

1

The Best **Full-Day Tours**



The Best in One Day



- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Westminster Abbey | 7 British Airways London Eye |
| 2 Big Ben | 8 Shakespeare's Globe Theatre |
| 3 Houses of Parliament | 9 Globe Brasserie |
| 4 The Jewel Tower | 10 Millennium Bridge |
| 5 Westminster Bridge | 11 St. Paul's Cathedral |
| 6 Café Manga | |

Previous page: One of Trafalgar Square's famous lions.



With London's abundance of sights, how much can you manage to see in just one day? Plenty. In this tour, you'll visit the oldest (Westminster Abbey); the newest (British Airways London Eye); and something that stands (time wise) in between: the painstakingly authentic reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. Throw in classic London cityscapes viewed from some of the famous bridges that span the Thames River, and you've got yourself a great 1-day jaunt that won't leave you feeling exhausted. **START: Westminster Tube Station**

1 ★★★ Westminster Abbey.

Westminster Abbey is one of the finest examples of medieval architecture in Europe. Laid to rest here are the towering figures of English life. Some 3,300 memorials to kings, nobles, and an assortment of church worthies are here for the viewing. William the Conqueror, Edward III (who willed that his heart be removed before burial to rest with his mum's remains in Grey Friar's Church), Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth I (whose death mask was the model for her tomb's figure), and Henry V, the hero of Agincourt—all have elaborately decorated sarcophagi. Don't miss the Gothic ceilings (reflected in a large mirror for close-up viewing), the stained glass in the Chapter House, and the elaborate carvings of the Henry VIII Chapel's choir stalls. And make your way to Poet's Corner,

The name Big Ben actually refers to the bell in the famous clock's chime.



The Choir Apse at Westminster Abbey.

where you'll find monuments to well-loved literary names such as Chaucer, Austen, and Dickens. 🕒 1½ hr.; arrive before 9:30am to avoid lines. 20 Dean's Yard. ☎ 0207/222-5152. www.westminster-abbey.org. Admission £10 adults, £7 seniors & kids 11–16, £24 family, free for kids 10 & under; Free admission to services. Mon–Sat 9:30am–3:45pm; Closed Sun. Tube: Westminster.

2 ★★★ Big Ben. The iconic Clock Tower at the eastern end of the Palace of Westminster has come to be known as Big Ben, though that appellation really refers to the largest bell in the clock's chime. The 14-ton bell, installed in 1858, is believed to have been named for

the commissioner of public works at the time—Sir Benjamin Charles—although some historians insist it was named for a famous boxer of the era, Benjamin Caunt. Brits can make the ascent up the tower's 334 spiral steps by special guided tour, but non-U.K. citizens must content themselves with a must-have snapshot. ⌚ 5 min. *Near St. Stephen's Entrance of Westminster Palace, Old Palace Yard. British citizens should contact their local MP to apply for permission to tour the clock tower.*

3 ★★ Houses of Parliament.

The immense 3-hectare (7.4-acre) Palace of Westminster, a splendid example of Gothic Revival architecture, dates back to 1840 (the original palace was all but destroyed by fire in 1834). It's the home of the 659-member House of Commons (where elected officials do their legislating) and the 700-plus-member House of Lords (where they second-guess the decisions made in the Commons). You may observe debates for free from the Stranger's Galleries in both houses, but the long entry lines make this spot better for a quick photo op than a lengthy visit. The only exception: U.K. citizens can take worthwhile guided tours of the premises on select days throughout the year; non-U.K. citizens can take a guided tour only during Parliament's summer break. ⌚ 5 min.

Old Palace Yard. ☎ 0207/219-3000 House of Commons; 0207/219-3107 House of Lords. www.parliament.uk. Free admission. Mon–Wed 2:30–10:30pm; Thurs 11:30am–7:30pm; Fri 9:30am–3pm. Closed Easter week. Guided tours (£12 adults, £5 kids 16 & under) offered to non-U.K. residents July–Oct only



The Palace of Westminster, home to both Houses of Parliament.

(check website or call for exact tour times). Tube: Westminster.

