

How to Feel Like a London Family

London changes at lightning speed—a fact I’ve only fully appreciated since spending time away from it—and preparing this guide for a second edition has involved almost as much work as writing the original from scratch. That’s not surprising given the city’s place as a world leader in the spheres of fashion, art, music, food, architecture, politics, finance, and so much more, and it’s also part of the reason why Britain’s capital is one of the most exciting places on the globe, both to visit and to live in.

London’s greatest selling points are its vast size and extraordinary diversity—more than 300 languages are spoken here, and by 2015 it is estimated that 40% of Londoners will be from ethnic minorities. Very few places on earth can rival this city’s cultural depth and rich heritage—combined, they create a city that proves endlessly fascinating to both its inhabitants and visitors. Yet London inspires and maddens in equal measure. Ask Londoners how they feel about the city, and they will roll their eyes and unleash a litany of complaints about the traffic, the crowds, and the prices. These caveats prove doubly annoying when you have kids. In fact, many people up and leave the capital when they start a family. Their reasons are no doubt valid, but I would argue that London is actually one of the world’s *greatest* cities for children.

My husband and I thought we knew London to its core, having regularly written and edited for local guides and listings publications. It had been part of our jobs to keep up, as best anyone can, with its changes, including the latest restaurant, shop, and hotel openings. But rediscovering London from a new point of view—that of our young sons—has been a revelation. I have been, quite literally, astounded by the range and variety of activities that are on offer here for kids of all ages. In fact, what you read between these pages is only a small sampler—the *crème de la crème*—of all there is to experience here as a parent or a child.

Perhaps the biggest revelation of all has been just how much fun you can have in this expensive city for free or for very little money. Sure, there are high-priced premium attractions, but for each of them you’ll find a wealth of wonderful parks and urban farms, one-off museums and galleries with great free workshops, and neighborhood cafes welcoming hungry families on a budget, which brings me to my two main pieces of advice. The first is not to underestimate the power of the simple or everyday: When I first visited London on day trips with my intrepid grandmother Molly, riding the Tube truly awed me. How, I wondered, did anyone ever manage to navigate its tangle of colored lines? (Don’t worry; it’s actually a breeze.) Keep in mind that a simple bus ride on a classic red double-decker might be all it takes to set Junior’s heart aflutter. The second is to accept the appeal of the tacky where youngsters are concerned: As a kid, I adored all the rampantly tourist stuff that now riles me, such as Madame Tussaud’s.

Much of the skill of being a parent is about learning to stop being a control freak and to go with the flow. If that means occasional trips to a wax museum instead of an art museum, or burgers and fries in a loud themed restaurant over authentic Asian dishes in a Vietnamese canteen, so be it—there'll be other times to soak in art, and other dinners. Family holidays are about pleasing everyone, while recognizing that not everyone can be pleased at the same time. Luckily, London caters to all tastes, moods, and whims, so it's easy to get the balance just right.

1 Frommer's Favorite London Family Experiences

- **Seeing the Sights from the Top of a Double-Decker Bus:** Get an overview of some of London's top sights from one of its red public buses, and you'll score one of the city's best bargains. The iconic open-backed Routemaster has largely been phased out, but the newer buses are more spacious and comfortable, and bus travel has the advantage of giving you a feel for where places are in relation to one another, unlike the Tube. Best of all, kids under 16 now get free bus travel.

One of the City's best routes is the **no. 15** between Paddington and the East End via Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, and Fleet Street. Attractions you will see include Selfridges department store, the National Gallery, The Savoy Hotel, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Monument, and the Tower of London. Traffic is the only downer when you travel by bus, but special lanes on many streets mean you never get snagged in the worst jams, and if you're not in a hurry you can sit back and let the sights, smells, and sounds wash over you. Bag a front seat on the top deck for prime views. See p. 57.

