbourne Place)
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-4023

<http://www.kilkennyshop.com>

You'll find a beautiful range of Irish goods, from knitwear to crystal, pottery, jewelry and more, at this gift shop in the Cobh Heritage Center. It's a sister store of the Kilkenny Group, which promotes Irish design throughout the country.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-5 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm.

Cobh Pastimes

The Cunard Center, 29 West Beach
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-3485

<http://cobhpastimes.ie>

Step back to the days of the *Titanic* at this old-fashioned photography studio. They'll dress you in vintage costumes and pose you in a themed set for a unique gift and a personal souvenir of your Irish trip. No appointment necessary.

June-September daily 11 am-6 pm, call for winter hours.

O Conaill's Chocolate shop

16 French Church St.
Cork, Ireland

<http://www.oconailchocolate.ie>

The O'Conaill family has been making artisan chocolate since 1979, and its chocolates are a favorite across the city. The two-story shop and cafe located on French Church Street is the perfect place to escape from the unreliable Irish weather and to enjoy some melt-in-the-mouth, locally made hot chocolate. The chocolate itself is made in Carrigaline, just 6 mi/10 km south of the city.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm.

Pinochio's Toy and Gift Store

2 Paul St.
Cork, Ireland

<http://www.pinocchios.ie>

This toy and gift store is a true gem, packed with unique toys built to last. The shop is a family-run business that specializes in beautifully crafted and ethically produced wooden toys for young children. Excellent store for buying gifts for loved ones back home.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm.

Tregan Craft Centre

20 Casement Square
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-4412

<http://tregancrafts.eu>

Located in the historic White Star Line building alongside the Titanic Experience, this craft center and design gallery features one-of-a-kind Irish handmade crafts and gifts. Many of the goods are produced by longtime family businesses, using traditional skills in textiles, ceramics, glass and more.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm, reduced hours in winter.

Dining

Dining Overview

Ireland offers a variety of wholesome foods for every budget. Do try grilled or roast beef, cured hams, breads, fish, oysters, mussels, eel (some of the restaurants have viewing tanks) and very hearty local meals (not fine dining, but they're delicious).

Irish food is traditionally meat-based, so vegetarian choices sometimes are a bit lackluster. However, nobody can do more with a potato than the Irish. Don't leave without trying the simple and delicious potato cake—a flour-and-potato concoction sauteed in butter. Other delicacies include *brack*, a fruity bread that is delicious fresh from the oven and spread with butter; soda bread made from flour, salt, baking soda and buttermilk, the traditional daily bread of most Irish families from the mid-19th century; and colcannon, a creamy, delicious potato dish made with milk, leeks, and kale or cabbage.

Cork is also blessed with plentiful salmon. Served in a variety of ways, it can be found in the finest restaurants and in the humblest of pubs. And though it may sound redundant, the Irish (unsurprisingly) make the best Irish stew (mutton, onions and potatoes).

Whether you stay at a bed-and-breakfast or a hotel, your room is likely to come with a morning meal. If you've the stomach capacity for it, you can usually have a huge bowl of cereal, a basket of bread and scones, and a plateful of eggs, bacon and sausage. Although it used to be difficult to find lighter fare, almost every property now has healthier options such as fresh fruit and yogurt.

Cork is well-known all over Ireland for the high quality of its food and local produce. It plays host to many food festivals throughout the year and is home to some of the country's best restaurants. Ingredients are often sourced from local farmers, which means everything is served fresh, be it from the fields or the sea.

No stay in Cork would be complete without trying some of the local cheeses produced as well as Clonakilty Blackpudding and various other pork products.

Local & Regional

Gilbert's Bistro in the Square

11 Pearse Square
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-1300

<http://www.gilbertsincobh.com>

Cobh Cathedral towers above this friendly bistro in historic Pearse Square, set in a 19th-century house and decorated with contemporary art. Stop in for a coffee and homemade scone, or try delicious lunch and dinner dishes such as traditional beef and Guinness stew, braised lamb shank or pasta dishes. Save room for the scrumptious desserts.

Monday-Friday 5-9 pm, Saturday noon-9 pm, Sunday 1-9 pm. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Elbow Lane Brew and Smokehouse

Oliver Plunkett Street
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-239-0479

<http://www.elbowlane.ie>

Cork's most popular smokehouse attracts big crowds with its delicious food and in-house brewery. Situated in a gorgeous building right in the city center, this restaurant is best known for its incredible steaks, made with locally sourced Irish beef. It offers both inside and outside seating plus has a full bar.

Monday-Thursday 5-10 pm, Friday 5-11 pm, Saturday 4-11 pm and Sunday 4-10 pm. Reservations not accepted. Most major credit cards.

Gourmet Burger Bistro

Bridge Street
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-450-5404

<http://www.gourmetburgerbistro.ie>

Not to be confused with Gourmet Burger Kitchen, a popular chain of burger restaurants around Ireland, this is Cork's most popular independent burger restaurant. Offering a wide selection of delicious burgers made from organic meat served in a cozy and tranquil bistro.

Monday-Saturday noon-10 pm and Sunday 2-9 pm. Most major credit cards.

Titanic Bar & Grill

20 Casement Square
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-4585

<http://www.titanicbarandgrill.ie>

Set in the historic Scott's Building, the elegant bar is a popular local watering hole. The restaurant menu ranges from upscale burgers and pub favorites (bangers and mash, fish and chips) to fresh-caught fish and prime steaks. You can dine al fresco on the wonderful sun deck overlooking the harbor.

Monday-Friday 11 am-9 pm, Saturday noon-9 pm, Sunday 12:30-8 pm. \$\$. Most major credit cards.

Jacob's Ladder

Yacht Club Quay
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-5566

<http://www.watersedgehotel.ie/restaurant.html>

Next to Cobh Heritage Center, this bistro-style restaurant in the Waters Edge Hotel is a favorite with visitors. Seafood takes pride of place on a menu that also features steaks, chicken and pasta dishes—all made with local produce. There's a simple bar menu at lunchtime. The large windows and balcony offer splendid views of the harbor.

Daily noon-9 pm. \$\$. Most major credit cards.

Market Lane

5 Oliver Plunkett St.
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-427-4710

<http://www.marketlane.ie>

An award-winning restaurant that continues to draw in both locals and tourists year after year. What makes this restaurant so special is that the menu actually changes throughout the year to coincide with what vegetable, meat and fish is available in the local market as well as from local artisan producers.

Monday-Thursday 5-10 pm, Friday noon-10:30 pm, Saturday noon-11 pm, Sunday 1-9 pm.

Nash 19

19 Princes St.
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-427-0880

<http://www.nash19.com>

This hidden gem is located just a stone's throw from The English Market. We recommend stopping there for lunch and trying out the tomato soup with freshly baked soda bread or the incredible cheese selection, which is produced locally in County Cork.

Monday-Friday 7:30 am-4 pm, Saturday 8:30 am-4 pm. Most major credit cards.

The Cornerstone Restaurant

40-A Cornmarket St.
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-427-4777

<http://www.cornstorecork.com>

One of the best places in the city to indulge in some locally sourced seafood such as smoked haddock, mussels chowder or delicious pan-seared sea bass. It is also well known for its premium dry-aged steaks.

Monday-Thursday noon-3:30 pm and 5-9:30 pm, Friday and Saturday noon-3 am, Sunday 1-4 pm and 5-9 pm.

The Ivory Tower

The Exchange Buildings
Cork, Ireland

Phone: 21-427-4665

<http://www.ivorytower.ie>

One of Cork's most unusual and expensive restaurants. Expect to pay a lot more for a meal there than in any of the other restaurant in the city, but you will also be guaranteed a very unique dining experience. Patrons should go with an open mind as the chef creates imaginative and unusual tasting courses such as carpaccio of wood pigeon or rabbit in Beamish and prune jelly.

Thursday-Saturday 7-11:30 pm. Most major credit cards.

Trade Winds

16 Casement Square
Cobh, Ireland

Phone: 021-481-3754

<http://www.tradewindsrestaurant.ie>

This simple yet elegant restaurant is set above a cozy bar and has one of the most extensive menus in town. It ranges from starters of fresh seasonal soup or pan-fried kangaroo to a wide choice of fish, seafood, meat and vegetarian dishes. The stuffed fillet cove, filled with smoked ham, mushroom and onion stuffing and served with cherry brandy sauce, is a popular choice.

Tuesday-Friday noon-10:30pm, Saturday 6-10:30 pm, Sunday noon-7 pm. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Security

Personal Safety

Cork is, in general, a very safe city to visit. Like many cities in Ireland, there are good spots and bad spots that are easily identified by where they are located in relation to the river: Similar to Dublin, the North side of the city is known to be a lot rougher than the south. Nightlife hotspots such as the Grand Parade, McCurtain Street and Washington Street can get quite rowdy late at night once bars and clubs close. The areas around both the bus and train stations should be avoided late at night.

Health

Cork city is home to three excellent hospitals, Cork University Hospital (Wilton, phone 21-492-2000), The Mercy and The South Infirmary. There is also a 24-hour VHI Swiftcare Clinic (Mahon, phone 18-908-6696) that provides walk-in medical care for minor injuries.

Facts

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Passports are needed by citizens of Canada and the U.S. Reconfirm travel document information with your carrier before departure.

Population: 194,184.

Languages: English, Gaelic.

Predominant Religions: Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican).

Time Zone: Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Saturday of April to the last Saturday of October.

Voltage Requirements: 240 volts.

Telephone Codes: 353, country code; 021, city code;

Money

Taxes

A 21% VAT (value-added tax) is incorporated in prices for almost all goods. But with a little paperwork, nonresidents of the European Union can obtain a tax refund. To reclaim the tax you paid, you must see the VAT refund officer at the airport before departure and present the article you purchased (unused), the receipt and a refund form (which must be obtained at the place of purchase). Some larger stores will handle most of the paperwork for you and then mail you the refund.

Room rates for hotels include VAT at the reduced rate of 13.5%. Some hotels and restaurants may also add a service charge of 10%-15% to the bill.

Tipping

Tip 10%-15% in restaurants (if the service charge has not been added to the bill) and 10% for taxi drivers. Do not tip if you are served at the bar in a pub: It's not expected, even if you order food in addition to drinks. And do not tip at all if the service is poor.

Weather

May to mid-September is by far the warmest and generally the driest time of year, relatively speaking (Ireland is often chilly and damp). The absolute best times to visit are probably from mid-May to the end of June and during the month of October—the weather is good for touring, and there are likely to be fewer tourists. The rest of the summer is fine, though a bit crowded. In summer, temperatures generally fall in a range of 59 F/15 C to 68 F/20 C.

Winter days can be drizzly, cold and short (the sun sets around 4 pm), but because of the Gulf Stream, the temperature seldom falls below freezing, averaging about 45 F/7 C. Winter is also an opportune time to meet the Irish—few tourists are about, and you can easily find conversation at the local pub. No matter when you go, a light raincoat or Windbreaker is essential, and you'll need a wool sweater and a jacket or coat, especially at night.

What to Wear

No one goes to Ireland for the weather, they'll tell you, so pack accordingly. In the summer, light casual clothing is best, but take along a sweater and rain jacket just in case. In winter, pack several layers so you can cope with variations in the temperature. Rainwear is essential—you will need it.

Smart suits are best for business meetings, and there are some restaurants where a collar and tie are mandatory. Otherwise, anything goes. The Irish are remarkably tolerant, but don't wear swimwear away from the beach.

A good pair of shoes is needed if visiting Cork as it's quite hilly, and the best views of the city are from the top of the biggest hill. Cork is also a gateway to many great beaches, mountains and walks, so good shoes and a waterproof jacket will be well used.

If you plan to go out at night in Cork, bouncers can be strict: Many bars and clubs have a dress code that forbids sneakers and clothes that are too casual. If you just plan to visit local pubs instead of bars and clubs, casual clothes are fine.

Dublin, Ireland

Overview

Introduction

Dublin, Ireland, is the small, charming, eminently walkable city that visitors expect, and the corner pub offers a warm welcome. Wry perceptions are uttered with a winsome Irish lilt in Dublin. And, as visitors stroll along the city's handsome Georgian squares, they'll realize the necessity of an umbrella.



But today's Dublin also includes high-tech companies, many of them located in the lovely Georgian houses that line the city's streets. High-rises and cosmopolitan restaurants and hotels continue to spring up next door to traditional taverns and friendly guesthouses, and a beehive of construction work aimed at improving the city's infrastructure buzzes around them.

Dublin is a city in transition, from medieval capital to exciting commercial center—a hip, electric city, astonishing even visitors who make it their business to stay on Europe's cutting edge. Dublin's unpretentious charm is still there, but chic urbanity has moved in beside it. Now known for its vibrant nightlife, Dublin has become a favorite city-break destination for young European visitors. Visitors could spend a week in Dublin and still not cover all the attractions.

Highlights

Sights—Ancient Christ Church Cathedral; the 18th-century Georgian architecture of Merrion Square; the beautiful *Book of Kells* at Trinity College; St. Patrick's Cathedral, where the namesake saint baptized converts to Christianity at a well; Dublin Castle, with its elegant State Apartments.

Museums—The National Museum of Ireland's sites at Collins Barracks and Kildare Street; the impressive collection at the Irish Museum of Modern Art; the Dublin Writers Museum; Dublin City Gallery: The Hugh Lane; Dublinia, the Viking heritage center; The Chester Beatty Library, with its magnificent Asian art holdings.

Memorable Meals—Haute Irish cuisine at Thornton's; modern Irish cooking at L'Ecrivain; lunches of fresh fish and seafood at Cavistons Food Emporium in Sandycove.

Late Night—Mixing with the locals at Mulligans; listening to an up-and-coming Irish band at Whelan's; relaxing in a private booth at Kehoe's; laughing at the alternative comedians at the International Comedy Club; following in the footsteps of the Dubliners in O'Donoghues.