4 ★ **The Jewel Tower.** This medieval structure was one of only two buildings to survive an 1834 fire that destroyed the original Palace of Westminster. The tower dates back to 1365 and was originally used to house Edward III's wardrobe and treasures. Today, it's home to a very informative exhibit, "Parliament Past & Present," which details the inner workings of the British government. Look carefully at the building's exterior as you enter and you'll spot the remains of a moat. ⌚ 25 min. *Abingdon St. ☎ 0207/222-2219. www.english-heritage.org.uk. Admission £2.90 adults, £1.50 kids 12 & under.*

Apr–Oct daily 10am–5pm; Nov–Mar daily 10am–4pm.

5 Westminster Bridge.

From the center of this bridge you can enjoy a sweeping view of the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben—one of the most familiar and beloved cityscapes in the world. ⌚ 10 min.

Tube: Westminster.

The medieval Jewel Tower was once the treasure house of Edward III.



6 ★ **Café Manga**, located in County Hall, also has outdoor seating behind the London Eye. It's a Japanese anime-themed joint, but don't let that put you off: They serve plenty of good food and drinks, and the people-watching opportunities are endless. *Westminster Bridge Rd.*

☎ 0207/928-5047. \$.

7 ★★★ **kids** **British Airways London Eye.**

The huge Ferris wheel that solemnly rotates at one revolution per half-hour has quickly become a London icon. It graces the skyline from as far away as Hyde Park, and is much loved by even the most hardened London traditionalists. Although it was originally planned for only a 5-year stint, there's no way the London Tourist Board will let it go. You are encouraged to buy your timed ticket well in advance, which can end up in disappointment if you get a gray and rainy day. You may, however, be able to buy same-day tickets during the off season, which can eliminate the guesswork about the weather. Show up 30 minutes before your scheduled departure time (15 if you have a Fast Track ticket). Don't forget your camera. ⌚ **1 hr., from lining up through half-hour ride.** **Book Fast Track tickets via the website or in person for double the price. Book through the website for a 10% discount.** *South Bank (at Westminster Bridge).* ☎ 0870/500-0600. www.londoneye.com. Admission £15 adults, £12 seniors, £7.50 kids 5–15, free for kids 4 & under.

Sept–June daily
9:30am–8pm;
July–Aug daily
9:30am–10pm.
Closed bank holidays & 3 weeks in Jan. Tube: Westminster.



Shakespeare's Globe Theatre is a perfect replica of the Bard's original.



The British Airways London Eye offers some of the best views in London.

8 ★★★ **kids** **Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.**

Even if you don't have tickets to a play (p 135), the Globe is a fascinating place to visit. It was rebuilt in painstaking detail on a parking lot near the site of the original theater (and only those tools authentic to the period of the original were used in its construction). It was at the Globe in the late 1500s/early 1600s that Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies were performed in daylight (as they are now) to delight the nobility (who sat in the tiers) as well as the rabble (who stood before the stage). You can choose either option when purchasing tickets, weighing comfort versus proximity to the stage. Changing exhibits focus on related topics such as the frost fairs of medieval London (back when the

Thames would freeze into solid terrain, and people would party on the river for days); or the juicy history of nearby Southwark, once a haven for prostitutes, thieves,

and actors. 🕒 1 hr. 21 New Globe Walk. ☎ 0207/902-1500 (exhibition) or 0207/401-9919 (box office). www.shakespeares-globe.org. Admission to museum & exhibits: £9 adults, £7.50 seniors, £6.50 kids 5–15, £25 family (2 adults & 3 kids). Daily 10am–5pm (closed during afternoon theater matinees—call for schedules). Tube: London Bridge.

The 🍷 ★★ kids **Globe Brasserie** is a fine choice for a restorative tea and sandwich, along with a Thames-side view of London. The menu features deliciously prepared English favorites, such as cottage pies, as well as more modern sandwiches and salads. 21 Globe Walk, SE1 (off Thames Path). ☎ 0207/902-1576. \$.

10 ★★★ kids **Millennium Bridge**. This gorgeous sliver of a footbridge connecting Bankside to The City and its attractions is an efficient way to cross the river and a wonderful spot from which to take photos of the surrounding landmarks. When it first opened in 2000, it swayed and had to be shut down, but it has since been stabilized. 🕒 10 min. Tube: Southwark or Blackfriars.