- **Kite-Flying on Parliament Hill:** The 98m (320-ft.) summit of Hampstead Heath, with its views of St. Paul's Cathedral and farther afield, is the city's top spot for flying kites; on windy weekends it's full of kids and parents flying one-liners. (For more ambitious stunts with fancier kites, you're better off going down to the open area near the Lido.) See p. 143.
- **Going to the Dogs:** An afternoon or evening at **Walthamstow Stadium** is an East End ritual—you'll encounter genuine local characters as well as exciting greyhound racing. Continue the Cockney theme at **Manze's**, one of London's oldest traditional pie-and-mash shops (where you can also sample jellied eels), with its original tiled interior. See p. 260 and 140.
- **Munching the Morning Away at Borough Market:** Encourage kids' interest in real food by taking them on a snacking trip around this historic market under railroad arches, now a gourmet food market Thursday to Saturday. Around 70 stalls offer free tasting samples of delicious cheeses, breads, cakes, jams, and other goodies, many organic and all produced with love. Don't miss the candy at Burnt Sugar or the chorizo rolls at Spanish specialist Brindisa. See p. 233.
- **Tackling the Sights and Delights of Kensington:** There's no avoiding this neighborhood west of the center, with its trio of world-class and wonderfully child-friendly museums (the Victoria and Albert Museum, Natural History Museum, and Science Museum) and its green spaces—Kensington Gardens, containing the Diana Memorial Playground; and Hyde Park, where you can horseback ride, in-line skate, row on the winding Serpentine lake, and much, much

more. You might do it justice in about a week. See chapters 6 and 8.

- **Talking to the Animals in Battersea Park:** If there was ever a zoo to win the hearts of kids, the **Battersea Park Children's Zoo** is it, with its Mouse House, Butterfly Garden, and farm area; its cafe with outdoor tables where you can listen to exotic birds sing as you eat; its wildlife-themed playground with toddlers' toys; and its wildlife gift shop. After touring the zoo, you can explore the rest of Battersea Park with its ducks and herons, boating lake, fountains, peace pagoda, playparks, toddlers' club, art gallery, and more. Nearby, Battersea Rise and Northcote Road make up a little haven of child-friendly eateries, including Crumpet and Le Bouchon Bordelais. See p. 189.
- **Enjoying a Traditional Afternoon Tea:** Most swank hotels in the city serve this highly civilized, very English ritual at premium prices (typically, upwards of £28/\$56 a head). Smart dress is generally required for these venues. A relaxed alternative is Chelsea's Bluebird "gastrodome," where kids get their own "Tiny Tea" of baby bridge rolls, fairy cakes or jelly and ice cream, and blackcurrant tisane or lemon verbena. See p. 100 and p. 123.
- **Ambling by the River:** Inhale the salty tang of the tidal Thames on a walk along the cultural hotbed of the South Bank east from Westminster Bridge. As well as close encounters with bridges historic and modern, and fabulous views of St. Paul's and the Tower of London, you can break your walk at a stunning array of attractions, including the London

Eye, the Tate Modern, and Shakespeare's Globe theater. You can also shop at the crafts outlets of Gabriel's Wharf or Oxo Tower, or "beach-comb" when the tide is low. Finish at Shad Thames, an atmospheric quarter of converted old spice warehouses. See p. 199.