Walks—Enjoying breathtaking vistas of Dublin and Wicklow while hiking the Wicklow Way from Marlay Park; meandering through Temple Bar; strolling through the People's Park enjoying spectacular views of Dun Laoghaire; walking around the Baily Lighthouse near Howth; along the North and South Bull Walls or Dun Laoghaire piers.

Especially for Kids—Farmleigh and the Dublin Zoo, both in Phoenix Park; the Viking Splash Tour; Liffey River Cruises; the wonderful playground at Malahide Castle, including the Fry Model Railway Museum and Tara's Palace antique dollhouse and toy museum.

Geography

Dublin is situated on the east coast of Ireland. Its famed river, the Liffey, cuts through the center of the city and empties into Dublin Bay, dividing the city into north and south. On the north side are 18th-century architectural masterpieces—the Custom House and the Four Courts—and also the historic thoroughfare of O'Connell Street. At the northern end of O'Connell Street are Parnell Square and the Gate Theatre. The Abbey Theatre is east of O'Connell Street. South of the Liffey are Trinity College, the trendy (but old) streets of Temple Bar, the fine Georgian buildings of St. Stephen's Green, Grafton Street's upscale stores and restaurants, and most hotels.

Postal codes help serve as indicators of general location within Dublin, and most addresses incorporate them. With very few exceptions, odd-numbered postal codes are used to designate areas north of the Liffey. Even-numbered ones are south of the river. As examples, addresses in Dublin 1 are just north of the river; those in Dublin 2 are immediately south. County Dublin represents the Dublin metropolitan area north and south of the city. Addresses in County Dublin include the name of the village (Dalkey, for example), followed by the abbreviation "Co. Dublin."

History

Dublin's history is one marked by a tragic influx of conquerors. When the pagan Celts arrived from the European continent sometime around 600 BC, some of them settled on the banks of the Liffey and named the area *Baile Atha Cliath* (meaning the "ford of hurdles"—the name is still visible on buses and license plates).

In the fifth century, Christianity began to sweep across the island, led by the conversion efforts of St. Patrick. Religious scholarship flourished in Ireland until the ninth century, when Viking invaders wreaked havoc on the Emerald Isle and firmly established the city of Dublin. In 1014, the Vikings were defeated by the Irish king Brian Boru in the Battle of Clontarf, but it wasn't long after that the British took an interest in their western neighbor.

In the late 12th century, England's King Henry II sent his well-disciplined army of Anglo-Normans to Ireland, claiming sovereignty over Dublin and the surrounding area. After triumph in the English civil war in the mid-1600s, the Protestant Oliver Cromwell also took control of Dublin, precipitating a power struggle between Catholics and Protestants that has continued to the present day.

As the seat of English rule in Ireland, the town prospered. An 18th-century economic boom fostered a Georgian architectural expansion still evident in the city. At the beginning of the 19th century, however, the Act of Union between England and Ireland abolished the Irish parliament, and many of the city's aristocrats left for England. This mass exodus was accentuated by the Great Famine of the 1840s and '50s, when 2 million Irish people either died of starvation or moved abroad as a result of a far-reaching potato blight and staple-crop failure. Emigration continued over the next century, dramatically reducing the population and inflaming a movement for Irish independence (or Home Rule) from Britain.

During Easter of 1916, a band of Irish rebels led by James Connolly and Patrick Pearse took over Dublin's General Post Office and proclaimed an Irish republic in what became known as the Easter Rising. The British subsequently executed most of the rebel leaders, enraging many Dubliners who had been less enthusiastic about independence. On 6 December 1921, the Irish Free State was finally established. A bitter civil war immediately followed, leaving Dublin in ruin. The conflict ended in a partition of Ireland: The 26 southern counties gained their independence, but six counties known as Northern Ireland remained part of the U.K.

Dubliners rebuilt their city, and after seven turbulent and impoverished decades, they experienced an economic upturn in the 1990s. Many former emigrants returned to their native land. With them came immigrants from eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, giving Ireland its first experience of being a multicultural society. An abundance of new restaurants, pubs and hotels cropped up, reflecting the increasingly cosmopolitan tastes and spending power of the local populace. The city's expansion and resurgence is still going strong: The government projects that by 2020 the population of Ireland will have grown from 4.1 million to 5.3 million, and immigrants will account for 19% of the nation's population.

But the capital has struggled with its growth. A hyperinflated property market has left many burdened by huge mortgages. During the prosperous early 2000s, Dubliners developed expensive lifestyles, which are now financed through credit-card spending—giving the Irish one of the highest levels of personal debt in Europe. A recent movement encourages people to shop around and to refuse to pay for overpriced goods, but the Irish nevertheless travel frequently, especially to southern Europe and the U.S., in search of bargains. Fiscal conservation is under way as the country is struggling with a currency crisis and Ireland attempts to stabilize its economy.

Port Information

Location

Dublin Port Authority books approximately 90 cruise ships and welcomes more than 130,000 passengers each year.

Smaller liners can dock on the River Liffey, and large ships currently dock at Alexandra Quay, an area more suited to cargo ships. There's not much when you disembark, as the area is virtually all industrial, so your best bet is to take one of the shuttle buses or a cab into town. The entire Quay is experiencing redevelopment, including facility updates and other improvements, but work is likely to be ongoing for several years.

Dublin Port is centrally located, only minutes from Dublin city center and major tourist attractions. The port is also within walking distance of the Georgian-style 1791 Customs House, where you can stroll through the arcades and pavilions.

Potpourri

Killiney and neighboring Dalkey form "the Beverly Hills of Ireland." George Bernard Shaw was from there, and residents now include Bono and The Edge from the band U2, singers Sinéad O'Connor, Van Morrison, Enya and filmmaker Neil Jordan. Internationally renowned writer Maeve Binchy was born there and lived there until her death in 2012.

At noon and 6 pm, the national broadcaster RTE stops all TV and radio programs on its main stations to play "the Angelus," a one-minute recording of church bells, to allow people to say their daily prayers. The tradition is a vestige of the institutional power held by the Catholic Church in the days when the station was founded.

Stay alert to pick up a few Dublin words and phrases such as *me old segosha* (my old friend); *craic* (fun, good conversation and entertainment); *holliers* (holidays); and the *mott* (a girlfriend or wife).

Because of the smoking ban in workplaces and public venues, the Irish have developed the new custom of "smirting"—smoking and flirting with people they meet outdoors. The term is said to have originated in Dublin's nightclub-rich Temple Bar district.

Dublin's most notable statues are given nicknames that are usually rhyming and often politically incorrect. A statue of Molly Malone near Grafton Street is called "the tart with a cart" or "the dish with the fish." The Anna Livia statue, a woman sitting in a fountain to represent the spirit of the River Liffey, was unveiled in 1988 and promptly became "the floozy in the Jacuzzi"—or even more impolitely "the hoo-er in the sewer." The sculpture attracted so much abuse from pranksters that it was replaced by the Millennium Spire, soon known as "the stiletto in the ghetto," among other names. In the Grand Canal Basin, just off Pearse Street, the floating cubic building—officially known as the Waterways Ireland Visitors Centre—is affectionately referred to as "the box in the docks."

Dublin's O'Connell Bridge, which spans the River Liffey and connects the north and south sides of the city, is known for being the only bridge in Europe that is just as wide as it is long. What's more, it's not the only O'Connell Bridge in the city; the other can be found in St. Stephen's Green, where it dramatically spans a pond.

Dublin's Trinity College is probably best known as the home of the legendary *Book of Kells*. Its lengthy list of notable alumni, however, includes Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett and even Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula*, who was born in Dublin.

See & Do

Sightseeing

The River Liffey is the center of activity in Dublin today, just as it was in medieval times. Though not particularly picturesque or impressive, the river's banks are a good place to begin exploring the city. South of the Liffey you'll find much of the tourist infrastructure and the new developments spurred by the city's rapid economic growth. Hotels, restaurants, trendy cafes, shops and attractions abound. North of the Liffey, the flavor of the old city is easier to find in less-gentrified neighborhoods. There, stately Georgian buildings coexist with humble 19th-century workers' cottages. To get an understanding of where Dublin has been and where it's going, spend some time on each side of the Liffey.

One of the most vibrant areas of the city is the rejuvenated docklands district to the east, where numerous cultural events take place and Dublin celebrates its maritime origins. Near Temple Bar, the striking James Joyce Bridge, designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava and built in 2003, spans the river.

Although some of Dublin's once-posh neighborhoods have become run-down and seedy, much of their elegance remains. No expense was spared initially in Dublin's construction and embellishment. As you walk around, notice the brightly colored doors on many of the town houses. The best examples of Georgian architecture are at Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square on the south side of Dublin and at Mountjoy Square on the north side.

Chief among Dublin's churches are St. Patrick's Cathedral (whose most famous dean was satirist Jonathan Swift) and Christ Church Cathedral (originally constructed in 1038 but rebuilt many times since). The finest examples of ancient fortifications in the city are Dublin Castle and Malahide Castle (8 mi/13 km north of the city center). The latter is noted for its lovely antiques and outstanding gardens.

Ireland's oldest university is Trinity College, founded by Queen Elizabeth I in 1592. Its refined academic atmosphere remains: Step through the Regent's House passageway and you'll be transported from the busy downtown streets to a serene quadrangle surrounded by vintage buildings. On display at the Old Library is the college's most famous treasure: the must-see *Book of Kells*, an illuminated manuscript that dates from around AD 800.

Dublin is also a city of wonderful museums. Take time to see the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) and the National Museum of Ireland. We also enjoyed Dublinia—a re-creation of Dublin as it was when Vikings founded the city more than 1,000 years ago.

Visit the lovely villages of Dalkey, once the site of seven ancient churches, and Sandycove, south of the city center, both accessible by public transportation. The Heritage Center in Dalkey Castle will provide all the information needed. Also check out the picturesque seaside village of Howth, north of the city center, and the medieval Howth Castle on the grounds of the Deer Park Hotel. Behind the hotel is a beautiful walk through the rhododendron gardens that will take you up to a rocky ledge with spectacular views of Dublin Bay.

Literary Dublin deserves its own tour, with a first stop at the Dublin Writers Museum. Merrion Square boasts the homes of a number of noted writers, including Oscar Wilde and William Butler Yeats. Just outside the city, in the hamlet of Sandycove, is the James Joyce Museum (not to be confused with the James Joyce Centre, in Dublin 1), whose Martello tower is one of the most sacred spots for lovers of literature (the tower is the setting for the opening of Joyce's *Ulysses*). Of course, almost all of Dublin was the setting for *Ulysses*, and there are numerous maps and tours tracing the meanderings of Leopold Bloom (Dublin celebrates Bloomsday—the day on which all the action in *Ulysses* takes place during the year 1904—on 16 June). Literary pub tours also abound.

Historic Sites

Christ Church Cathedral

Christchurch Place
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-677-8099

<http://www.christchurchdublin.ie>

Dublin's oldest building was erected in 1038 and has been rebuilt several times since. It was the center of medieval Dublin. Inside is a range of oddities and relics, including the heart of St. Laurence, Dublin's patron saint.

Open daily. 6 euros adults.

City Hall

Dame Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-222-2204

<http://www.dublincity.ie/dublincityhall>

Inside is an interesting exhibition about Dublin's history, with artifacts and multimedia presentations. The building, which dates from 1779 and was occupied by rebels during the 1916 Easter Rising, has been renovated. There is also a great cafe in the basement. Guided tours are available.

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-5:15 pm. 4 euros adults (3.60 euros if booked online), 2 euros students and seniors, 1.50 euros children, 10 euros families. Admission to The Rotunda is free.

St. Brigid's Cathedral and the Round Tower

Market Square
Kildare, Ireland

Dating to 1223, the cathedral stands on one of Ireland's most important religious sites, believed to be the place where St. Brigid founded a religious community of nuns in the late fifth century. Brigid is one of Ireland's three patron saints, and in the cathedral's west stained-glass window she is depicted alongside St. Patrick and St. Colmcille. Beside the cathedral, the 12th-century round tower is the second-highest in Ireland. Made of granite and limestone, it stands 108 feet/33m tall. You can climb to the top for awesome views over the countryside.

May-September Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 2 pm-5 pm. Round Tower 4 euros adults.

Dalkey Castle and Heritage Centre

Castle Street
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-285-8366

<http://www.dalkeycastle.com>

Situated about 5 mi/8 km outside the city center in one of the few remaining of Dalkey's seven castles, this interesting place boasts an impressive exhibition on the history of the Dalkey area, and you can tour the remains of the castle as well as visit a church and graveyard. An art gallery is also on-site.

Monday-Friday 10 am-5:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 11 am-5:30 pm. 8.50 euros adults.

Dublin Castle

Dame Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-645-8813

<http://www.dublincastle.ie>

This castle is a joy for anyone interested in archaeology or history. Dublin Castle was built in the 13th century on top of the foundations of a Viking structure. It lies on the site of Dublin's first-ever prehistoric fortification. The River Poddle, which formed the ancient tributary with the River Liffey, now runs under the castle. The tidal pool of this river gave the city its name—Dubh Linn (Black Pool). The medieval castle, set amid sprawling formal gardens and courtyards, served as a military fortress, prison, court of law and the core of British administration in Ireland until 1922. It's now used for state functions and government conferences. Guided tours of the elegant State Apartments, the Undercroft (where the city's old walls join the castle) and the Gothic revival Chapel Royal are available.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-4:45 pm, Sunday noon-4:45 pm. 4.50 euros adults.

Garda Museum

Dame Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-666-9998

<http://www.dublincastle.ie/VisitorFacilities/TheGardaPoliceMuseum>

The Police Museum is another attraction within the grounds of Dublin Castle and is in the Record Tower, the last intact tower of the castle and of medieval Dublin itself. It houses archives and artifacts of the Garda Síochána as well as the Irish Constabulary, the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Dublin Police and the Dublin Metropolitan Police. It may be of particular interest to people interested in policing in Ireland before 1922.