11 ★★★ kids **St. Paul's Cathedral**. For centuries, the Dome of St. Paul's had no competition in the skyline of London; it was the

The ultramodern Millennium Bridge is one of the city's newest landmarks.

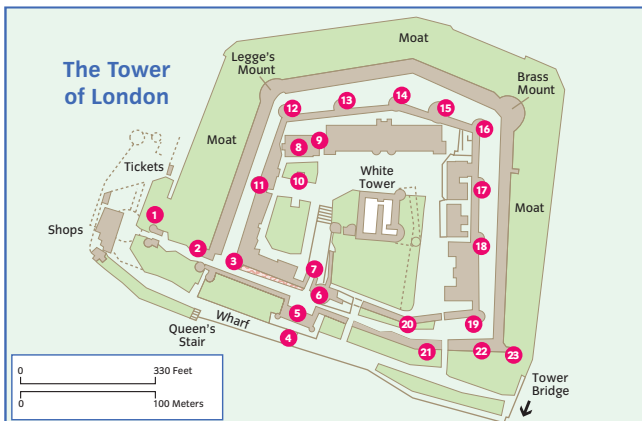


St. Paul's Cathedral, Sir Christopher Wren's crowning achievement.

highest and most impressive building in town. Though it has since been dwarfed by the skyscrapers in the financial district, none of them inspires the same awe as Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece, built after the Great Fire of 1666. The cathedral is the culmination of Wren's unique and much-acclaimed fusion of classical (the exterior Greek-style columns) and baroque (the ornate interior decorations) architecture. The Whispering Gallery is a miracle of engineering, in which you can hear the murmurs of another person from across a large gallery. The 530 stairs to the top are demanding, but you'll be rewarded with a magnificent view, not only of London, but of the marvel of the cathedral, which Wren—who is buried alongside many notable scientists and artists in the church's crypt—considered his ultimate achievement and most demanding effort. There are guided tours at 11am, 11:30am, 1:30pm, and 2pm. 🕒 ½ hr. Ludgate Hill, EC4 (at Paternoster Sq.).

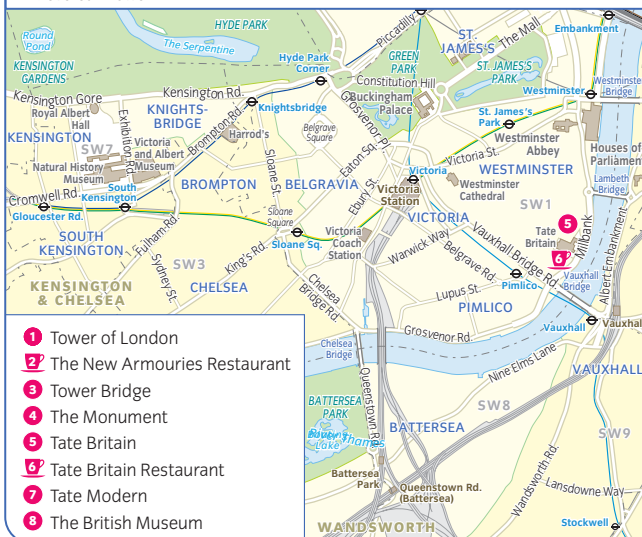
☎ 0207/236-4128. www.stpauls.co.uk. Admission £10 adults, £9 seniors, £3.50 kids 15 & under. Mon–Sat 8:30am–4:30pm. Tube: St. Paul's.

The Best in Two Days



Beauchamp Tower **11**
 Bell Tower **3**
 Bloody Tower **7**
 Bowyer Tower (torture chamber) **14**
 Brick Tower **15**
 Broad Arrow Tower **18**
 Byward Tower **2**
 Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula **8**
 Constable Tower **17**
 Cradle Tower **21**
 Develin Tower **23**
 Devereux Tower **12**

Flint Tower **13**
 Jewel House (entrance) **9**
 Lanthorn Tower **20**
 Martin Tower **16**
 Middle Tower **1**
 Salt Tower **19**
 Site of Scaffold **10**
 St. Thomas's Tower **5**
 Traitors' Gate **4**
 Wakefield Tower **6**
 Well Tower **22**



- 1** Tower of London
- 2** The New Armouries Restaurant
- 3** Tower Bridge
- 4** The Monument
- 5** Tate Britain
- 6** Tate Britain Restaurant
- 7** Tate Modern
- 8** The British Museum



On your second day in London, you will circle the globe and leap across centuries without ever leaving the city precincts.