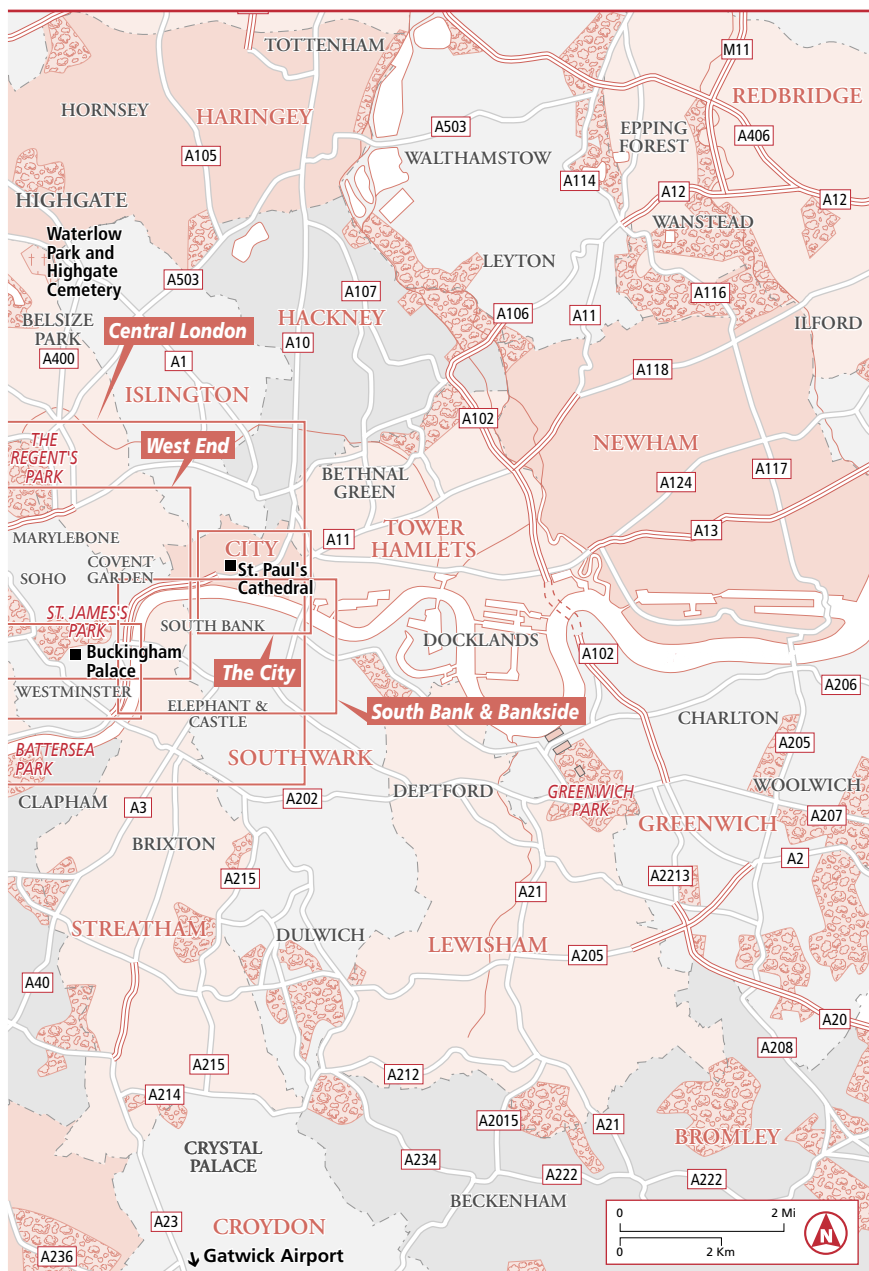
- **Riding in a London Taxi:** This isn't a cheap way of getting around town, but even if you make public transport your mainstay, try at least one trip in a traditional black cab—though not at rush hour, when you'll notch up a heavy bill for the luxury of sitting in a queue of traffic. Once ensconced, you're more than likely to strike up a conversation with your "cabbie"—many like nothing better than the chance to share their worldviews with passengers. And before you get snooty, know that a study carried out in 2000 found that London taxi drivers' brains are larger than those of most of their peers, due to their having to remember up to 400 routes within a 9.5km (6-mile) radius of Charing Cross, as part of a competence test known as "The Knowledge." See p. 58.
- **Idling Away a Morning at Portobello Market:** Get browsing at London's most famous market, best known for its Saturday antiques stalls but also for its fruit and vegetables and—best of all—innovative fashion on Fridays. The street is also lined with vintage clothing stores, where you're guaranteed to find something original. Stop past the north end of the market, where it peters out into junk stalls, for an obligatory custard pastry at one of the Portuguese bakeries. See p. 233.