Admission is by prior arrangement only. Free.

Glasnevin Cemetery

Finglas Road
Dublin, Ireland 11

Phone: 01-882-6500

<http://www.glasnevintrust.ie>

Some of the great figures of Irish history and literature have been laid to rest in this graveyard, including Charles Stewart Parnell, Michael Collins, Maud Gonne, Countess Markievicz, Daniel O'Connell, Eamon De Valera, Brendan Behan and The Dubliners singer Luke Kelly.

Tours daily at 11:30 am and 2:30 pm. One-hour walking tours are available daily at 11:30 am and 2:30 pm and cost 6 euros adults. Tickets combining walking tours with admission to the Glasnevin Museum are 10 euros adults, 9 euros children, students and seniors.

Irish National Stud

Tully
Kildare, Ireland

Even if you're not a racing fan, the story of the National Stud and the beautiful horses that are bred and trained here are worth a visit. You can take a guided tour of the facilities and visit the Horse Museum. Leave plenty of time for a stroll in the Japanese Gardens, which were established by Colonel Hall-Walker and designed by master Japanese horticulturalist Tassa Eida. Symbolic landmarks trace the journey of the human soul from birth to the afterlife in these peaceful, meditative surroundings. St. Fiachra's Garden displays Ireland's timeless natural beauty.

Daily 9 am-6 pm. 12.50 euros adults.

Kilmainham Jail

Inchicore Road, Kilmainham
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-453-5984

<http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/Dublin/KilmainhamGaol>

Until this jail's closure in 1924, the British incarcerated—and, in 1916, after the Easter Rising, executed—Irish political prisoners at this site. For those who want a more detailed look at events, a collection of documents focuses on the role of women in the rebellion. It's an interesting yet disturbing place to visit. See the audiovisual show and take a guided tour.

Daily 9:30 am-6 pm. 6 euros adults.

Malahide Castle

Malahide, Ireland

Phone: 01-816-9538

<http://www.visitdublin.com/see-do/details/malahide-castle-and-gardens/48888/#53.444904|-6.164625|16>

About 10 mi/16 km outside Dublin, Malahide Castle is the ancestral home of the Talbot family, who lived there 1185-1973. The extensive grounds (250 acres/101 hectares) incorporate the 20-acre/8-hectare Talbot Botanic Garden, the Malahide Historical Society Museum, and soon, an international cricket ground with seating for 12,000 fans. The castle recently underwent a 12-million-euro redevelopment that included an interpretive exhibit in the castle's basement, as well as a shopping and cafe center. To get there, take the DART or bus No. 42 from the city center.

Open daily 9:30 am-5:30 pm. Closed for Christmas holidays. 12 euros adults. .

Marsh's Library

St. Patrick's Close
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-454-3511

<http://www.marshlibrary.ie>

Just a few steps away from St. Patrick's Cathedral is Ireland's oldest public library. Founded by Archbishop Narcissus Marsh in 1701, this tiny gem is charming and well worth a visit for its collection of early books and manuscripts, not to mention the cages used to confine readers in an effort to discourage theft of rare or valuable volumes.

Monday and Wednesday-Friday 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 3 euros adults.

St. Michan's Church

Church Street
Dublin, Ireland 7

Phone: 01-872-4154

<http://www.stmichans.com>

Too often bypassed by tourists, this church just north of the Liffey was founded by the Vikings in 1096. The current building dates from 1685 and has been refurbished and repaired. There's an 18th-century organ said to have been used by composer G.F. Handel during his visit to Dublin. The church may appeal to those with a taste for the macabre: Visitors can view mummified corpses preserved by the dry atmosphere in the church crypt, and Handel's ghost supposedly haunts the structure.

Open November-March Monday-Friday 12:30-3:30 pm, Saturday 10 am-12:45 pm; March-November Monday-Friday 10 am-12:45 pm and 2-4:45 pm, Saturday 10 am-12:45 pm. Guided tours 5 euros adults.

St. Patrick's Cathedral

St. Patrick's Close
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-453-9472

<http://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie>

Ireland's largest church was erected on the oldest Christian site in Dublin, where St. Patrick is believed to have baptized his converts to the Christian faith at a well on the grounds. The site of the well is marked on the left as you enter the cathedral gardens, and a couple of interesting carved-stone slabs found buried at the site of the well are preserved inside the cathedral. The current building dates back to the late 1100s or early 1200s, although it's been restored and altered over the years. Jonathan Swift was dean of St. Patrick's 1713-45, when he wrote *Gulliver's Travels*. His pulpit and his tomb may still be seen.

Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-6 pm. 5.50 euros adults.

The Liffey Boardwalk

(Extends from the O'Connell Bridge to the Millennium Bridge on the northern shore of the Liffey)
Dublin, Ireland

Dubliners often walk along this public promenade, flanked by brightly colored buildings and long benches. The walkway is perfect for soaking up the sun, and it offers surprising tranquility given that it's in the midst of city traffic. It can also be a hangout for undesirables, so watch your belongings. The boardwalk extends from the O'Connell Bridge to the Millennium Bridge on the northern shore of the Liffey.

The National Library

Kildare Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-603-0200

<http://www.nli.ie>

At the genealogical office, staffers will help trace your Irish roots. Its consultation service on ancestry is available Monday-Wednesday 9:30 am-5 pm, Thursday and Friday 9:30 am-4:45 pm, Saturday 9:30 am-12:45 pm. The library building also contains a heraldic museum, which exhibits coats of arms and

banners; the library's great domed reading room is the highlight, however—it has been home to many Irish students, including James Joyce. Free tours of the library Saturday at 2:30 pm.

Main Reading Room open Tuesday and Wednesday 10 am-4:45 pm, Thursday 10 am-1 pm and 2:30-4:30 pm. Free, both for genealogical service and use of the library.

The National Library of Ireland

2-3 Kildare Street
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 603-0200

<http://www.nli.ie>

Besides housing the most comprehensive collection of Irish documentary material in the world and valuable resources for family history research, it offers a full program of exhibitions and events. The permanent exhibition *Yeats: The Life and Works of William Butler Yeats* is a large collection of his work, featuring manuscript drafts of some of his most popular poems. Free "drop-in" guided tours are offered Wednesday at 1 pm and Saturday at 3 pm.

For the exhibitions, Monday-Friday 9:30 am-4:45 pm, Saturday 9:30 am-4:45 pm, Sunday 1-4:45 pm.

The Spire

O'Connell Street
Dublin, Ireland 1

<http://www.visitdublin.com/dublin-a-to-z/details/the-spire/31186>

A 393-ft/120-m steel pole, known unofficially as "the Pin in the Bin" or the "rod to God" can be seen from all directions around the city center. It stands in place of Nelson's Pillar, a British monument that was destroyed by an IRA bomb in 1966. Although originally intended to mark the millennium, the spire wasn't completed until 2003.

Trinity College

College Green
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-896-1000

<http://www.tcd.ie>

Trinity College (officially, the University of Dublin) was founded by Queen Elizabeth I in 1592. The reason most visitors venture to Trinity is to see the *Book of Kells*, the renowned illuminated manuscript created by monks around AD 800. It's one of the most exquisite books in the world and one of the oldest. The precise detail and vivid colors become clear only when you see the actual manuscript, although related exhibits explain the history and techniques behind the book.

The *Book of Kells* is on display at the Old Library. The book was repaired and rebound into four volumes in 1953. Two of the volumes are always on display, along with two other ancient Christian manuscripts from the library's collection. The ticket price includes admission to the Long Room, a striking space that contains 200,000 of the college's oldest books.

There are official student-guided walking tours of the campus, which will provide you with a history of the campus buildings. Tours run daily mid-May through September from inside the front gate of the college. Tours commence every 30 minutes 10:15 am-3:40 pm. The fee is 10 euros per person, 5 euros for

students October-March, 10 euros for students April-September. Price includes an Old Library admission ticket.

Additional sites on campus include the Science Gallery (<http://www.sciencegallery.com>), the Douglas Hyde contemporary art gallery (<http://www.douglashydegallery.com/home.php>) and the Samuel Beckett Theatre (<http://www.tcd.ie/beckett-theatre>).

The Old Library is open year-round Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-5 pm; Sunday May-September 9:30 am-4:30 pm, October-April noon-4:30 pm. Call for information about public holiday hours. 9 euros adults, 8 euros students and seniors, 18 euros families, free for children younger than 12.

Museums

Dublin City Gallery: The Hugh Lane

Charlemont House, Parnell Square North
Dublin, Ireland 1

Phone: 01-222-5550

<http://www.hughlane.ie>

Made famous in a 1912 poem by William Butler Yeats (*To a Wealthy Man Who Promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it Were Proved the People Wanted Pictures*), the Hugh Lane is just steps away from the Dublin Writers Museum and contains a wonderful collection of modern portraits as well as other contemporary pieces within its magnificent structure. Exhibits include a re-creation of painter Francis Bacon's supremely messy studio, filled with the contents of the actual studio shipped from London. The artist's voluminous reference materials are accessible in an interactive format, and the gallery holds an extensive collection of Bacon's original works. The museum also includes a room dedicated to Irish artist Sean Scully. The gallery has an excellent independent book shop, Dubray Books (phone 01-873-4216; <http://www.dubraybooks.ie>), and the on-site Brambles Cafe offers snacks and light lunches (phone 01-222-5567; <http://www.brambles.ie>).

Tuesday-Thursday 10 am-6 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. Free.

Dublinia

St. Michael's Hill
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-679-4611

<http://www.dublinia.ie>

This heritage center charts Dublin's development from the arrival of the Vikings in the ninth century to the closure of the monasteries and the Reformation, circa 1540. It includes a reconstructed archaeological dig, artifacts from excavations at Viking sites and the *Life in Medieval Dublin* exhibit, which features reconstructions of interiors from the Middle Ages. Get a taste of life long ago by trying on parts of a suit of armor or dressing up in medieval robes.

Daily 10 am-6:30 pm. 7.50 euros adults, 6.50 euros students and seniors, 5 euros children, 23 euros families.

Dublin Writers Museum

18 Parnell Square N.
Dublin, Ireland 1

Phone: 01-872-2077

<http://www.writersmuseum.com>

Situated at the top of O'Connell Street, this museum contains memorabilia relating to Ireland's literary greats: Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, Jonathan Swift, Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan and more. Digital audioguides are available in six languages. A coffee shop and bookstore are also located on-site.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. 7.50 euros adults.

Glasnevin Cemetery and Museum

Finglas Road
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-882-6550

<http://www.glasnevintrust.ie>

This contemporary, three-story museum is located on the site of Glasnevin Cemetery, known as Ireland's largest cemetery and its national necropolis. The museum's exhibits look at the social, historical and cultural growth of modern Ireland by documenting the lives of the 1.5 million people buried at Glasnevin. It's a highly recommended stop for tourists interested in exploring their Irish genealogical roots.

Daily 10 am-5 pm. 4 euros adults.

Irish Jewish Museum

3 Walworth Road (between Victoria Street and Kingsland Park Avenue, both of which connect to South Circular Road)
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 85-706-7357

<http://www.jewishireland.org/irish-jewish-history/museum>

Located on a modest side street in what was once Dublin's main Jewish neighborhood, this former synagogue is bursting with archives, artifacts, historical displays, textiles and other material concerning the last 150 years of Ireland's little-known, and rapidly dwindling, Jewish community. The curators, whose Dublin accents interestingly mix with Jewish intonations, are fountains of information.

Sunday-Thursday 11 am-3:30 pm; in winter Sunday only 10:30 am-2:30 pm. Free, but donations gratefully accepted.

Irish Museum of Modern Art

Military Road, Kilmainham
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-612-9900

<http://www.imma.ie>

Housed in the beautifully restored 17th-century Royal Hospital Kilmainham (which was modeled on Les Invalides in Paris), the museum exhibits contemporary art and has an impressive permanent collection representing the cutting edge in Irish and international art. An excellent cafe and a bookstore are also

located on-site. A free guided tour is offered Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 10 and 11:45 am, and 4 pm; Wednesday at 11:45 am and 4 pm.

Tuesday-Friday 11:30 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm, Sunday noon-5:30 pm. Free.

James Joyce Centre

35 N. Great George's St.
Dublin, Ireland 1

Phone: 01-878-8547

<http://www.jamesjoyce.ie>

Guided tours of this beautifully restored 18th-century town house include information about Joyce's life, family and works. There's also a reference library and bookshop.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. 5 euros adults.

James Joyce Museum

Sandycove Point (accessible by DART, or bus 59 from Dun Laoghaire)
Sandycove, Ireland

Phone: 01-280-9265 or 01-872-2077

http://www.dun-laoghaire.com/profile/joyce_tower/index.html

This museum is located in a Martello tower (one of a chain of towers built to withstand invasion by Napoleon) some 8 mi/13 km south of Dublin on the coast road. Joyce's brief stay there in 1904 inspired the opening chapter of *Ulysses*. The museum is filled with letters, photographs, rare first editions of his works and other memorabilia.

Open April-August Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-1 pm and 2-5 pm, Sunday 2-6 pm. Closed on Monday. Open by appointment September-March. 6 euros adults, 5 euros students and seniors, 4 euros children, 15 euros families. Combined tickets available with Dublin Writers Museum and Shaw's birthplace.

National Gallery of Ireland

Merrion Square West (at Clare Street)
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-661-5133

<http://www.nationalgallery.ie>

This beautifully maintained and arranged gallery displays works by such Irish artists as Sir John Lavery, Nathaniel Hone, James Osborne and William Orpen. The Millennium Wing houses Irish art from the first half of the 20th century, temporary exhibitions and an archive dedicated to the work of Jack B. Yeats. Try to spend more time looking at the artwork than ogling the striking architecture of the addition—it won't be easy. Royalties from the plays of George Bernard Shaw have provided much of the gallery's funding over the years.