Even blasé Londoners are excited by the cauldron of history that is the Tower of London, the spoils of the Empire at the British Museum, the view from the top of the Monument, and the iconoclastic art of the 20th and 21st centuries ensconced at the Tate Modern. And as a bonus, you get to traverse the Thames by boat. **START: Tower Hill Tube Station**

1 ★★★ kids Tower of London.

Built by William the Conqueror in 1066, this fortress was added to by subsequent generations of kings and queens up to the Victorian Age, and is now an incomparable collection of buildings that reflect the range of England's architectural styles over the past millennium. The Tower has a bloody past marked by power struggles, executions, and cruelty: The young nephews of Richard III were murdered here in 1483; two of Henry VIII's six wives (Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard) were beheaded on Tower Green, as was the 9-day queen, Lady Jane Grey; and Sir Walter Raleigh left his name on a walkway by his prison cell. Yeoman Warders (or "Beefeaters") give sprightly talks all day long, and talented actors offer living history lessons as they wander about in period costumes. The Crown Jewels are the most popular sight, just edging out the Torture Exhibit; the two together represent the awful accouterments of power (and have the longest lines). The Tower, quite justifiably regarded as one of the most haunted—and haunting—places in London, will thrill students of history, and entertain kids as well. ⌚ **3 hr.** **Buy your tickets online & arrive before 9am to avoid the long line & save a small amount of money, as well as time.** **Tower Hill.** ☎ **0870/756-6000.** **www.hrp.org.uk.** **Admission £16 adults, £13 seniors, £9.50 kids 5–15, free for**

The Imperial State Crown, one of England's famous Crown Jewels.



kids 4 & under. Open daily 9am–6pm; till 5pm Nov–Feb. Tube: Tower Hill.

Buy take-away sandwiches and drinks at **2★★ The New Armouries Restaurant** for an outdoor picnic, or settle in for a hot lunch of shepherd's pie, soup, Yorkshire pudding, or whatever you fancy. It's clean and pleasant though not hugely atmospheric. There are also snack shops scattered here and there around the Tower. **Inside the Tower of London.** ☎ **0870/756-6000. \$.**

The Tower of London is actually a fortress encompassing many buildings.



Tower Ghosts

The Tower of London, said to be the most haunted spot in England, fairly overflows with supernatural manifestations of tormented souls.

The restless ghost of Queen Anne Boleyn (executed in 1536 on a trumped-up charge of treason after she'd failed to produce a male heir for Henry VIII) is the most frequently spotted spirit. The tragic shades of the Little Princes (the two sons of Edward IV)—allegedly murdered by Richard III in 1483—have been spied in the Bloody Tower. Ghostly reenactments of the Tower Green beheading of the Countess of Salisbury—who was hacked to death by her inept executioner on May 27, 1541—have been seen on its anniversary. The ghostly screams of Guy Fawkes, who gave up his co-conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot after suffering unspeakable torture, reputedly still echo around the grounds.

Other notable spirits you may encounter (the no-nonsense Tower guards have had run-ins with them all) include St. Thomas á Becket, Sir Walter Raleigh, Lady Jane Grey, and Henry VI.





One of the Tower of London's famous resident ravens.

3 ★★ kids Tower Bridge. This picture-perfect bascule bridge—a term derived from the French for “seesaw”—has spanned the Thames since 1894. There’s no denying the physical beauty of the neo-Gothic bridge: Its skeleton of steel girders is clothed with ornate masonry using Cornish granite and Portland stone designed to harmonize elegantly with the neighboring Tower of London. Its lower span opens and closes through hydraulics and behemoth machinery—details that even engineering-challenged visitors will find fascinating on the “Tower Bridge Experience” tour. Tour participants can also ascend to the bridge’s top level for a bird’s-eye view of the Tower of London and the Thames, 43m (141 ft.) below. (Acrophobics need not apply.) 🕒 **1 hr.** **Tower Bridge.** ☎️ 0207/403-3761. www.towerbridge.org.uk. £6 adults, £4.50 seniors, £3 kids 5–15. Ticket office is

on northwest side of bridge. Daily 9:30am–6pm. Tube: Tower Hill.