2 The Best Hotel Bets

London accommodations are never a bargain in comparison with their counter-

parts elsewhere, but the city's hoteliers and B&B proprietors have lived up to the

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needs of visiting families over the past few years, and services and facilities for kids and their parents are improving all the time.

- **Most Family-Friendly:** Mayfair's **Athenaeum Apartments** 116 Piccadilly, W1; ☎ 020/7499-3464) include a funky Family Apartment with mirrored Philippe Starck chairs, seats resembling giant computer keys, a kids' sleeping niche, and a games console that doubles as a coffee table. Like all the apartments here, it has a full kitchen and washing machine, and highchairs, potties, and strollers can be supplied free of charge. All junior guests, including those at the adjacent Athenaeum Hotel, get complimentary movies, gadgets, toiletries, and milk and cookies, and there are kids' menus throughout the hotel and on room service. See p. 67.

The friendly but unobtrusive staff at **22 Jermyn Street** (22 Jermyn St., SW1; ☎ 020/7734-2353), a family-run town house steps from Piccadilly Circus and St. James's Park, have thought of everything a parent might need, it seems. But if you have additional requirements, they'll go out of their way to procure them for you. Amenities include free kids' movies delivered to your room or suite with complimentary popcorn; wipe-clean drawing books, musical cassettes with singalong books; the owner's own lively newsletter highlighting kid-friendly sights and restaurants; and cozy bathrobes for all ages. Staff members will even babysit while you use the trendy health club and pool nearby, or try out the owner's eating recommendations. See p. 70.

- **Best Neighborhood Option:** **Europa House** (79a Randolph Ave., W9; ☎ 020/7724-5924) is a collection of spacious serviced apartments in a safe residential area with wide, tree-lined

avenues leading down to the picturesque canals of Little Venice, where a barge hosts puppet shows and companies run narrow-boat trips to London Zoo. You'll find an array of family-friendly delis, cafes, and pubs; an organic grocer; and a small 24-hour supermarket nearby, yet the center of London is just a 15-minute bus ride away. Best of all is the 1.4-hectare (3½-acre) enclosed garden to which the apartments have access, with a playground where little ones can make friends with local kids. Inside, the apartments are stylish but practically furnished. See p. 83.

North of the center, **La Gaffe** (107–111 Heath St., NW3; ☎ 020/7435-8965) is an Italian restaurant and guesthouse in an 18th-century shepherd's house in villagey Hampstead. The charming shops, tea-houses, restaurants, and historic pubs of Hampstead High Street and Flask Walk are a few minutes' walk away, as are the wild spaces of Hampstead Heath, full of local families flying kites, swimming in the Lido, and generally running amok. See p. 97.

- **Best Views:** Deluxe rooms and suites on the river side of the **Four Seasons Canary Wharf** (46 Westferry Circus, E14; ☎ 020/7510-1999), east of the center in Docklands, overlook a dramatic sweeping bend of the Thames and have views as far back as the London Eye. Order from the superior kids' room service menu, and then sit in your window and watch boats and ferries chug by. In the morning, swim in the adjoining infinity-edge pool, which seems to merge with the river outside.

History doesn't come much more in your face than at the **Grange City** (8–14 Cooper's Row, EC3; ☎ 020/7863-3700), where some rooms look out over the Tower of London and Tower Bridge, which are virtually next

door. There's even a section of the old London wall running alongside the hotel's large piazza, where kids can expend some energy while you enjoy a drink. Family rooms feature two double beds and a small sitting area. See p. 92.