Monday-Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 9:30 am-5:30 pm, Thursday 9:30 am-8:30 pm, Sunday 11 am-5:30 pm. Free, but a donation of 3 euros is encouraged.

National Leprechaun Museum

Jervis Street
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-873-3899

<http://www.leprechaunmuseum.ie>

This relatively new attraction is less a traditional museum than a collection of multimedia and installation displays dedicated to Irish mythology and culture. The museum was founded with the intention of changing the public's perception of Irish folklore and fairy lore, as well as that of the leprechaun itself, which the Irish consider to be a somewhat derogatory symbol.

Daily 10 am-7:45 pm. 12 euros adults.

National Museum of IrelandùArchaeology

Kildare Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-677-7444

<http://www.museum.ie/en/intro/archaeology-and-ethnography-museum.aspx>

Its antiquities exhibits hold one of Europe's most impressive collections of artifacts from the Stone Age through the 20th century. Particularly interesting is the gold jewelry from the Bronze Age, as well as the famed Tara Brooch, the Shrine of St. Patrick's Bell and the Ardagh Chalice from early Christian times. Opened in 1890, this wonderful museum hosts an incredible collection of Ireland's ancient and Celtic past, along with an impressive exhibition of Viking and medieval artifacts.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 2-5 pm. Free.

National Museum of IrelandùDecorative Arts & History

Benburb Street (on the Luas Red Line)
Dublin, Ireland 7

Phone: 01-677-7444

<http://www.museum.ie/en/intro/arts-and-history.aspx>

The refurbishment of the old Collins Barracks (named after the revolutionary Michael Collins) into a museum is magnificent, with the building itself often taking center stage. Exhibits focus on Ireland's decorative arts, including furniture, ceramics, silver, glassware and a wealth of pieces by the Modernist designer Eileen Gray. Weapons and costumes are also on display. A cafe and gift and bookshop are located on-site.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 2-5 pm. Free.

National Photographic Archive

Meeting House Square, Temple Bar
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-603-0200

<http://www.nli.ie/en/national-photographic-archive.aspx>

Located in a bright, modern building, the archive is always worth a browse for its exhibitions showing Ireland in the early years of photography. It includes tourists' views of Ireland, the great political events

that shaped the nation, portraits of Irish luminaries and unexpected subjects such as images of Irish lighthouses.

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. Free.

Number 29

29 Lower Fitzwilliam St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-702-6165

<http://www.esb.ie/numbertwentynine>

This charmingly restored Georgian house (one of very few open for guided tours) gives an excellent overview of life in Dublin between 1790 and 1820.

Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 6 euros adults, 3 euros seniors and students, free for children younger than 16.

The Chester Beatty Library (Dublin Castle Gardens)

Dublin Castle
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-407-0750

<http://www.cbl.ie>

Located within the grounds of Dublin Castle, this art museum disguised as a library contains an impressive collection of manuscripts and artwork related to ancient and sacred traditions and religions throughout the world. The gardens are also a safe, enclosed, quiet oasis in the heart of the busy city—perfect for small children and families. There's also a rooftop garden and The Silk Road Cafe, with a menu that includes some Middle Eastern dishes (phone 01-407-0770; <http://www.silkroadcafe.ie>).

Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday 11 am-5 pm, Sunday 1-5 pm; closed Monday October-April. Free.

The George Bernard Shaw Birthplace

33 Synge St.
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-475-0854

<http://www.tourist-information-dublin.co.uk/the-shaw-birthplace.htm>

The childhood home of George Bernard Shaw will interest anyone with a literary bent or an interest in Victorian domestic life. Affiliated with the Dublin Writers Museum.

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday 11 am-3:30 pm, Saturday 2-5 pm. 6 euros adults.

The Little Museum of Dublin

15 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-661-1000

<http://www.littlemuseum.ie>

A simple yet captivating museum located on the first floor of a traditional Georgian townhouse, this museum tells the story of 20th-century Dublin through a collection of more than 400 unique artifacts. The

collection ranges from the cultural to the political, with items encompassing everything from art and photography to letters, postcards and other odd bits of ephemera, the majority of which was donated by Dublin residents, businesses and cultural groups.

Friday-Wednesday 9:30 am-5 pm, Thursday 9:30 am-8 pm. 6 euros adults.

Neighborhoods & Districts

Ballsbridge

Ballsbridge
Dublin, Ireland 4

<http://www.dublintontourist.com/towns/ballsbridge>

Take a walk on the posh side in Dublin's legendary "D4" district. Mansion-lined Aylesbury and Shrewsbury roads are reputedly the most expensive streets in Ireland, and Raglan Road (of the well-known Irish song) boasts impressive redbrick Victorian houses with huge gardens. Herbert Park is a genteel, beautifully maintained oasis for a walk or a picnic lunch. Although there is no high-end shopping street (such as Madison Avenue or Rodeo Drive) per se, the gleaming fancy-food markets, wine shops and trendy lifestyle and fashion boutiques along Donnybrook and Pembroke roads attest to this area's prosperity.

Dalkey

Coliemore Road, Dalkey
Dublin, Ireland

<http://www.dalkeyvillage.net>

This charming village, located along the coast road about 8 mi/13 km south of Dublin, is a perfect place for an afternoon stroll. Check out its many atmospheric pubs, restaurants and shops or admire the view from the top of Dalkey Hill. You never know—you might bump into one of Dalkey's many celebrity residents, including Bono and The Edge of U2 and filmmaker Neil Jordan. Novelist Maeve Binchy also lived there. For the adventurous, Dalkey Island is just a five-minute boat ride from Coliemore Harbour just south of Dalkey Village. This tiny island, which is popular with scuba divers, boasts the ruins of one of the earliest stone churches in the area. Today it's a haven of peace and tranquility; its only inhabitants are a family of goats. During the summer, drop by the harbor and ask one of the local fishermen about dropping you off and picking you up at the island. Take the DART to the Dalkey station. Just follow the signs for the coastal road.

Dun Laoghaire

Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
Dublin, Ireland

<http://www.dun-laoghaire.com>

If it's a sunny Saturday or Sunday, join the locals in their rambles in this increasingly multicultural port town south of the city, on the DART line. Pronounced *Dun-leary*, it has a pleasant park (the People's Park) with a great organic market on Sunday. Its twin Victorian piers offer two of the best walks in Dublin. You can buy fresh fish from its smaller Coal Harbour Pier and feed the seals. The harbor and town have a great array of nightlife, cafes and pubs.

Howth

Howth
Dublin, Ireland 13

<http://www.dublintontourist.com/towns/howth>

Lying on the northern tip of the Dublin Bay, Howth (rhymes with "both") is a picturesque seaside village easily accessible by DART. The lovely marina is a choice spot for eating and drinking, and the coastline provides panoramic views of Dublin Bay. Visit the 15th-century partly-ruined Howth Castle in the Deer Park Gardens. Behind the Deer Park Hotel, take a walk through the rhododendron gardens and enjoy the views from the top. Just outside of Howth, drive or walk up to the parking lot—there you can view the Baily Lighthouse or take a spectacular cliffside walk. The road north from Howth to Malahide takes you through a lovely area with some sandy beaches.

Merrion Square

Merrion Square
Dublin, Ireland 2

http://www.dublintontourist.com/towns/merrion_square_area

One of the city's best-known Georgian squares, Merrion Square has plenty of well-maintained winding walkways, flower beds and statues—including one of Oscar Wilde, whose parents lived at No. 1. Other famous residents included W.B. Yeats, who lived at No. 52 and No. 82. With its proximity to the National Gallery, Merrion Square is a popular place to relax, and on the weekend the square comes alive with artists selling their wares on the street.

Temple Bar

Temple Bar
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 1-677-2255

<http://www.templebar.ie>

Extensive redevelopment has ignited this historical area bordered by the Liffey to the north and Dame Street to the south. (The district's main street running through the area also is called Temple Bar.) Artists, designers and young entrepreneurs have set up small shops, galleries, restaurants and pubs, and many of Dublin's vibrant arts organizations are headquartered there. On Saturday, Meeting House Square boasts a fabulous fresh-food market; other markets sell books, clothing, crafts and furniture. All are abuzz with social activity. Check out the independent films regularly shown at the Irish Film Institute (<http://www.ifi.ie>). On a more cautionary note, be aware that Temple Bar has its elements of sleaze and can be a nighttime haunt for drunken revelers—it's pretty well guaranteed to be rowdy during weekends. Watch your wallet.

Parks & Gardens

Farmleigh

Farmleigh, Castleknock
Dublin, Ireland 15

Phone: 01-815-5900

<http://www.farmleigh.ie>

This late-18th-century Georgian house on a 78-acre/32-hectare estate at the northwest edge of Phoenix Park was bought by the Irish government from the Guinness family in 1999 for 29.2 million euros. Farmleigh has proved a valuable public resource, hosting free jazz and classical concerts, lectures and

art workshops, food markets and classes. The lovingly maintained grounds are good for a walk. There are sculptures, ponds and ancient trees, and donkeys, horses, cows and chickens wander through the fields. There is also a cafe on-site.

Daily 10 am-6 pm. Free.

Herbert Park

Ballsbridge
Dublin, Ireland 4

Phone: 01-668-4364

<http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-services-recreation-culture-dublin-city-parks-visit-park/herbert-park>

Stretching between the upscale neighborhoods of Ballsbridge and Donnybrook, Herbert Park is a 32-acre/13-hectare public oasis of green space in a rapidly developing area. A relic of the British Empire, this beautifully landscaped park features rose gardens and wooded copses, and such old-fashioned amenities as croquet grounds, tennis courts and boules pitches. Two playgrounds and a duck pond, built for the Dublin International Trades Exhibition of 1907, attract children of all ages, often accompanied by their nannies.

Open daily from 10 am; closing times vary according to time of year.

Iveagh Gardens

Clonmel Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-475-7816

<http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/dublin/theiveaghgardens>

This least known of central Dublin's parks is also called "The Secret Garden," and its anonymity makes a stroll there all the more fun. It has a rustic grotto, cascade, fountains, rosarium, maze and old archery range, as well as striking statuary.

Monday-Saturday from 8 am, Sunday from 10 am. Free.

National Botanic Gardens

Botanic Road, Glasnevin (located north of the city center, and accessible by car or city bus)
Dublin, Ireland 9

Phone: 01-804-0300

<http://www.botanicgardens.ie>

Founded in 1795, these beautiful gardens contain rare blooms and palms housed in huge, equally rare Victorian conservatories. Every September, there's a fascinating outdoor sculpture exhibition, with many tactile artifacts children can play with. The gardens are home to one of very few examples of the Wollemi Pine, a species that was thought to be extinct until it was re-discovered in Australia.

Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-6 pm. Free guided tours Sunday at noon and 2:30 pm.

Phoenix Park

Conyngham Road
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-677-0095

<http://www.phoenixpark.ie>

This is one of Europe's largest enclosed urban parks at 1,760 acres/713 hectares. Its size—larger than either New York City's Central Park or London's Hyde Park—allows walkers to travel a great distance and still be in the city. Dubliners use it for picnics, jogging, walking the dog and playing impromptu ball games. Within the park are the residences of the president of Ireland (*Aras an Uachtarain*) and the U.S. Ambassador to Ireland, as well as the Papal Cross and the Dublin Zoo (attractive but small). The Phoenix Park Visitors Centre houses exhibitions and an audiovisual show about the park. Next to it is Ashtown Castle, a restored 17th-century tower house. Situated on Dublin's north side, the park gate closest to the city center is at Infirmity and Conyngham roads. *Note:* As with many large urban parks, it is unsafe to walk in Phoenix Park after dark.

The park is open 24 hours daily. Visitors Centre hours April-December daily 10 am-6 pm; January-March Wednesday-Sunday 9:30 am-5:30 pm. Admission to the Visitors Centre is free.

St. Stephen's Green

Top of Grafton Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-475-7816

<http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/Dublin/StStephensGreen>

Dublin's best-known central park has trees, flowers, rockeries, gardens for the visually impaired, an artificial lake with ducks and a playground. It's a prime people-watching site, too—much of Dublin goes there at lunchtime on warm days.

Open during daylight hours.

Wineries, Breweries & Distilleries

Guinness Storehouse

St. James's Gate
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-408-4800

<http://www.guinness-storehouse.com>

Although the Storehouse is adjacent to the Guinness Brewery, you don't get to see the actual beer-making process or facilities. Instead, it's a large, multifloor museum that tells the story of the famous stout using various mediums, including an interactive "Tasting Laboratory" where visitors can try some beer directly from the keg line. The seventh-floor Gravity Bar offers a fantastic view of the city and is the place where visitors also receive a complimentary pint of Guinness.

Daily 9:30 am-5 pm. 16.50 euros adults, 13 euros seniors and students older than 18, 10.50 euros students younger than 18, 6.50 euros children ages 6-12, 40 euros families (10% discount on adult tickets if booked online).

Old Jameson Distillery

Bow Street
Dublin, Ireland 7

Phone: 01-807-2355

<http://www.jamesonwhiskey.com>

This 18th-century brewery includes a tour that reviews the history of whiskey making, which began in the sixth century. You get a taste of the product at the end of the tour.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 14 euros adults, 10.60 euros students older than 18 (with ID), 9.60 euros seniors, 7.70 euros children, 35 euros families. 10% discount for adults if booked online.

Shopping

A consumer frenzy developed with the growth of Ireland's economy in the early and mid-2000s, and many shopping centers and smaller retail stores popped up around the city. North of the Liffey, you'll find lots of British chain stores and small Irish boutiques, especially along Henry Street. South of the river, the Temple Bar district is packed with stores selling retro items and the work of local designers. On Grafton Street are Brown Thomas (*the* Irish department store) and a host of international shops.

The largest concentration of well-known antiques dealers is in the Francis Street area, but there are pockets of shops on Patrick Street, in the Molesworth/Dawson Street area and along the north quays in the first few blocks off O'Connell Street. For books, head to Dawson Street.