Tower Bridge, not London Bridge, is the most recognizable span in the city.



4 ★ kids The Monument. Sir Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke designed this 62m-high (203-ft.) Doric stone column—topped with a copper flame—to commemorate the Great Fire of 1666. That tragic disaster started on September 2 inside the house of a baker on Pudding Lane (the height of the tower corresponds to the distance from its base to the fire's starting point). A stiff wind ignited the old timber and thatch houses of medieval London; when the conflagration was finally stopped, more than 13,000 houses and 87 churches had been reduced to smoldering ashes. Closed for repairs in 2008, the tower's reopening in early 2009 should satisfy sightseers who are reluctant to climb its 311 steps with a new visitor center that will beam down live views from the top.  **50 min.** **Monument St.**  **0207/626-2717.** www.towerbridge.org.uk. **Admission £5 adults, £3 seniors & kids. Daily 9:30am–5:30pm. Tube: Monument.**



5 ★★ kids Tate Britain. The Tate Britain, set on the former Thames-side site of the Millbank Penitentiary, opened in 1894 thanks to generous donations of money and art from sugar mogul Sir Henry Tate. One of England's most prestigious art

The Monument was built to commemorate the Great Fire of 1666.



Matisse's The Snail, in the Tate Modern.

museums, the Tate features a collection consisting chiefly of British art from the 16th century to the dawn of the 20th century. The museum has an unparalleled collection of works by renowned landscape artist J. M. W. Turner, who bequeathed most of his paintings to the museum. Other notable British artists whose works adorn the walls include satirist William Hogarth, illustrator William Blake, portraitist Thomas Gainsborough, and traditionalist Joshua Reynolds.

 **2 hr.** **Millbank.**  **0207/887-8008.** www.tate.org.uk. **Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Daily 10am–6pm. Tube: Pimlico.**


The **6' ★★ Tate Britain Restaurant** is one of the best museum eateries in London, and serves tasty modern British cuisine, accompanied by an extensive wine list, in a cheery, mural-filled dining room. It's a great place to stop for afternoon tea. **In the Tate Britain.**  **0207/887-8825. \$\$.**

7 ★★★ kids Tate Modern.

Britain's premier modern art museum, an offshoot of the Tate Britain, is housed in a gargantuan shell that was once a power station. For me, part of the fun of a visit here are the reminders of the building's utilitarian past—check out the




immensity of the Turbine Hall and wonder at the amount of electricity once provided to power the lights in London. The museum's curators have admirably risen to the challenge of filling its enormous space with exhibits, gigantic sculptures, and art installations. Collections here are displayed thematically instead of by period. Some of the world's most important and exciting art is here, with works by Dalí, Matisse, Picasso, Bonnard, Duchamp, Giacometti, Man Ray, Bonnard, Diego Rivera, Mondrian, Klee, Margaret Bourke White, Francis Bacon, David Hockney—think of the most groundbreaking artists of the past century and you will likely find something of their work somewhere in this gargantuan and wonderfully satisfying cathedral of modernity. Do use their brilliant website to plan your visit if you can.

 **2½ hr.** *Take a free guided theme tour or an audioguide highlights tour (£3) to make the best use of your*




Warhol's Marilyn Diptych, in the Tate Modern.

time. Bankside.  0207/887-8000. www.tate.org.uk. *Free admission except for temporary exhibits. Daily 10am–6pm. Tube: Blackfriars.*

8 ★★ kids The British Museum. You could spend days exploring this renowned museum. If you're visiting on a Thursday or Friday, stay for the Late Night views and enjoy the dark skies (no stars, sadly) over the Great Court.  **1 hr.** *See p 30.*