- **When Hipness Is Important:** *The* glam opening of 2007, the **Haymarket Hotel** (1 Suffolk Place, SW1; ☎ 020/7470-4000) makes no concessions to minimalism with its contemporary English luxe decor. Accommodations include a couple of stunning one- and two-bedroom suites, plus a four-story town house with both a private entrance and access via the hotel. Kids get unrestricted use of the pool, which has its own bar and sound system, and there's a fashionable North Italian restaurant where the chef will adapt dishes for kids. See p. 77.

High Road House (162–166 Chiswick High Rd., W4; ☎ 020/8742-1717), a western outpost of the fashionable Soho House members' club, turns its club room with its squidgy sofas and low-level tables into a family playroom between 11am and 4pm, with games, toys, table football, a pool table, and a large screen showing cartoons, in addition to full waiter service (there are kids' menus throughout the building, including as part of room service). Guest rooms fall into two categories: Playpens and the Playroom, with one Playpen kitted out to be baby-friendly. Mainly white, with lots of wood, they feel a little like upmarket beach cabins, and have bath products from the group's trendy Cowshed range. See p. 85.

- **When Price Is No Object:** *The Mandarin Oriental* (66 Knightsbridge, SW1; ☎ 020/7235-2000) has one of the world's best spas, as well as a Michelin-starred restaurant,

but junior guests aren't overlooked: They get a storybook about a monkey who helps out at the Mandarin, an album to record their stay, teddies, mini-bathrobes, toiletries, and little umbrellas. The interconnecting family rooms are enormous, and there's great kids' room service. See p. 79.

Brown's (Albemarle St., W1; ☎ 020/7493-6020) is a London classic combining traditional charm with beautiful contemporary decor. Service is second to none, and that includes a warm welcome extended to even the youngest guests, who get an age-specific toy (perhaps a personalized copy of *The Jungle Book*, which was written here), funky kids' bed linen, a teddy bear, bathrobes and slippers, bath ducks, an excellent room service menu, and even a "kids' menu" of facials, foot and hand treatments, or a back rub, all in the chic spa. The ongoing "Family Affair" package gives you a good saving on interconnecting deluxe rooms, which are vast. See p. 70.

- **When Price Is Your Main Object:** *The* family-run **Crescent** (49–50 Cartwright Gardens, WC1; ☎ 020/7387-1515) is virtually unique in its moderate price range in that it offers baby-listening, highchairs, a guest lounge, and access to a garden square and four tennis courts. It's the best central option for those keeping an eye on their pennies. See p. 74.

The Citadines "Apart'Hotel" (18/21 Northumberland Ave., WC2; ☎ 0800/376-3898) just steps away from Trafalgar Square offers exceptional value for its location and facilities. As with other members of the chain, it allows you to choose between hotel services (including a breakfast room, babysitting, and a launderette) or self-cater, since the flats all have full kitchens. One-bedroom apartments sleep up to four, two-bedroom

duplex apartments sleep up to six. See p. 78.

- **Best Pool:** It's a close call between the 20m (65-ft.) Thameside infinity-edge pool at **Four Seasons Canary Wharf** (p. 96), open to kids for 2 hours each morning; and the calm blue 18m (59-ft.) basement pool at **One Aldwych** (1 Aldwych, WC2; ☎ 020/7300-1000), where children are welcome all day and underwater classical music is played. See p. 75.
- **Best Hotel Restaurant for Kids:** The **Marriott West India Quay** (22 Hertsmere Rd., E14; ☎ 020/7093-1000), may be primarily a business hotel, at least during the week, but its Curve seafood restaurant has a surprisingly noncorporate feel—especially on sunny days when its French windows are thrown open onto the wharf and tables are set up outside. A charming waitstaff and a bank of smiling chefs happily show kids what they're doing behind their semi-open counter. Children get crayons and coloring books to occupy them as they wait for well-cooked, high-quality kids' dishes, but don't be surprised if

they're tempted by what Mom and Dad are having—perhaps a whole fish from nearby Billingsgate Market. See p. 138.