A must-have item is Irish smoked salmon. It's sold vacuum-packed and can be imported into most other countries this way. Make sure you buy it at a supermarket, such as Dunnes Stores in the St. Stephen's Green Shopping Centre—you'll save a bundle over prices at the airport.

Shopping Hours: Stores are generally open Monday-Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm, with later hours on Thursday until 7 or 8 pm.

Department Stores

Arnotts

12 Henry St.
Dublin, Ireland 1

Phone: 01-805-0400

<http://www.arnotts.ie>

More affordable than Brown Thomas, this Dublin institution offers a wide selection ranging from designer items to bargain-basement finds.

Hours vary.

Brown Thomas

88-95 Grafton St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-605-6666

<http://www.brownthomas.com>

Within Dublin's long-established and most prestigious department store, you'll find the best of Irish and European fashion, an extensive range of giftware and everything for the home.

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:30 am-8 pm, Tuesday 10 am-8 pm, Thursday 9:30 am-9 pm, Saturday 9 am-8 pm, Sunday 11 am-7 pm.

Galleries

Green on Red Gallery

Park Lane, Spencer Dock
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-245-4282

<http://www.greenonredgallery.com>

This gallery specializes in the work of contemporary Irish artists and is a good place to view current trends in Irish art. Its only drawback is a heavy emphasis on selling the works on display, so visitors may feel a little intimidated. Just don't let that put you off.

Wednesday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday 11 am-3 pm.

Kerlin Gallery

Anne's Lane, South Anne Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-670-9093

<http://www.kerlin.ie>

This gallery is noted internationally for cutting-edge art.

Monday-Friday 10 am-5:45 pm, Saturday 11 am-4:30 pm.

Taylor Galleries

16 Kildare St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-676-6055

<http://www.taylorgalleries.ie>

This place shows works by some of Ireland's most accomplished contemporary artists, with an emphasis on painting and sculpture.

Monday-Friday 10 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 11 am-3 pm.

Temple Bar Gallery + Studios

5-9 Temple Bar
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-671-0073

<http://www.templebargallery.com>

There are two art exhibition spaces and 30 artist studios in this fine modern building. Studio visits with artists can be arranged by calling in advance.

The Molesworth Gallery

16 Molesworth St.
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-679-1548

<http://www.molesworthgallery.com>

One of Ireland's leading contemporary-art galleries, the Molesworth represents some of the most accomplished and exciting artists working in the country today.

Monday-Friday 10 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 11 am-2 pm.

Markets

A vibrant network of farmers markets has developed around Dublin. The stall holders usually include butchers, bakers, cake makers, cheese mongers and other retailers, as well as farmers. The markets are generally smaller—and pricier—than many of the food markets in Europe, but no less appealing. You can buy cheeses, olives, oysters, ethnic fast food, bread, coffee, apple juice and lots of fresh fruit and vegetables—much of it organic. The markets are great places for browsing or an alfresco lunch. For a list of current markets in Dublin, visit <http://www.irishfarmersmarkets.ie>.

The area around North Moore Street just west of O'Connell Street on the Northside has become a multicultural food haven. Dublin's ubiquitous fruit and vegetable sellers hawk their wares, and old-fashioned Irish butcher shops display pigs' heads and tails, alongside a plethora of Russian, Latvian, Romanian, West African, Chinese and Filipino food shops and tiny restaurants.

Parnell and Talbot streets, also on the Northside, just east of O'Connell Street, have become a cultural melting pot dotted with ethnic grocery stores and with Korean, African, Chinese and eastern European restaurants. Take a walk and discover a whole new world of food.

Blackrock Market

19-A Main St.
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-283-3522

<http://www.blackrockmarket.com>

Only a short bus or DART ride from the city center, this market features 50-plus stalls offering an engrossing hodgepodge of antique housewares and linens, old books, handcrafts and jewelry, as well as standard flea-market discounted CDs and DVDs.

Monday-Friday 11 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 9 am-5:30 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-5:30 pm.

Leopardstown Farmers Market

Foxrock
Dublin, Ireland

<http://irishfarmersmarkets.ie/category/leopardstown>

Located at Leopardstown racecourse, this is one of the oldest farmers markets in Ireland. There are about 40 stalls of organic and local produce, meat, fish and an incredible selection of freshly baked goods. Most of the stalls are located indoors.

Friday 10 am-4 pm.

Temple Bar

Temple Bar
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-677-2255

<http://www.templebar.ie/markets/article/temple-bar-food-market>

Temple Bar has three separate, lively markets. The Book Market is open Saturday and Sunday 11 am-6 pm in Temple Bar Square (<http://www.templebar.ie/markets/article/temple-bar-book-market>). Clothing, crafts and furniture can be found at Designer Mart, which is open Saturday 10 am-4:30 pm at Cow's Lane (<http://www.templebar.ie/markets/article/designer-mart>). Temple Bar Food Market is open Saturday 10 am-4:30 pm at Meeting House Square.

Shopping Areas

Dundrum Town Centre

Sandyford Road (on the Luas Green Line)
Dublin, Ireland 16

Phone: 01-299-1700

<http://www.dundrum.ie>

This mall is notable as it includes a few British and European clothing retailers not found anywhere else in Ireland. These include Harvey Nichols and House of Fraser.

Monday-Friday 9 am-9 pm, Saturday 9 am-7 pm, Sunday 10 am-7 pm.

Grafton Street

Grafton Street
Dublin, Ireland 2

Ireland's most famous shopping street stretches between Trinity College and St. Stephen's Green. Its pedestrianized expanse is lined with smart shops, including Brown Thomas department store and Weir and Sons jewelers, along with popular British chain stores such as Marks & Spencer, Monsoon, Next and Boots the Chemists. There's always a crowd there, and you'll see street performers busking, miming or standing absolutely still as "human statues." It remains *the* place for teens to hang out on Saturday afternoons.

Powerscourt Townhouse Centre

59 S. Williams St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-679-4144

<http://www.powerscourtcentre.com>

Located in a beautiful Georgian building, the Townhouse is a treasure trove of designer fashion, antiques, jewelry and eateries. There's also free Wi-Fi.

Monday-Wednesday and Friday 10 am-6 pm, Thursday 10 am-8 pm, Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm.

Stephen's Green Shopping Centre

Stephen's Green West
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-478-0888

<http://www.stephensgreen.com>

Located at the top of Grafton Street, this modern shopping center has a wide range of fashion and gift shops.

Open Monday-Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 9 am-7 pm, Thursday 9 am-9 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm.

Specialty Stores

A Store is Born

34 Clarendon St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-285-7627

<https://www.facebook.com/AStoreIsBorn>

This divine (and tiny) shop reflects owner Marie Murphy's eye for vintage fashion. It's like stepping onto a 1950s Hollywood movie set

Open Saturday only 11 am-6 pm.

Celtic Whiskey Shop

27-28 Dawson St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-675-9744

<http://www.celticwhiskeyshop.com>

An unimaginable array of Irish, Scottish and other world whiskeys (some of them quite rare), plus wines, beers and other spirits—including mead and Irish *poitin* (moonshine).

Monday-Wednesday and Friday and Saturday 10:30 am-8 pm, Thursday 10:30 am-9 pm, Sunday 12:30-7 pm.

Claddagh Records

2 Cecilia St. (Temple Bar)
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-677-0262

<http://www.claddaghrecords.com>

This groundbreaking company was founded in 1959 by Garech Brown, and among its earliest releases was the first album by The Chieftains. Its specialty music shop has one of the finest selections of folk, roots, bluegrass and traditional genres in all of Ireland.

Open Monday and Friday 11:30 am-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Thursday 10:30 am-5:30 pm.

Cleo Knitwear

18 Kildare St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

The best place, bar none, for Irish hand-woven and hand-knit sweaters, scarves, throws, hats, bags, socks and other wearable art.

Open Monday-Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm.

Gallery 29 Vintage Posters

29 Molesworth St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-642-5784

<http://www.gallery29.ie>

Pick up an alternative gift or memento in the form of an original Irish tourist poster. Many were commissioned by railway companies in the pre-TV age, and some are wonderful landscapes by acclaimed artists such as Paul Henry. There are also film posters for classic movies such as John Ford's *The Quiet Man*.

Open Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm.

House of Ireland

37-38 Nassau St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-671-1111

<http://www.houseofireland.com>

Purchase your Waterford crystal, Belleek china, Aran knitware, and other high-quality Irish homewares and souvenirs from this large, airy emporium near Trinity College.

Monday-Wednesday and Friday 9 am-6:30 pm, Thursday 9 am-8 pm, Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-6 pm.

Weir and Sons

96-99 Grafton St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-677-9678

<http://www.weirandsons.ie>

This Dublin institution is definitely worth a visit if only to gape at the beautiful showcases and elegant surroundings. Fine jewelry, silver, leather, watches and other gift items. There's a second location at Dundrum.

Monday-Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 9:30 am-6 pm, Thursday 9:30 am-8 pm.

Whytes

38 Molesworth St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-676-2888

<http://www.whytes.ie>

This company appraises value and auctions paintings, drawings, sculpture, prints and engravings.

Open Monday 10 am-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Friday 9:30 am-5:30 pm. Auction previews 10 am-6 pm. Other times by appointment.

Dining

Dining Overview

In Dublin, you'll find plenty of traditional Irish food: potato cakes, colcannon (potatoes mashed with cabbage or kale), salmon, Irish stew (mutton, onions and potatoes), prawns (fresh from Dublin Bay), oysters and breads. But don't stick just to the traditional fare. In addition to a respectable selection of international eateries, you'll find restaurants that specialize in a distinctive school of New Irish cuisine. It uses rich, indigenous Irish foodstuffs prepared with influences from the European continent and the Mediterranean.

Eating out in Dublin is pricey, although an increasing number of places offer set lunch and dinner menus, Early Bird specials and preheater menus that are a good value. Pubs also offer affordable sandwiches and light meals. Check with the tourist board for a list of such restaurants.

Dining times are generally 7:30-10 am for breakfast, 12:30-3 pm for lunch and 6-10 pm for dinner.

One cautionary note: Although Ireland was considered smoker-friendly in the past, legislation banning smoking in all workplaces, including restaurants and pubs, is now in effect.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a basic dinner entree for one, not including drinks, but including tax and tip: \$ = less than 15 euros; \$\$ = 15 euros-25 euros; \$\$\$ = 26 euros-40 euros; and \$\$\$\$ = more than 40 euros.

Local & Regional

Chapter One

18-19 Parnell Square
Dublin, Ireland 1

Phone: 01-873-2266

<http://www.chapteronerestaurant.com>

This welcoming Michelin-starred restaurant, housed in the basement of the Dublin Writers Museum, offers local and seasonal Irish fare prepared with French influences. Specialties include creamed tapioca, stuffed pig's tail and ravioli of 36-month-aged Parmesan. For dessert, try the Irish cherries with yeast ice cream. The preheater dinner Tuesday-Saturday beginning at 5:30 pm, at 36.50 euros, is deservedly popular and should be booked in advance.

Tuesday-Friday 12:30-2 pm and 7:30-10:30 pm, Saturday 7:30-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Fallon & Byrne

11-17 Exchequer St.
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-472-1010

<http://www.fallonandbyrne.com>

A food and wine lover's delight, this three-floor emporium in the center of town boasts a wine bar, a gourmet "food hall" market and restaurant. All is fresh, contemporary and beautifully presented. Prices are reasonable.

Daily noon-3 pm and 6-10 pm. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Gallagher's Boxy House

20-21 Temple Bar
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-677-2762

<http://www.boxtyhouse.ie>

This is one of Dublin's most tourist-oriented restaurants, but don't let that put you off. Few places serve the potato variations, Irish stew and other dishes that constitute traditional Irish cuisine—Gallagher's does them well and at reasonable prices.

Daily 11 am-10:30 pm. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

L'Ecrivain

109A Lower Baggot St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-661-1919

<http://www.lecrivain.com>

Its name means "the writer," and everything about this handsome, airy restaurant demonstrates owner-chef Derry Clarke's passion for Irish culture. Try the crispy rabbit belly starter followed by the Irish corn-fed chicken served with wild asparagus, fresh almond, sweet-corn puree and smoked bacon popcorn. L'Ecrivain has an excellent wine list, and its personable service suits everyone from executive "suits" at lunch to cozy couples in the evening.

Monday-Saturday 6:30-10 pm, Thursday and Friday 12:30-2 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

O'Reilly's of Temple Bar

22 East Essex Street, Temple Bar
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-677-5222

<http://www.oreillysoftemplebar.ie>

Three generations of O'Reilly's have been purveying the best of traditional Irish food in their family pubs in Clonakilty, Killarney and Kilrush. It was Ted O'Reilly who exported the family cuisine from West Cork to Dublin. Aunty Nora's Bread and Butter pudding, Nell Og's Stew and Ma Reilly's soda bread are now firm Dublin favorites, along with traditional delights such as bacon and cabbage served with creamy mashed potatoes, Kerry lamb steak, Guinness beef stew and fresh seafood.

Open daily for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Roly's Bistro

7 Ballsbridge Terrace
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-668-2611

<http://www.rolysbistro.ie>

Wonderfully consistent, Roly's French-influenced Irish fare never disappoints. Try the Kerry lamb with roasted parsnips and thyme, or the roast breast of free-range chicken with creamed leeks. The service is efficient, the white starched tablecloths very civilized, and you'll be surrounded by a mix of society ladies who lunch, businesspeople and, on weekends, family gatherings. A good value for the money.