Sailing the Tate Boat

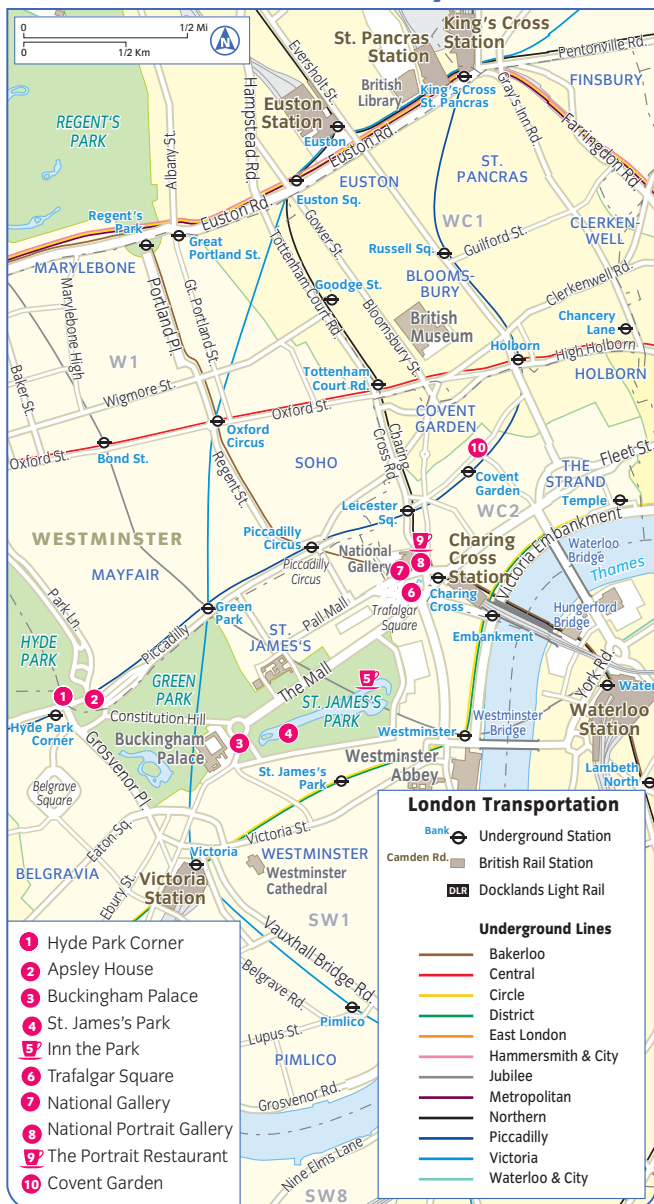
The Tate boat ferry service between the two Tate museums on opposite banks of the Thames is one of London's better tourist creations. The same folks who built the London Eye designed the ferry's dramatic Millbank Pier, and the colorful catamaran is itself a work of art decorated by bad boy artist Damian Hirst. The 18-minute ride runs from the Tate Britain to the Tate Modern, and also makes a stop at the British Airways London Eye (p 12, **7**). When you're visiting both Tate museums in a single day, the ferry is a convenient, scenic, and comfortable way to get from one to the other.

Alas, it's not free. One-way ferry tickets cost £4 adults, £2 kids 5 to 15, free for kids 4 and under. If you have a London Travelcard (p 159), you get a good discount. Tickets can be bought online or at the Tate Britain or Tate Modern. The boat runs daily every 40 minutes (more often in high season) between 10am and 6pm. For precise boat times, call  0207/887-3959 or check www.tate.org.uk/tatetotate.



The Tate Britain lit up at night.

The Best in Three Days



This tour reveals London's great charms. I follow this route when I'm feeling out of sorts, and by the time I hit St. James's Park, I've fallen in love with London all over again. From the glory of Hyde Park Corner's monuments, to the incomparable art in the National Gallery, to the street crazies and entertainers of Covent Garden, this is the London that even crabby cabbies quietly relish as they go about their business. **START: Hyde Park Corner Tube Station**

1 ★ Hyde Park Corner. The busiest traffic circle in London is one of the city's most central locations, with Piccadilly, Knightsbridge, Park Lane, Constitution Hill, and Grosvenor Place radiating from its axis. It's the perfect place to get great morning photos of the majestic statue of *Winged Victory*, which replaced the statue of the Duke of Wellington in 1912 as a topper to the Wellington Arch. The arch itself was built in the 1820s to celebrate the British victory over the French. The underground walkways beneath the circle will save you from the treacherous crosswalks above and feature an interesting pictorial history of the Duke of Wellington, who orchestrated the crushing of Napoleon at Waterloo and remains one of Britain's most celebrated military heroes. 🕒 10 min. Tube: *Hyde Park Corner*.