- **Tops for Teens:** The flexible arrangements at **base2stay** (25 Courtfield Gardens, SW5; ☎ 020/7244-2255) make it particularly ideal for a family with older kids, who might, for instance, book themselves a standard double for Mom and Dad and a room with two bunk beds for the teens. There are also superior doubles that can fit up to three guests on an additional sofa/chairbed, and deluxe doubles that can fit up to four—you can pick and mix any of the above to form a two- or three-room unit to suit your needs. All units have a mini-kitchen with microwave and fridge, allowing a degree of self-catering. See p. 82.
- **Tops for Toddlers:** The **Athenaeum Apartments** (p. 67) can't be beat for their amenities for babies and toddlers, including baby movies, toy boxes, highchairs, potties, strollers, and more.

3 The Best Dining Bets

British food, long a joke among visitors, has come of age over the last 15 years or so, and London is now one of the world's gastronomic capitals. Though people don't tend to expect much of the food in a restaurant that sets out its stall as a family-friendly venue, that, too, has changed, and there is now a host of places serving wonderful cuisine that keeps both you and the kids happy.

- **Best Family Dining:** The **Wallace** (Manchester Sq., W1; ☎ 020/7563-9505), a newcomer in the glass-roofed courtyard spot of the Wallace Collection, is the kind of place where there's something for everyone, and at fair prices given the quality and setting.

Its vast menu of seasonal French dishes, served from breakfast through afternoon tea, plus at dinner on Fridays and Saturdays, includes excellent kids' main courses such as steamed lemon sole with fresh vegetables, and organic beef burger with Provençal tomato and olive oil crushed potatoes. Other kid-pleasers are pancakes with sugar, *tartines* (open sandwiches), *piperade* (scrambled egg) with goats' cheese, and Parisian-style afternoon teas of croque-monsieur, finger sandwiches, and pastries. See p. 109.

Carluccio's Caffè (8 Market Place, W1; ☎ 020/7636-2228), and more than 20 other venues) is a bustling,

great-value all-day Italian eatery with a bargain three-course kids' menu featuring homemade *grissini* (breadsticks), breaded chicken breast with rosemary potatoes or pasta with a choice of sauces, real ice cream, and more. In summer, don't miss the fresh lemonade; in winter, warm up with a *cioccolata fiorentine*—a Florentine-style hot chocolate served in an espresso cup. See p. 109.

- **Most Kid-Friendly Service:** **Crumpet** (66 Northcote Rd., SW11; ☎ 020/7924-1117) loves kids so much, it gives them a rear play area with a Wendy house and toys, and a large kids' menu (including home-cooked organic baby food, and "picnic teas"). Parents, meanwhile, benefit from a stroller park and the chance to buy little essentials such as a "messy pack" with a disposable bib and wipes, or diapers. Staff couldn't be friendlier or more patient with kids. This modern tearoom specializes in "proper tea," made with tea leaves and served with scones with jam and clotted cream, but you can also come for breakfast, cakes, or all-day soups, sandwiches, salads, and so on. See p. 133.
- **Best Kids' Menu:** Award-winning canteen-style Indian **Imli** (167–9 Wardour St., W1; ☎ 020/7287-4243) provides a wonderful menu of gentle, lightly spiced kids' dishes free on weekends (noon–5pm), but it's a great value the rest of the time, too. They choose from starters of banana *dosa* (south Indian pancake) with chutney, *sev puri* (potato-filled wheat crisps with yogurt-date chutney and vermicelli), and *papdi chaat* (whole wheat crisps and bean sprouts with vermicelli and mint chutney), then mains of chicken in a smoked tomato fenugreek sauce with rice, seasonal vegetables in a cumin sauce with *pav* bread, or grilled chicken breast with cumin and turmeric mash. The feast

is rounded off by chocolate and orange zest ice cream, fig and ginger ice cream, or cardamom rice pudding. See p. 116.