Daily noon-3 pm and 5:45-10 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

The Brazen Head

20 Bridge St. Lower
Dublin, Ireland 8

Phone: 01-677-9549

<http://www.brazenhead.com>

This place claims to be the oldest pub in Ireland. It's not. (That title is held by Sean's Bar in Athlone which, according to Guinness World Records, is the world's oldest pub.) But it does date back to the late 12th century. Its most famous resident was the Irish rebel Robert Emmet, whose writing desk still sits in the restaurant, and whose portrait, along with those of other patriots, adorns the wall of the bar. James Joyce, Brendan Behan, Michael Collins, Jonathan Swift, Wolf Tone and Daniel O'Connell all frequented this establishment. More modern patrons include Van Morrison and Mary Black. There are two bars, and the old bar used to roll back to reveal an escape tunnel for Emmet when the British army got too close. No-frills bar food includes beef-and-Guinness stew and a wide variety of seafood.

Daily noon-9:30 pm. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Thornton's

128 St. Stephen's Green (Fitzwilliam Hotel, first floor)
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-478-7008

<http://www.thorntonsrestaurant.com>

One of the most imaginative and artistic chefs in Ireland, Kevin Thornton creates "haute" Irish food that sings with flavor, freshness and integrity. Specialties include the pig's head starter, sauteed prawns, wild Atlantic sea bass and milk-fed veal loin. Try the blood-orange souffle with blood-orange sorbet. Menus reflect the finest seasonal ingredients; the atmosphere is elegant, quiet and a trifle chilly. Prices are through the roof, although the three-course lunch or pretheater dinner at 50 euros are among the best values in the city.

Tuesday-Thursday and Saturday from 6 pm, Friday and Saturday from 12:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cuisines

French

L'Gueuleton

1 Fade St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-675-3708

<http://www.lgueuleton.com>

This Dublin restaurant opened in response to price awareness among Irish customers. No starched linen or whispering servers—the tasty, reasonably priced food is the reason to go there. The name, French for "taste sensation," sums up the Francophile fare; the offerings include fresh seafood puff pastry and a caramelized onion and smoked Gubbeen tart.

Monday-Saturday 12:30-10 pm, Sunday noon-9 pm. Reservations available. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

The French Paradox

53 Shelbourne Road
Dublin, Ireland 4

Phone: 01-660-4068

<http://www.thefrenchparadox.com>

This extremely popular and stylish establishment combines a wine shop and a wine bar, featuring some 65 French wines by the glass. The list changes frequently, and the menu of French tapas provides a nice complement to the wines.

Wine shop Monday-Saturday 10:30 am-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Italian

Dunne & Crescenzi

14-16 S. Frederick St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-675-9892

<http://www.dunneandcrescenzi.com>

This cafe (with several locations around town) serves hot pasta and soup alongside paninis, plates of ham, cheese and arugula, and some of the best coffee in Dublin. The restaurant, an Irish-Italian partnership, also has a good wine list, with many organic selections.

Monday-Saturday from 8 am, Sunday from 9:30 am. Reservations available. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Gotham Cafe

8 S. Anne St.
Dublin, Ireland 2

Phone: 01-679-5266

<http://www.gothamcafe.ie>

This is a great spot if you have a craving for pizza and Americana. The walls are covered with *Rolling Stone* magazine covers, and the creative, thin-crust pizzas have names such as the Central Park, Bowery, Spanish Harlem and the TriBeCa. A children's menu is also available.

Monday and Tuesday 11 am-10 pm , Wednesday-Saturday 11 am-11 pm, Sunday 11:30 am-10 pm.
Reservations available. \$\$. Most major credit cards.

Il Posto Restaurant

10 Stephen's Green
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-679-4769

<http://www.ilpostorestaurant.com>

Hearty, imaginative Italian and Mediterranean food served in Dublin's trendy Stephen's Green neighborhood, where you can dine inside or out and not break the budget. The early dinner and the lunch special offer particularly good value. Start with the beef meatballs and follow them up with the popular baked fillet of hake.

Monday-Saturday noon-2:30 pm and from 5:30 pm. Reservations available. \$-\$\$.

Steps of Rome

1 Chatham St.
Dublin, Ireland

Phone: 01-670-5630

<http://www.stepsofrome.ie>

The takeaway pizza slices are second to none. Conveniently located near St. Stephen's Green and the Grafton Street shopping area.

Monday-Thursday 10 am-11 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-11:30 pm, Sunday noon-10 pm. \$. No credit cards.

Security

Personal Safety

Dublin is a reasonably safe city, but use caution when venturing into the northern part of O'Connell Street and surrounding areas at night. Temple Bar can get crowded and rough late at night, especially during weekends—pickpockets haunt the area.

Do not leave valuables in a parked car, even if they are in the trunk or covered with a coat. Do not park your car in the streets—use designated car parks, as they are safer. Be as careful of your handbag or wallet as you would be in any major city; do not carry your passport or large amounts of cash on you or leave them in your hotel room (unless it has a safe). Cell phone theft has become common around the

city center, so be extra careful about using one in public places. Dublin also has a drug problem, which is more prominent the farther north of the river you go.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

No vaccinations are necessary for entry into Ireland. In general, Dublin's sanitation standards are decent, and tap water is safe to drink. Food is not generally sold on the street, but when it is (fish-and-chips or ice cream, for instance), it's safe, though of varying quality. Medical care, if needed, is excellent.

In the event of medical emergency, dial 112 or 999. St. Vincent's University Hospital is centrally located at Elm Park, off Merrion Road, Dublin 2. Phone 01-221-4000.

Pharmacies are available all over the city, including many branches of the chain Boots the Chemists, and most operate at least part of the day on Sunday. Although 24-hour pharmacies are a rarity, Hamilton Long & Co., at 5 Lower O'Connell St., Dublin 1 (phone 01-874-8456), and its sister branch at 4 Merrion Road, Dublin 4 (phone 01-668-3050), are open until 9 pm.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

Disabled Advisory

More and more hotels, guesthouses and restaurants are adapting their facilities for people with disabilities. Most museums are handicap-accessible, as are buses and other public transportation.

Shopmobility Dublin is based at a number of locations, including the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre (phone 01-620-8731) and at Dundrum Town Centre (phone 01-298-7982), and offers a variety of facilities for disabled visitors. <http://www.ddai.ie/index.php/shop-mobility>.

The Sage Traveling Web site ranks dozens of popular European destinations, including Dublin, according to their respective levels of accessibility for the disabled. <http://www.sagetraveling.com/Dublin-Disabled-Access>.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do check out the free entertainment provided by Dublin's buskers. Although Grafton Street has been the traditional haunt of these street performers, many of the more exotic artists now frequent Temple Bar Square, where you can catch fire-eaters, limbo dancers and madcap comedians, as well as your average guitar strummer.

Don't be daunted by Dublin's reputation for hard drinking. Drinking is considered a sociable pastime, but generally speaking, it's a drinking culture of leisurely pints enjoyed over long conversations.

Do try the Guinness—it's the country's most famous beverage, after all. But don't feel compelled to drink it for your entire stay if it doesn't suit your palate. They say it's an acquired taste, and not everyone acquires it—even some born-and-bred Dubliners. But be careful *where* you try it. Ask a local for the best places. Kilkenny and Smithwick's are two other good beers, with the former harder to come by.

Don't assume all pubs are the same. If you want to get a good deal, do check the drinks price list, displayed by law just inside the entrance of each bar. Prices can vary wildly from pub to pub, and mixed drinks are generally very expensive.

Do purchase the Dublin Pass, advertised at a lot of tourist venues, but only after you have read the fine print. It may make sense if you want to pack a lot of sightseeing into a short time, but remember that the benefits of the card are limited.

Don't travel during morning or evening rush hours if you can avoid it. Getting stuck in Dublin's infamous traffic gridlock is not a great way to spend time. Despite express bus lanes, public transport will also be jammed with people traveling to and from work.

Do use the word "lift," not "ride," when asking someone to take you someplace in their car. "Ride" is the slangy equivalent of the f-word.

Don't expect to hear much Gaelic in the city: English has long been the first language of Ireland, other than in some rural areas, and although most Dubliners have a basic grasp of the Irish language, some aren't too familiar with it. However, you could be lucky enough to meet some fluent Irish speakers. Some phrases you may encounter include *slainte* (pronounced *slawn-cha*), which is a toast to good health; *cead míle fáilte* (pronounced *cade mee-la fawl-cha*), which means "a thousand welcomes"; and *go raibh míle maith agat* (pronounced *guh rev mee-la moh a-got*), which means "a thousand thank yous." Also, on public lavatories you may see the words *fir* (men) and *mna* (women).

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Passports are needed by citizens of Canada and the U.S. However, a visa is not required for stays of up to three months. Reconfirm travel document information with your carrier before departure.

Population: 527,612.

Languages: English, Gaelic.

Predominant Religions: Christian (Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland).

Time Zone: Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts. 50 Hz.

Telephone Codes: 353, country code; 01, city code for Dublin;

Money

Taxes

A 23% VAT (value-added tax) is incorporated into prices for almost all goods, with the exception of books, which are not taxed, and restaurant meals, takeaway food and bakery goods, which are taxed at 13.5%. But with a little paperwork, nonresidents of the European Union can obtain a tax refund. To reclaim the tax you paid, you must see the VAT refund officer at the airport before departure and present the receipt for the article you purchased and a refund form (which must be obtained at the place of purchase). Some larger stores will handle most of the paperwork for you and then mail you the refund.

Tipping

Tipping is not part of Irish culture, and, as is the case in most of Europe, restaurant patrons will often round a bill up or leave some small change on the table. Waitstaff are paid a reasonable wage in Ireland.

Weather

Dublin's weather is best described as changeable. Rain showers can come at any time (carry an umbrella even if it looks sunny). February-July is the driest time of year, with an average of about 2 in/5 cm of rain each month. December is usually the wettest, but then again, no one goes to Ireland for the weather.

There are few extremes of hot or cold. July is typically the warmest month, averaging 60 F/15 C; January and February are the coldest, averaging about 40 F/4 C. Snow falls just a few days a year at most.

What to Wear

The Irish have become more fashion-conscious of late. But you can still wear what you feel comfortable in and not worry about it. Because the weather can be very changeable, wear layers for the greatest flexibility. Even in summer, take a heavy sweater and—always—a rain jacket and/or umbrella. Wearing a T-shirt, shorts and athletic shoes—although very popular with Dublin teenagers—will brand you as a tourist, as well as exclude you from some of the more upscale pubs and restaurants. For business, take a suit.



Akureyri, Iceland

Overview

Introduction

Akureyri, known as the "Capital of the North" and located near the Arctic Circle, is the second-largest town in Iceland. An industrial, shipping and dairy town on Eyjafjordur Fjord, 150 mi/240 km northeast of Reykjavik, it has a charming pedestrian shopping area, a folklore museum and botanical gardens that shouldn't be missed.

When the weather is colder, plenty of winter sports activities are offered. During the summer, because the sun never sets, contestants in the Arctic Open play midnight golf. Nearby is lunarlike Lake Myvatn and its impressive green inlets.

About 45 minutes northwest is Husavik, which is known as the whale-watching capital of Europe. This small town boasts a historical and whale museum and operates numerous whale-watching cruises. At least two nights are needed to do justice to Akureyri and the immediate area.



Reykjavik, Iceland

Overview

Introduction

The world's northernmost capital, Reykjavik (which means "smoky bay") sits on the southwest coast of Iceland. Surrounded by a ring of mountains and Faxaflói Bay, Reykjavik is immaculately clean, and visitors will find that it's easy to explore on foot.



The capital city is full of artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers, as well the rugged fishermen who ply the North Atlantic Ocean and unload their catch on the city's docks. Reykjavik is the political and cultural epicenter of Iceland, home to the nation's parliament.

Reykjavik remains one of the world's top travel destinations, the number of annual tourists now far exceeding the country's total population. Where these tourists once found exorbitant prices, the economic upheaval the nation faced in 2008 devalued the Icelandic krona, and what was once one of the most expensive cities in the world has become a relative bargain. With unrivaled nightlife and pristine nature surrounding the city, there's never been a better time to visit Reykjavik.

Port Information

Location

Smaller cruise ships dock close to the town center, within walking distance from nearly all of the city's attractions. Most ships, however, have to dock at the Skarfabakki cruise dock, which is 2 mi/3 km from the town center. The small terminal at the cruise dock contains visitor information, car rental booths, and computer and Internet access.

Skarfabakki offers free shuttle buses to transport visitors to the Reykjavik town center, which is about a 10-minute drive. Taxis are also available at the dock and in town.

Potpourri

Iceland opened the first hydrogen fuel station in 2003, and that same year it began running hydrogen-powered buses in Reykjavik. The country is striving to transfer its entire fishing fleet to hydrogen fuel cells to reduce Iceland's dependency on fossil fuel.

See & Do

Sightseeing

The highlights of Reykjavik can be seen in two days, but we recommend staying longer, if time permits. And be sure to take the time to talk with the city's residents; they're very friendly.

Because the city is old, streets are laid out in strange ways, and it's possible to become disoriented. Find a landmark, such as the church spire or the city pond, and keep it as a reference point.

The two main areas of Reykjavik encompass the harbor and the small pond. The harbor, teeming with boats and fishermen, provides a pleasant stroll and a glimpse into the life of a fishing nation. Stop in for afternoon tea at the Hotel Borg, just across from the City Hall, and you may spot local lawmakers or even the president.

Historic Sites

Althing

Austurvollur Square
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-563-0631

<http://www.althingi.is/english/information-and-enquiries/visits-to-parliament-house/>

Established in 930, the Althing is the oldest parliament in the world. Its current building is unassuming and decidedly younger, built in the 19th century, but absolutely worth a visit. It's a major stop on most walking tours of the city, so if you're going independently, be prepared for crowds—and herds of segways.

City Hall

Tjarnargata 11
Reykjavik, Iceland

This ornate building is the focal point for this northernmost capital's operations. Architects designed the building so it split into four two-story bays, each top-lit by an elliptical roof light. On the ground floor is a cafe with windows overlooking Tjornin pond. There's also a massive topographical map of Iceland, highlighting the glaciers and the fjords.