2 ★★ Apsley House. Designed by famed architect Robert Adam, this neoclassical mansion was purchased by Arthur Wellesley, first Duke of Wellington (1769–1852), following his victories in the Napoleonic Wars. Its location, just past the old Knightsbridge tollgate, gave it the city's most grandiose address at the time: Number One London.



The dining room at Apsley House and its priceless Portuguese silver centerpiece.

The residence houses a renowned collection of decorative arts (many of the pieces bestowed upon the duke by grateful European monarchs), historic weaponry, numerous Old Masters, a towering nude statue of his enemy Napoleon (with a strategic fig leaf), and magnificent views of Hyde Park. It's a small, quick-hit museum that provides you with a taste of old Georgian splendor. (Don't miss the staggeringly over-the-top silver table setting, with an 8m-long/26-ft. centerpiece.) 🕒 50 min. 149 Piccadilly.

☎ 0207/499-5676. www.english-heritage.org.uk.

Admission £5.30 adults, £4 seniors, £2.70 kids 5–15. Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. Tube: *Hyde Park Corner*.



Wellington Arch, topped by the Winged Victory, sits atop Hyde Park Corner.



The Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace.

3 ★ Buckingham Palace. Buck House, the queen's famous abode in London (if the yellow-and-red Royal standard is flying, it means she's there), is the setting for the pageantry of the Changing of the Guard, a London tradition that attracts more people than it warrants—it's a nightmarish mass of crowds in the summer. A better place to see all the queen's horses and all the queen's men in action is the Horse Guards Parade (p 69, **3**). But if you're determined to see the guards change here, arrive a half-hour early to get a seat by the statue of Victoria in front of the palace; it offers a reasonably good view. The ritual takes place every other day in winter and every day in summer at 11am in the forecourt of the palace.

30 min. See p 45, **1**.

4 ★★ kids St. James's Park. Arguably London's prettiest park, St. James's has an interesting history. The former swamp was tidied up in the 18th century, and evolved into a popular and notorious scene where prostitutes conducted business, laundresses brought their loads to dry on bushes, and drunken rakes took unsteady aim at dueling opponents. Now, however, it's very respectable, with a duck and pelican pond, weeping willows, and numerous paths lined with flower beds. The benches at the eastern end of the park offer a peaceful view of London's landmarks. **30 min.**

At the northeast end of St. James's Park is **5P★★ kids Inn the Park**, a combination cafe and restaurant. Skip the expensive restaurant, where the food is overpriced; the same chefs supply the less-expensive cafeteria-style eatery, which features picturesque views of the London Eye and Whitehall. **In St James's Park (by Pall Mall).** **0207/451-9999.** \$.

6 Trafalgar Square. While you were once able to identify this famous square by its staggering population of pigeons, the practice of feeding them was outlawed (as were cars, to create a useful pedestrian area) in front of the National Gallery. The square is named after Britain's most revered naval hero, Horatio Viscount Nelson, who fell at the Battle of Trafalgar (the most pivotal naval battle of the Napoleonic Wars) in 1805, and whose statue stands on top of a 44m (144-ft.) pillar of granite guarded by kingly lions at the base. Street lamps at the Pall Mall end of the square are decorated with small replicas of the ships he commanded. The square is the scene of many rallies, demonstrations, and celebrations, and it's perfect for people-watching.

15 min.

The statue of Horatio Viscount Nelson overlooking Trafalgar Square.

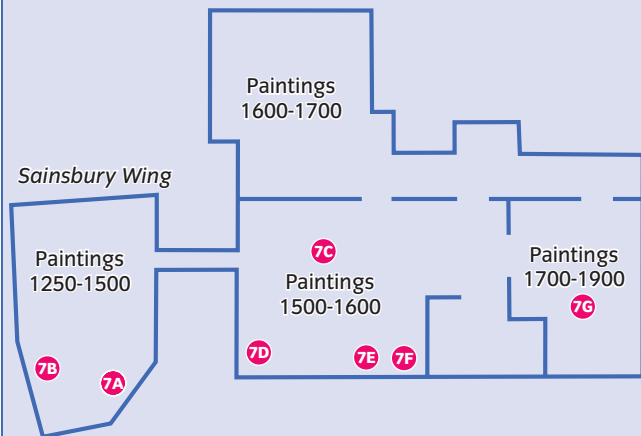


7 ★★★ kids National Gallery.