Otherwise, French restaurants **Le Cercle** (1 Wilbraham Place, SW1; ☎ 020/7901-9999) and **Roussillon** (16 St Barnabas St., SW1; ☎ 020/7730-5550) both offer tasting menus for budding gastronomes. See p. 120 and p. 122.

- **Best Neighborhood Hangout:** **Sam's Brasserie** (11 Barley Mow Passage, W4; ☎ 020/8987-0555) in Chiswick is the kind of place every parent wishes was local to them. An all-day neighborhood brasserie and bar, it serves daily brunch from 9am, snacks, drinks, lunch, and dinner. Families come in force at weekends, when there are toys put out for kids, plus free face-painting on some Saturday mornings. The head chef has two young sons and knows how to make healthy but interesting food for kids, including shepherd's pie with broccoli and homemade fish fingers with pea mash, and at Sunday lunch half-portion of the roasts. See p. 130.
- **Best Outdoor Eating:** You get a real taste of the great outdoors at **Frizante@CityFarm** (1A Goldsmith's Row, E2; ☎ 020/7739-2266)—it's in the middle of a farmyard, complete with clucking chickens and a garden with a kids' play area. The homemade Italian cuisine includes all-day breakfast with eggs from those same chickens, great pizzas and pasta dishes, and superb cakes and puddings. See p. 135.
- **Best Park Cafe:** Along with a striking grass-roofed, glass-fronted building, the lovely views of the surrounding royal park and palaces from its decked terrace make **Inn the Park** (St. James's Park, SW1; ☎ 020/7451-9999) very special. It offers

diners the choice of upscale cafe fare, including children's lunch sets, or seasonal British cuisine—or you can pre-order a wonderful picnic to take into the park itself. See p. 106.

- **Best Museum or Gallery Cafe:** The **National Dining Rooms & Bakery** (Trafalgar Sq., WC2; ☎ 020/7747-2525) in the National Gallery is open from breakfast through afternoon tea, for everything from coffee and pastries to three-course lunches; mid-week, it serves early/pre-theater dinners. Foodie parents won't be disappointed, but neither will kids in search of familiar comfort food, from boiled eggs with toast "soldiers" to macaroni cheese. The bakery has lighter fare: breads, pies, tarts, cookies, pastries, soups, salads, "savory pots" (pâtés and the like) with toast, ice creams, fruit juices, and smoothies. See p. 116.

- **Best View: Babylon at The Roof Gardens** (99 Kensington High St., W8; ☎ 020/7368-3993) has one of London's most sensational locations—a lush rooftop garden with views of west and south London, with resident flamingos and ducks, a fishpond, and tropical trees and plants. The ambitious Modern European food is best sampled at Sunday lunch, when a magician does the rounds. The Young Diners' menu changes all the time but might feature roast tomato soup with chive cream, cheddar cheese soufflé, and sea bass with creamy mash. Summer sees alfresco barbecues and a shellfish bar. See p. 117.

- **Best Breakfast: Leon** (136 Brompton Rd., SW3; ☎ 020/7589-7330), one of a small chain of Mediterranean/North African cafes and take-aways, is especially useful at breakfast, offering everything from organic toast with Marmite, bacon sandwiches, or organic porridge with

honey, seeds, or homemade blackcurrant compote, to full English breakfasts. Put an extra spring in your step with a blackcurrant "power smoothie" or a carrot, orange, and ginger juice. See p. 121.