Hallgrímskirkja

Eriksgata (Miobaer)
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 663-8300

<http://hallgrimskirkja.is>

This Lutheran church highlights the Reykjavik skyline, watching over the capital like a friend. Named after Icelandic poet and clergyman Hallgrímur Petursson, the structure rises 244 ft/74 m and was designed to resemble the basalt lava flows that dominate Iceland's rugged landscape. From the church's bell tower, you can gaze down upon the rooftops of Reykjavik. This is an active church with Sunday Mass, so plan your visit accordingly.

The Pearl

Oskjuhlíó Hill
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-562-0200

<http://www.perlan.is>

Go to the top of the hot-water storage tank, which has an observation walkway and a revolving restaurant, set in a glass dome known as The Pearl. A fountain, built to mimic a geyser, erupts in the lobby every five minutes. On the lower level of the Pearl is the Saga Museum, one of the most interesting museums in Iceland. Below The Pearl is Nautholsvík, an artificial beach with white sand where you can splash around in heated seawater.

Museums

Arbaer Folk Museum

Kistuhylur
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-411-6300

<http://www.minjasafnreykjavikur.is>

People of all ages will enjoy the open-air Arbaer Folk Museum with its historic turf-roof houses, a church and a barn. There are sheep and horses in the summer. Interpreters wear period costumes.

Arni Magnusson Institute

Suburgata Melar
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-525-4010

<http://www.am.hi.is>

The Arni Magnusson Institute is named after the 17th-century Icelandic scholar and librarian who amassed a huge collection of Nordic manuscripts during his lifetime. The Institute showcases his collection, which it shares with the Arnamageaeian Institute in Copenhagen.

Kjarvalsstaeir

Flokagata 105
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-517-1290

<http://www.artmuseum.is>

Icelanders are loyal to their own artists, and original artworks are on public display everywhere. A favorite is the late Johannes Kjarval. This entire museum is devoted to his work. It is located in lovely Miklatun Park and reachable by city bus.

Daily 10 am-5 pm.

National Gallery of Iceland

Frikirkjuvegur 7
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-515-9600

<http://www listasafn.is>

This Reykjavik gallery was founded in 1884 in Copenhagen. Its collection of more than 10,000 works focuses primarily on 19th- and 20th-century Icelandic and international art. The museum seeks to showcase and share Icelandic culture through its artists.

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm.

National Museum of Iceland

Suourgotu 41
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 530-2200

<http://www.thjodminjasafn.is>

What makes a nation? This museum offers a permanent exhibition that tries to answer this question by shedding light on the history of Iceland from settlement to the present day.

Daily 10 am-5 pm.

Nordic House

Sturlugata 5
Reykjavik, Iceland 101

Phone: 354-551-7030

<http://www.nordichouse.is>

The Nordic House is home to a library of more than 30,000 items, as well as exhibition spaces, auditoriums, restaurants and Nordic shops. It was opened as a cultural center in 1968, and remains a great meeting and learning center for both locals and tourists.

Daily noon-5 pm.

Reykjavik Photography Museum

Tryggvagata 15 (6th floor)
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-563-1790

<http://www.ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur.is>

Located in the public library near the harbor, this museum displays historic photographs of the island and its people. What's especially interesting about the collection is that not all photographs are professional. There are as many amateur and personal pictures as public and professional. If you find any favorites, there's a printing lab on-site and you can have it developed for purchase.

Monday-Thursday noon-7 pm, Friday noon-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 1-5 pm.

Saga Museum

Oskjuhlid Hill
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 354-511-1517

<http://sagamuseum.is>

The Saga Museum illuminates the settling of Iceland and the legendary Viking Age through wax figures and engaging displays. It sits inside one of the hot-water storage tanks in The Pearl, making the setting just as much fun as the museum's contents. All tours are self-guided and accompanied by audio. This is a favorite with both parents and children.

Daily 10 am-6 pm.

Parks & Gardens

A visit to Reykjavik would not be complete without a stop at the Laugardalur area, a large park, which includes the popular Laugardalslaug swimming pool (heated by geothermal water), the botanical garden and the Reykjavik Park and Zoo.

Tjornin

When this pond at the heart of Reykjavik's city center freezes during winter, locals skate and play hockey across it. But come summer, the pond melts and becomes a gathering spot for local waterfowl such as ducks and geese. Buy some day-old bread and join the Icelanders who soak up the sun while feeding the ducks.

Shopping

Walk around the old part of Reykjavik, near parliament, and peer into the area's shops. If looking for knickknacks, don't skip Kolaportid. At this flea market, you can unearth some of the city's top bargains.

Across the main street and up the hill is Laugavegur, Reykjavik's main shopping street, where you'll find anything from fish-skin leather to record stores to Reykjavik's hippest fashion in design shops such as Kron Kron.

The Handknitting Association of Iceland is a good place to buy handmade woolen sweaters or yarn to make your own.

Dining

Dining Overview

The local food, consisting primarily of all types of seafood (salmon, cod, shrimp, haddock and dried fish) and lamb, is fabulous. Among our favorite dishes are *hakarl* (raw shark), *grافلax* (cured salmon with herbs), *hangikjot* (smoked lamb), *skyr* (similar to yogurt) and *hverabraud* (rye bread baked underground). This bread can be bought everywhere, even in gas stations. With a local cheese, it makes a good lunch.

The Pearl

Oskjuhlid
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 562-0200

<http://www.perlan.is>

This is Reykjavik's most glamorous dining experience. Not only does a mighty glass dome with 1,176 window panes shelter the restaurant, which rests upon six aluminum-sided tanks, but the meals also delight guests.

Thrir Frakkar

Odinsgata
Reykjavik, Iceland

Phone: 552-3939

<http://www.3frakkar.com>

This is a seafood restaurant that even a fishmonger would love. Try the local delicacy, a fish-mash called Plokkfiskur.

Security

Etiquette

Icelanders are very proud of their country. For that reason, never tell an Icelandic that you aren't happy to be there.

When you enter the home of an Icelandic, be prepared to take off your shoes, and expect to be offered coffee.

If an Icelandic offers you shark meat, swallow it whole and then chase it with Brennivin, a bitter-flavored schnapps.

Nearly everyone in Iceland speaks English, so don't be afraid to strike up a conversation with a local.

Personal Safety

Serious crime is rare in Iceland, and the risk of terrorism is low. Theft is minimal in Reykjavik and almost nonexistent anywhere else in the country.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

For nonemergency medical assistance in Reykjavik, call 585-1300, or visit <http://www.heilsugaeslan.is>. Confirm coverage with your medical insurance company before your trip and, if needed, buy supplemental insurance.

In Reykjavik and other geothermal areas, the water may have a slight sulfur smell, but it won't hurt you (locals will reassure you that it's good for your complexion). It's safe to eat the food and drink the water in local restaurants or from the tap.

Call 112 to reach emergency assistance 24 hours a day. For nonemergency police information in Reykjavik, call 569-9020

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Do be aware that many secondary roads outside Reykjavik are unpaved. Use caution while driving, particularly during the winter months, when days last only a few hours, and weather and road conditions can change very quickly.

Don't expect to see Eskimos or penguins—they don't exist in Iceland, much less Reykjavik.

Do take along waterproof clothing if you plan to go hiking.

Do take a steam bath at the geothermal pools, and do take along swimsuits. Swimming in the natural hot springs is a grand experience.

Don't think about taking your pet along. A six-week quarantine period is required before entry.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: A passport is required of Australian, Canadian, U.K. and U.S. citizens for a stay of up to 90 days. Reconfirm travel document requirements with carrier before departure.

Languages: Icelandic. English widely spoken..

Predominant Religions: Predominantly Christian.

Time Zone: Daylight Saving Time is not observed.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts.

Telephone Codes: 354, country code;

Money

Taxes

The value-added tax (VAT) in Iceland ranges 7%-24.5%. It's less for hotels, restaurants and some goods, but the taxes for hotel and restaurant services are not refundable. Refunds on goods taken out of the country are only applicable on purchases of more than 4,000 ISK. To get your refund at the airport, you must have the item purchased, the receipt and a "Refund Cheque" provided by shops that display the Tax Free logo. Go to the Landsbanki Islands booth (a bank) in the airport's departure area to receive your refund.

Tipping

Tipping is unnecessary. In general, bartenders and waitstaff receive good wages and don't expect tips. The only exception is at the end of a long tour, when it is appropriate to tip your guide and driver.

What to Wear

You'll need a warm jacket during the winter and a wind-resistant fleece during the summer, as the northern breezes tend to be chilly. Many locals dress down on the weekends, but think European chic for weekdays.

Belfast, Northern Ireland

Overview

Introduction

The capital of Northern Ireland is an industrial city that was once synonymous with sectarian violence, but that has now changed and Belfast has emerged as a growing cultural center. The city center is compact, and many areas are now off-limits to automobiles, so it's a pleasant city to walk through. Belfast has charming architecture—as you walk, be sure to look up at the buildings, where you'll see ornate carvings ranging from faces to figurines.



Allow a minimum of three nights for visiting Belfast and the surrounding region.

History

Belfast has been a recognized city since 1888, although people have been settled in the area since at least the Bronze Age. When the northern part of Ireland was colonized by the English in the 17th century, in what has become known as the Plantation of Ulster, its population increased considerably because of the influx of Scottish and English Protestants. The Protestants attempted to take over the area and implement their own religion and language upon the Gaelic-speaking, predominantly Catholic region.

An antagonism based on the differences between the indigenous Gaels and what became a distinctive Ulster-Scottish Culture led to open warfare during a period that became known as the Troubles. It erupted in the 1970s with the Provisional IRA on one side and the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defense Association on the other. Between 1969 and 2001, some 1,600 lives were lost in the struggle for autonomy.

Although the odd violent death occasionally occurred after the Troubles were officially deemed over, there is no longer any threat of struggle. There remain cultural differences between the Catholics and Protestants, but tolerance is practiced.

Belfast was and still is a center of industry. In the past it was famous for the production of Irish linen, as well as for its shipbuilding, producing great liners such as the ill-fated Titanic in what was then the world's largest shipyard, Harland and Wolf. It also had the world's first aircraft manufacturing company, Shorts Brothers, which still operates in the city.

During the Troubles, the city suffered substantial damage. Since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, it has been largely rebuilt. Property prices have rocketed, and the influx of tourists contributes in excess of £300 million to the economy yearly.

Port Information

Location

Most cruise ships, particularly the larger ones, dock at Stormont Wharf in Belfast Harbour, which is located 2 mi/3 km from the city center. The area around the port is not very interesting, and there are few services for cruise-ship passengers. Free shuttles run every 15 minutes between the port and City Hall, which is located in downtown Belfast beside the visitor information center.

Smaller cruise ships are sometimes able to dock at Pollock Dock, which is closer to town.

Potpourri

The ill-fated Titanic was built at the Harland and Wolfe Shipyards in Belfast. There is a memorial to the victims at City Hall.

Northern Ireland is about one-third the size of the Republic of Ireland.

Be sure to visit Rowallane, a large house 20 minutes from Belfast, if the azaleas are in bloom.

See & Do

Sightseeing

As an ancient port city, it's no surprise that Belfast has an incredible amount of historic sites, museums and other sights to visit. Don't think you can get to it all in a day, though; allow yourself two or three days to explore the city to the fullest. Much of the architecture is late Victorian or Edwardian and many fine buildings have survived, such as the Ulster Bank building (now the Merchant Hotel), the City Hall and St. George's Market. On a darker note, you can visit the Crumlin Road Gaol, opened in 1846, which chronicles the historic tragedies of this once troubled city.

In modern Belfast, the waterfront has been regenerated to make the Titanic Quarter, a futuristic area of luxury apartments, hotels, cafes and restaurants. Right there, where the ship was built, the Titanic Belfast Visitor Experience relives the city's famous ship-building history, particularly the White Star Line, culminating in the story of that tragic vessel. There are numerous Titanic experiences and tours, from Titanic boat tours and the dry dock to the restored White Star ship the *SS Nomadic*.

Also in the Titanic Quarter is Titanic Studios, where *Game of Thrones* is shot, which has put Belfast and many of its surrounding landmarks on the international map. There are guided tours to visit some of the locations and Clearsky Adventure Park, the location for Winterfell, has a host of special activities based on the series.

Historic Sites

Belfast Cathedral

Donegall Street
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 028-9032-8332

<http://belfastcathedral.org>

Both worshippers and tourists are welcome at the century-old Saint Anne's Cathedral, better known as the Belfast Cathedral. The namesake of the historic Cathedral Quarter, the building boasts an impressive Romanesque design with beautiful stained-glass windows, fine stonework, displays of needlework and wood carving. Whether you seek to pray or admire, it's a must-see.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-5:15 pm, Sunday 1-3 pm. £5 adults.

Belfast City Hall

Donegall Square
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 028-9027-0456

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/cityhall>

Located in the heart of Belfast, the impressive City Hall opened for business in 1906. On warm days, its lawn is covered with sunbathers; we recommend that, rather than join them, you go inside and check out the staircase and mural.

Queen's University

University Road
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9024-5133

<http://www.qub.ac.uk>

Queen's University makes Belfast its campus. The most impressive of its buildings date from the 1900s and are worth ducking into, though they are primarily dedicated to students and administration. Both morning and night strolls are highly recommended.

Tuesday-Friday 10 am-4:30 pm, Saturday 10 am-12:30 pm and 1-4 pm.

Sinclair Seamen's Church

Corporation Square
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9080-1240

<http://www.presbyterianireland.org/congregations/sinclairseamens.html>

Sinclair Seamen's Church was founded for the sole purpose of tending to the souls of sailors breezing (or perhaps roaring) in and out of the port city in 1857. The pulpit is made from the bow of a ship and maritime navigation lights can be found throughout the structure.

Wednesday 2-4:30 pm.

