

# 1

## The Best **Full-Day** **Tours**



## The Best in One Day



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| 1 Westminster Abbey    | 7 Shakespeare's<br>Globe Theatre |
| 2 Big Ben              | 8 Swan at the Globe              |
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| 4 Westminster Bridge   | 10 St. Paul's Cathedral          |
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Previous page: St. Paul's dome from Millennium Bridge.



**T**his tour is of “Iconic London.” You’ll be visiting attractions, including Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s, that have been familiar to Londoners for hundreds of years, as well as more recent arrivals, such as the London Eye, and modern recreations of the past, such as Shakespeare’s Globe. Total time: 1 day; total history covered: More than 1,000 years. **START: Tube to Westminster.**



*Westminster Abbey.*

**1 ★★★ Westminster Abbey.**

The nearly 1,000-year-old abbey is one of the finest examples of medieval architecture in Europe. Like a giant shrine to the nation, it contains some 3,300 memorials to kings, nobles, and other great British figures from down the ages. William the Conqueror, Edward III, 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 Poets’ Corner, where you’ll find

monuments to well-loved literary names such as Chaucer, Austen, and Dickens. 🕒 1½ hr; arrive before 9:30am to avoid line-ups. 20 Dean’s Yard. 📞 020/7222-5152. [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org). Adults £16, £13 seniors & students, £6 children 11–18, £32 family, free for children 10 & under. Free admission to services. Mon–Tues & Thurs–Fri 9:30am–4:30pm, Wed 9:30am–7pm, Sat 9:30am–2:30pm. Last admission 1 hr before closing. 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, although that appellation technically refers only to the tower’s largest bell. The 14-tonne (13-ton) bell, installed in 1858, is believed to have been

*Big Ben.*



named after the rather portly commissioner of public works at the time—Sir Benjamin Hall. British residents 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 snapshot. 🕒 5 min. *Near St. Stephen's Entrance of Westminster Palace, Old Palace Yard. British citizens should contact their local M.P. 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 home to the 600-plus M.P.s (Members of Parliament, the elected representatives of the people) of the House of Commons and the 700-plus appointed members of the House of Lords (who scrutinize the decisions made in the Commons). You may observe debates for free from the Strangers' Galleries in both houses, but the long line-ups usually make this attraction better for a quick photo opportunity than a lengthy visit. The only exceptions are on Saturdays throughout the year and from Monday through Saturday during Parliament's summer recess, when the palace is open for guided tours. 🕒 5 min. *Old Palace Yard. ☎️ 020/7219-4272 House of Commons, 020/7219-3107 House of Lords. www.parliament.uk. Free admission. Mon–Tues 2:30–10:30pm, Wed 11:30am–7:30pm, Thurs 10:30am–6:30pm, Fri 9:30am–3pm. Closed Easter week. Guided tours (£15 adults, £6 children 16 & under) offered Sat 9:15am–4:30pm Aug–Sept (check website or call for exact tour times). Tube: Westminster.*

4 **Westminster Bridge.** From the center of the bridge you can



*The London Eye on the South Bank.*

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.*

At County Hall you have a choice between a light snack of noodles at the **5 ★ Zen Café**, by the London Eye, or something a bit more fancy and filling at its sibling, **Zen China**, inside the building itself—the Peking Duck (£42 for two) comes highly recommended. *Westminster Bridge Rd. ☎️ 020/7261-1196. £–££.*

6 ★★★ **kids London Eye.** The huge Ferris wheel that solemnly rotates one revolution per half-hour is already an icon of the city a mere decade since it opened, and is much loved by even the most hardened London traditionalist. You are encouraged to buy your timed ticket well in advance, which can end in disappointment if you get a gray



*The ornate interior of St. Paul's Cathedral.*

and rainy day—book yourself a “night flight” and you’re guaranteed the twinkling lights of the city. Same-day tickets are sometimes available in the off-season. 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 via the website for a 10% discount on the prices below. South Bank (at Westminster Bridge).