This revered museum dominating Trafalgar Square sits roughly where the stables of King Henry VIII used to be. Founded in 1832 with a collection of 38 paintings bought by

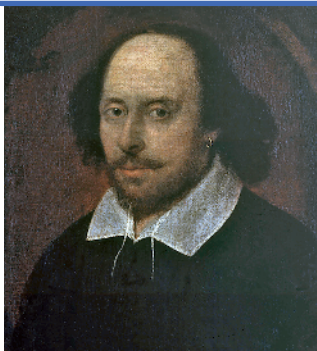
the British government, the National is now home to some 2,000 works representing the world's major artistic periods from 1250 to 1900. It's London's best museum for anyone interested in the arts.

National Gallery Highlights



Start in the **7A** ★★★ **Sainsbury Wing's Room 56**, where you'll find familiar early European works, including Van Eyck's haunting portrait, *Arnolfini and His Wife*. Note the words inscribed over the mirror: JAN VAN EYCK WAS HERE/1434. For a contrast in mood, go to **7B** **Room 66** for Botticelli's *Venus & Mars*, a voluptuous allegory most likely painted as a backboard to decorate a bench or chest. The **7C** **West Wing's Room 10** holds Titian's *Bacchus & Ariadne* in colors still vibrant after 500 years; in **7D** **Room 8** is an ethereal Raphael painting of *The Madonna of the Pinks*. Holbein's

Ambassadors is in **7E** **Room 4**; the skull in the foreground was painted using a geometrical process called *anamorphosis*, distorting the image unless you look at it from an angle. Pay your respects to Michelangelo and da Vinci in **7F** **Room 2**, and then leave the Renaissance for the **7G** **East Wing** to see the works of Impressionists van Gogh, Monet, and Seurat, among others. ⌚ 2 hr. Trafalgar Sq. (at St. Martin's Lane). ☎ 0207/747-2285. www.nationalgallery.org.uk. Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Thurs–Tues 10am–6pm; Wed 10am–9pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.



A portrait of William Shakespeare at the National Portrait Gallery.

8 ★★ kids National Portrait Gallery. Adjacent to the National Gallery, the NPG is the best place to put a face to the names of those who have shaped Britain politically, socially, and culturally. The gallery displays about 60% of its 10,000-plus portraits at a given time, ranging from King Harold II (b. 1022) to actress Keira Knightley (b. 1985). Familiar faces include Judi Dench, Richard Branson, Vivienne Westwood, Diana Rigg, David Bowie, Simon Cowell, Julie Christie, Michael Caine, and other less celebrated Brits, such as the psycho Kray brothers and their mum. Start at the top and work your way down. ⌚ 1 hr. 2 St. Martin's Lane, W1. ☎ 0207/306-0055. www.npg.org.uk. Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Sat–Wed 10am–6pm; Thurs–Fri 10am–9pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

9 ★★★ The Portrait Restaurant, on the top floor of the NPG, commands the most spectacular views over Trafalgar Square. The lounge area, serving salads, light meals, and afternoon tea, is your best bet for a quick bite. **National Portrait Gallery, 2 St. Martin's Lane, W1.** ☎ 0207/312-2490. \$\$.

10 ★★★ kids Covent Garden.

This famous marketplace—first laid out in the 17th century—is a good spot to end your day of cultural explorations. The area is bordered by the Strand, Charing Cross, Drury Lane, and High Holborn. At its heart is the Inigo Jones–designed arcade now filled with upscale shops and uninspired cafes. **Jubilee Market**, with inexpensive whatnots and cheap clothing, is set on the southern side of the arcade; at the western end you'll find stalls that, depending on the day, offer antiques, handmade crafts, or flea market goods. You may even be lucky enough to come upon an operatic performance given by professionals from the neoclassical **Royal Opera House** that faces the arcade. This area offers busking at its best; be it a tattooed man juggling knives, or a chamber music quartet, you'll always find real talent in Covent Garden's street entertainment. ⌚ 1–2 hr. Tube: Covent Garden. ●

Colorful Covent Garden is a good spot for shopping and street entertainment.