- **Best Brunch: The Blue Elephant** (3–6 Fulham Broadway, SW6; ☎ 020/7385-6595) wows kids with its jungle interior of trees, ponds, and waterfalls studded with statues and baroque ornaments; its imaginative Thai fare; and most of all its Sunday buffet brunches with displays of exotic fruit carved into spectacular shapes; as well as free face-painting and sugar-spinning demos. See p. 125.
- **Best Fish and Chips:** Trendy renovation work hasn't put off the East End taxi drivers who come to **Fish Central** (149–52 Central St., EC1; ☎ 020/7253-4970), but junior diners are made welcome by the cheery staff, kids' portions, and patio for fine weather. Little extras that single this place out from your average "chippy" include homemade bread, fresh veggies, and wonderful desserts, but you're best off sticking to the spanking-fresh battered cod or haddock with lip-smacking chips and mushy peas. See p. 140.
- **Best Pizza:** Families return again and again to **Italian Graffiti** (163–5 Wardour St., W1; ☎ 020/7439-4668) for its superb (and enormous) crisp-based pizzas cooked in a wood-fired oven. Adding to the ambience of this cozy family-run venue are its open fireplaces, its large windows from which you can observe the bustle of Soho, and the big-hearted staff, who might even whisk your kid away to show them how to make pizza. See p. 114.
- **Best Burgers:** Stealing the thunder of Ed's Easy Diner, the **Gourmet Burger Kitchen** mini-chain (Condor House, EC4; ☎ 020/7248-9199; and nearly

20 branches) consulted New Zealand celeb chef Peter Gordon when developing its award-winning, good-value burgers. These run the gamut from the classic to the exotic (“the Jamaican,” with mango and ginger sauce; or “the Kiwiburger,” with beet root, eggs, pineapple, cheese, and relish). Junior incarnations are available, and there are great fries and heavenly shakes. See p. 137.

- **Best Sausages: S&M Café** (268 Portobello Rd.; ☎ 020/8968-8898; two other venues) serves sausage and mash (the “S&M” that make up its name) in a variety of guises, traditional or otherwise, including pork, lime, and sweet chile, and mushroom and tarragon. Lashings of gravy and creamy potatoes complete the picture. Stodgy, old-school puddings are available if you have room to spare. See p. 128.
- **Best Vegetarian Restaurant:** The award-winning **World Food Café** (14 Neal’s Yard, WC2; ☎ 020/7379-0298) serves everything from veggie or vegan Mexican platters and Middle Eastern *meze* to Indian thalis and West African stews in a lovely, light-filled space, against a world-music soundtrack. The welcome is friendly, the food colorful and appealing to junior palates—gorgeous desserts include mango kulfi ice cream with fruit. Buy the cookbook to relive the experience when you get home. See p. 113.
- **Best Fast Food: Hummus Bros** (88 Wardour St., W1; ☎ 020/7734-1311) serves healthy fast food without

additives or preservatives (with leftovers donated to charity). The basic ingredient is Middle Eastern/Greek chickpea-based spread hummus, freshly made and served with warm pita bread. Add hot or cold toppings from hard-boiled eggs, guacamole, or fava beans to chunky beef, and you have the perfect, nutritiously sound light lunch or dinner. There are also salads, soups, sides such as tabbouleh or barbecued aubergine, gorgeous desserts, and drinks for all seasons. See p. 115.

- **Best Asian Food: Tamarind** (20 Queen St., W1; ☎ 020/7629-3561) serves Michelin-starred northwest Indian Moghul cuisine, including a special kids’ menu on Sunday lunchtimes (free to under-10s accompanied by two or more adults). This three-course feast of exotic flavors includes pan-fried potato cakes with split lentils, ginger, toasted cumin and spinach stuffing, and tandoori-grilled chicken in a mild creamed tomato and honey sauce. Among standout adult dishes are lamb cutlets marinated with raw paw-paw, garlic, paprika, and peppercorns. See p. 103.
- **Best Ice Cream:** The London outpost of an award-winning family firm of Kent ice-cream makers, **Morelli’s Gelato** (Harrods, SW1; ☎ 020/7893-8959) churns out wonderful Italian ice cream in an extraordinary range of flavors, from traditional favorites to inventions such as French aniseed, plum cake, and even, in the festive season, Christmas pudding! See p. 122.