Stormont

Parliament Buildings
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9052-1137

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk>

The Northern Ireland Parliament is located on the beautiful Stormont Estate. When you're done touring the assembly buildings, be sure to stroll around the grounds. There are forest trails for joggers and winding paths through picturesque flowerbeds for more leisurely walkers.

Ulster Bank Building

16 Skipper St.
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 028-9023-4888

<http://www.themerchanthotel.com>

Though it is now home to the Merchant Hotel in the historic Cathedral Quarter, this Victorian-era structure and Venetian palace look-alike, built in 1860, originally housed the Ulster Bank. If you want to indulge and bask in the lap of luxury for a night or two, consider booking a room.

Museums

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

Cultra
Holywood, Northern Ireland

Phone: 028-9042-8428

<http://www.nmni.com/uftm>

Just 4 mi/7 km outside of Belfast, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum is situated on the road to Bangor. It has a memorable Titanic exhibit and a small mock village representing Northern Ireland in the 1890s that isn't to be missed. Allow a minimum of three hours for your visit.

£9 adults.

The Ulster Museum

Botanic Gardens
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9044-0000

<http://www.nmni.com/um>

The Ulster Museum is only a 20-minute walk from the Belfast city center and situated in Belfast's Botanic Gardens. Its art collections change periodically, but always focus on Irish subjects or artists. Permanent exhibits include life and death in ancient Egypt, fossils and evolution, Ulster over the last 500 years and many others.

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm. Free admission.

Titanic Belfast Visitor Experience

1 Olympic Way
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9076-6386

<http://www.titanicbelfast.com>

This is the world's largest Titanic exhibition, and it is located beside the site of the shipyard where the vessel was built. From the museum's restaurant you can get a view of the slipway from where she was launched. Spread over six floors and using high-tech equipment to give an interactive experience, the museum lets you follow the story of the ship from design to sinking and the aftermath.

Daily 9 am-6 pm; shorter hours in winter. £15.50 adults.

W5

2 Queen's Quay
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 028-9046-7700

<http://www.w5online.co.uk>

This science museum—called W5 for the five questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why?—covers topics from physical activity to physics, all with interactive exhibits to try. Allow a minimum of two hours for your visit.

Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm. £8.50 adults.

Parks & Gardens

Belfast Botanic Gardens and Palm House

Botanic Avenue (College Park)
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 028-9031-4762

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/parksandopenspaces/parks/botanicgardens.asp>

Created in 1828 and now a public park, the Botanic Gardens are an essential part of Belfast's Victorian heritage with beautiful rose gardens and trees that are more than a century old. The Palm House, one of the first curvilinear cast iron glasshouses, is a horticulturalist's delight and a must-see.

Cave Hill Country Park

Antrim Road
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 028-9031-9629

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/parksandopenspaces/parks/cavehillcountrypark.asp>

This park in the north of the city features a variety of walking trails, gardens, Belfast Castle, a playground and sweeping views of the city and the Irish Sea.

Shopping

Shopping in Belfast offers better prices than in other parts of Northern Ireland. Good buys include Irish linen, Belleek china, Old Bushmills whiskey, Tiperrary and Tyrone crystal, Donegal tweed, woolens, lace, granite and silver jewelry.

The area surrounding Folktown Market is probably the best area to go looking for unique and quirky shops. Many are family-run businesses and provide the opportunity for truly rare and one-of-a-kind finds.

Belfast has a thriving traditional music scene; a CD from a local band or musician makes an excellent souvenir.

Markets

Folktown Market

Bank Square
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9024-6609

<http://www.folktownelfast.com>

This is the place to shop for local produce and crafts. It's an initiative aimed at regenerating this area, but it is firmly grounded on a much older tradition, as this was where the "Fadgies" from Omeath came to sell oysters, fish and honey in the 19th century. This is one of the oldest parts of Belfast, famous for its traditional music, which you can find being played in impromptu sessions in several of the traditional bars in the area. You'll find fresh fruit and vegetables there alongside stalls selling meats, artisan cheeses and other foodie delights—and all around are unique shops and quirky restaurants.

Thursday 11 am-8 pm.

Shopping Areas

Victoria Square Shopping Centre

1 Victoria Square
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9032-2277

<http://www.victoriasquare.com>

You'll find more than 70 outlets there, including top brands such as Apple, House of Fraser, and Crabtree and Evelyn. There's a cinema, a large parking lot and a Shopmobility Belfast, where people with disabilities can get the free loan of wheelchairs and scooters to access the shops and the city center.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-6 pm, Sunday 1-6 pm.

Specialty Stores

Carrols Gifts and Souvenirs

2-6 Castle Place
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9023-8899

<http://www.carrolls.ie>

This is the best place for buying Irish gifts. It stocks everything from key rings and mugs to Tipperary crystal, Arran knitwear, jewelery, T-shirts and the ubiquitous Guinness souvenirs. If you've fallen in love with the Irish traditional music you have heard in the pub sessions, you can buy CDs there, or even a penny whistle and a quick lesson—it's a remarkably simple instrument to get to grips with.

Monday-Friday 9:30 am-7:45 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-6:30 pm.

Essey Musical & Kilts

87 Castlereagh Road
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9045-6177

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Essey-Musical/147139438673341>

This is the place to find out what tartan is associated with your name and have a genuine eight-yard kilt hand-tailored just for you. The shop will ship it home for you as well. It also sells bagpipes and accessories.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-5 pm.

Sawers

Fountain Court, College Street
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9032-2021

<http://www.sawersbelfast.com>

This fantastic deli has been providing the people of Belfast with local and exotic goodies since 1879. It has a range of produce from local artisans including Ditty's Bakery, bacon and ham from William Sprott of Portadown and dairy from Five Mile Town Creamery.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-5:30 pm.

Utopia: Alice's Wonderland for Gifts

Fountain Centre, College Street
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9024-1342

<http://alice279.wix.com/utopiabelfast>

Alice Fitzpatrick opened her store, Utopia, in 1979. It's still a unique, family-run business specializing in old-fashioned toys, quirky household items, gifts and jewelry.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm.

Dining

Dining Overview

In the lively Cathedral quarter, around Saint Ann's Cathedral, you'll find a range of bars, cafes and restaurants to suit all tastes, from corner cafes to the magnificent Merchant Hotel. Many of the best places to eat in Belfast are in the area from the Cathedral to the City Hall, but you can find many lively bars serving simple traditional Irish fare. The area around the university also bustles with quirky little shops and interesting cafes and restaurants.

Food in Belfast is hearty, nourishing and tasty, featuring meat (lamb, pork and beef), fish (especially salmon and trout), vegetables, fine desserts and superb breads. You'll find Irish stew, boiled bacon and cabbage, and fish-and-chips on many menus.

One local delicacy is eel from Lough (Lake) Neagh—hundreds of tons of eels are exported every year.

Try to eat lunch in a pub—the food is reasonably priced and filling. Unless you're a vegetarian, don't be put off by black pudding (blood sausage), often served with breakfast—it can be delicious.

Afternoon tea (served about 4 pm) usually features a selection of marvelous home-baked breads, scones and sandwiches.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines for a two-course dinner for one, excluding tip or drinks: \$ = less than £15; \$\$ = £16-£25; \$\$\$ = £26-£35; and \$\$\$\$ = more than £35.

Local & Regional

Cellar Restaurant at Belfast Castle

Belfast Castle, Antrim Road
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9037-0133

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/tourism-venues/belfastcastle/bccellar.aspx>

The food here is not spectacular, but it is better than average pub grub at an affordable price in a lovely setting. The views over the garden from the castle are amazing and the area around the restaurant has a retro Victorian feel. The set meals are of particularly good value. The afternoon tea is not cheap but is well presented and abundant.

Daily for tea 2-5 pm; Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Ginger Bistro

7/8 Hope St.
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9024-4421

<http://www.gingerbistro.com>

This award-winning restaurant has regularly been voted best restaurant in Northern Ireland.

Monday-Wednesday for dinner, Thursday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

Holohan's

1 Lanyon Quay
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Booking is essential for this quirky restaurant on a barge, as it is good, economical and small. It serves traditional Irish dishes; the specialty is boxty, an Irish potato pancake, served with various choices of fish or meat, including crubeens, which are pig's trotters and vegetables coated in breadcrumbs and fried.

Monday and Tuesday for lunch, Wednesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Home

22 Wellington Place
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9023-4946

<http://www.homebelfast.co.uk>

This restaurant started life as a pop-up restaurant, but the fresh, innovative cooking was so popular that it continued past its original three-month tenure and then moved to permanent premises in this bright, airy space with wooden tables. There's also a deli and a take-away on the premises. One of the few restaurants in Northern Ireland to be recognized by the Michelin Guide, it received the Michelin Bib Gourmand in 2015.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Howard Street

56 Howard St.
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9024-8362

<http://www.howardstbelfast.com>

This restaurant in an industrial building with brick walls and high ceilings is spare and stylish but has a warm, welcoming buzz about it. It serves a varied menu, from spicy Thai food to steak, vegetarian and imaginative fusion dishes, all of it delicious.

\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Molly's Yard

1 College Green Mews, Botanic Avenue
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9032-2600

<http://www.mollysyard.co.uk>

This restaurant in a converted stables has a relaxed, quirky feel. The food is imaginative Irish, seasonal and locally sourced. It also has a short but interesting vegetarian menu.

Monday-Saturday noon-9:30 pm. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

The Great Room

16 Skipper St.
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9023-4888

<http://www.themerchanthotel.com/bars-restaurants/the-great-room-restaurant/the-restaurant>

This magnificent room in the Merchant Hotel is worth a visit just for the rich decor, the glass cupola, the pillars and the immense chandelier. However, the food is also good and surprisingly affordable, given the grandeur of the setting in the perfectly restored former Victorian bank building.

\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Cuisines

Italian

Little Italy

13 Amelia St.
Belfast, Northern Ireland

This is a pizza take-away spot, but the pizzas are amazing, baked fast with really thin crusts. The menu is short but is high on quality.

Daily 5 pm-late. \$.

Seafood

Mourne Seafood Bar

34/36 Bank St.
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Phone: 28-9024-8544

<http://mourneseafood.com>

This is definitely the best seafood restaurant in Belfast. The decor isn't fancy, but it's in a great location in the city center, has a friendly and efficient waitstaff, and most importantly, the fish is fresh and locally sourced. It can be busy, and reservations are recommended for dinner.

Monday-Thursday noon-9:30 pm, Friday and Saturday noon-4 pm and 5-10:30 pm, Sunday 1-9 pm. \$\$.
Most major credit cards.

Security

Personal Safety

Northern Ireland has the second lowest crime rate in Europe, although petty crime can be a problem in Belfast—take sensible precautions. Keep to well-populated, brightly lit areas at night, don't flash wads of money about, and don't leave valuable items, such as purses and cameras, in a parked car.

Although the Troubles have ended, it is still wise to avoid discussions about politics and religion. The summer marching season (April-August) often leads to demonstrations, some of which can seriously impede progress for drivers. Major routes through Belfast are often closed to traffic for several hours. The best way to avoid them is to consult the Belfast Telegraph for details of dates, times and routes.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.

Health

Be sure to take along all prescription items needed for your trip—although British equivalents are available, the brand names are different and the chemists (drugstores) may have a little difficulty filling your prescription.

Belfast has excellent hospitals and dental facilities. Water and food are safe to consume.

Disabled Advisory

Great advances have been made to disabled access in and around Belfast. DisabledGo-Belfast is an online guide with comprehensive information on disabled access to a number of venues and includes shops, nightlife and restaurants as well as transport. <http://www.disabledgo.com>.

Facts

Dos & Don'ts

Don't forget to take along an umbrella and raincoat.

Do seek out a traditional pub music session where you will hear some of the finest Celtic music played. Some are advertised and are organized for tourists, but for the best of them you'll need to search. Locals will be able to point you to some of the best performances.

Do try some delicious, freshly baked soda bread.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: Canadian and U.S. citizens need passports but not visas. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.

Population: 280,962.

Languages: English.

Predominant Religions: Christian (Protestant, Roman Catholic).

Time Zone: Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Saturday in March to the last Saturday in October.

Voltage Requirements: 220 volts. 240 volts.

Telephone Codes: 44, country code; 28, city code;

Money

Taxes

With a little paperwork, nonresidents can obtain a refund of the 20% value-added tax (VAT) on purchases of more than £50 in a single store during a single visit. Some larger stores will handle most of the paperwork and mail a refund to you (those stores offering the service will display a sign to that effect). Otherwise, you'll need to take three things to the airport to get a refund: the unused article you purchased, the purchase receipt and a refund form (which must be picked up at the place of purchase).

The standard way to get a refund is to present these items to the VAT refund officer on departure, who will give you a final form to be mailed in for your refund. (For your own convenience, see the VAT officer before checking your bags and have your purchases in an easy-to-reach place.) Private VAT refund services at the airport will give you an immediate refund minus a fee, which is usually a percentage of the refund.

Tipping

Wait staff receive the national minimum wage, and tipping is not expected. You may tip for good service if you like, but be aware that if tipping on a card, the restaurant often does not distribute the tip to the staff. Do not tip at all for bad service.

Weather

Mid-May to mid-October is generally cool and often drizzly and overcast, but it's our favorite time to visit. Because of the moisture, the countryside is incredibly green, and the mist, fog and rain give it a distinctive, somewhat eerie atmosphere that's part of Northern Ireland's appeal. When it's raining a light drizzle, the locals will often say it's a "soft day." Take along—or plan on immediately buying—some warm sweaters and a collapsible umbrella.

What to Wear

In the summer, light casual clothing is best, but take along a sweater and rain jacket anyway. In winter, pack several layers so you can cope with variations in the temperature. Rainwear is essential. You will need it.

Smart suits are best for business meetings, and there are some restaurants where a collar and tie are mandatory. Otherwise, anything goes. The Irish are remarkably tolerant, but don't wear swimwear away from the beach.

Be sure to take a comfortable pair of walking shoes.