☎️ 0871/093-0123. [www.londoneye.com](http://www.londoneye.com). Adults £18.50, £15 seniors, £9.50 children 4–15, free for children 3 & under. Sept–Mar daily 10am–8:30pm, Apr–June & Sept 10am–9pm, July–Aug daily 10am–9:30pm. Closed bank holidays & 3 weeks in Jan. Tube: Westminster.

**7 ★★ kids Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre.** Even if you don’t have tickets to a play (p 137), the Globe is still a fascinating place to visit. It was rebuilt in painstaking detail on a parking lot near the site of the original theatre (and only those tools authentic to the period of the original were used in its construction). In the late 1500s/early 1600s Shakespeare’s works were performed here 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 displays at the on-site exhibition focus on topics such as the frost fairs of medieval London (back when the Thames would freeze solid and people would party on the river for days) or the juicy history of nearby Southwark, once a haven for prostitutes and thieves.

🕒 1 hr. 21 New Globe Walk. ☎️ 020/7902-1400 (exhibition) or 020/7401-9919 (box office). [www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org). Admission to museum & exhibits: £11.50 adults, £10 seniors, £7 children 5–15, free for children 4 & under, £32 family (2 adults & 3 children). Daily 10am–5:30pm (closed during afternoon theatre matinees when tours of the remains

*The Millennium Bridge.*



of the Rose Theatre are offered instead—call for schedules). Tube: London Bridge.

The **8** ★★ **kids** **Swan at the Globe** is a fine choice for a restorative break, and has a Thames-side view of London. The menu in the top-floor bar features English favorites, such as fish pie or sausage and mash, while the brasserie is a much fancier (and more expensive) affair. **21 Globe Walk (off Thames Path)**. ☎ 020/7928-9444. £.

**9** ★ **Millennium Bridge.** This sliver of a footbridge connecting Bankside to the City is 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.

**10** ★★★ **kids** **St. Paul's Cathedral.** The dome of St. Paul's has been the defining icon of the London skyline since its creation after the Great Fire of 1666. Although it's no longer the city's tallest structure, no modern skyscraper (even the much admired "Gherkin") is held in such affection—or inspires the same awe—as Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece. The cathedral was 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 528 stairs to the Golden Gallery are demanding, but you'll be rewarded with a magnificent view not only of London but also of the interior of the cathedral. Wren—who is buried alongside many notable scientists and artists in the cathedral's

crypt—considered it his ultimate achievement. Guided tours (included in the admission price) are at 10:45 and 11:15am, 1:30 and 2pm. ⌚ 1½ hr. **Ludgate Hill (at Paternoster Sq.)**. ☎ 020/7236-8350. [www.stpauls.co.uk](http://www.stpauls.co.uk). Adults £14.50, £13.50 seniors & students, £5.50 children 6–18. Mon–Sat 8:30am–4:30pm. Tube: St. Paul's.

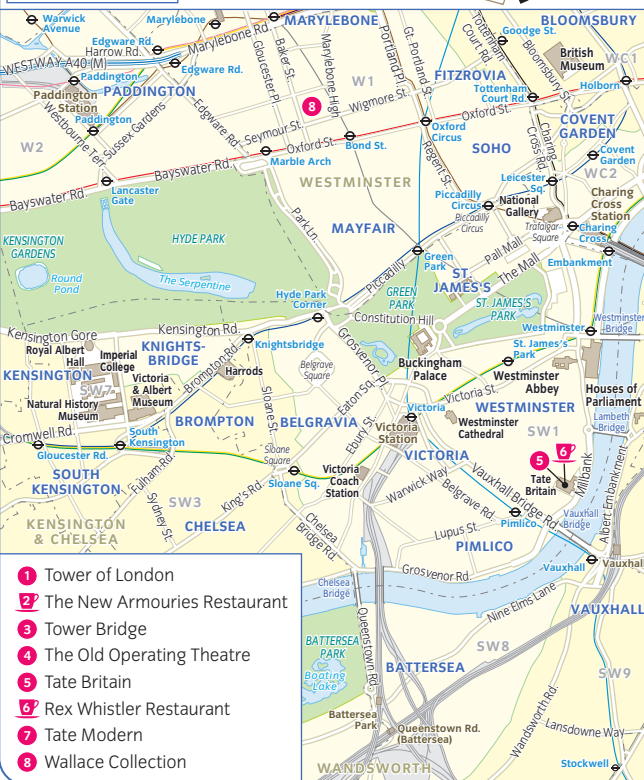
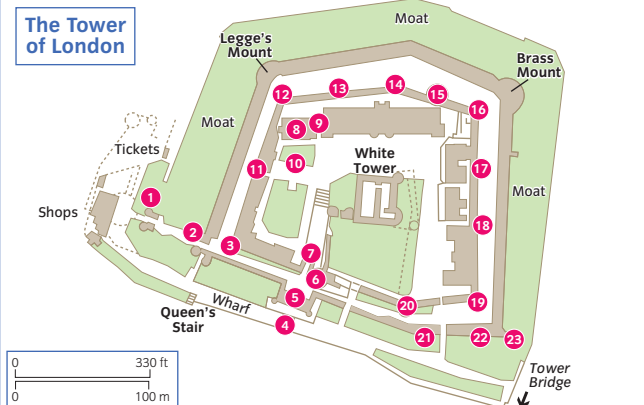
**11** ★★ **kids** **Museum of London.** If it pertains to London's history, you'll find it here. Exhibits start at the prehistoric level and proceed to the 21st century, with stops at all the great and terrible moments in London's long life, including "Roman London," "Medieval London," and the Great Fire. Do not miss the ornate Lord Mayor's Coach, a 2.7-tonne (3-ton) gilt affair in which Cinderella would have felt right at home. ⌚ 1½ hr. **London Wall**. ☎ 020/7001-9844. [www.museumoflondon.org.uk](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk). Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Open daily 10am–6pm. Tube: St. Paul's.

*Armory on display at the Museum of London.*



## The Best in Two Days

## The Tower of London



- 1 Tower of London
- 2 The New Armouries Restaurant
- 3 Tower Bridge
- 4 The Old Operating Theatre
- 5 Tate Britain
- 6 Rex Whistler Restaurant
- 7 Tate Modern
- 8 Wallace Collection

**TOWER OF LONDON**

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**  
 St. Thomas's Tower **5**  
 Salt Tower **19**  
 Site of Scaffold **10**  
 Traitors' Gate **4**  
 Wakefield Tower **6**  
 Well Tower **22**



**O**n the second day you'll delve into the capital's history, exploring the buildings, jewels, and ghosts that make up the Tower of London; British art at Tate Britain; and the gruesome horrors of the medical past at the Old Operating Theatre. You'll also experience the new at the Tate Modern and traverse the Thames by boat, now as always the watery heart of the city. **START: Tube to Tower Hill.**

**1 ★★★ kids Tower of London.**

Begun by William the Conqueror in 1078, this fortress was added to by subsequent generations of kings and queens, and reflects 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. Yeoman Warders (or "Beefeaters") give gore-filled talks all day long, and 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 accoutrements of power (and have the longest line-ups). The haunted—and haunting—Tower will thrill students of history and entertain kids too. 🕒 **2 hr.** Buy your tickets online & arrive when it opens to avoid the long line & save around 15% on the prices listed below. Tower Hill. 📞 0844/482-7777 (from the U.K.) or 020/3166-6000 (outside the U.K.). [www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/](http://www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/). Adults £19.80, £17.05 seniors, £10.45 children 5–15, free for children 4 & under, £55 family. Open Tues–Sat 9am–5:30pm, Sun–Mon 10am–5:30pm, till 4:30pm Nov–Feb. Tube: Tower Hill.

Buy sandwiches at **2 ★★ The New Armouries Restaurant** for an outdoor picnic, or settle in for a hot



*Beefeater at the Tower of London.*

lunch of shepherd's pie, soup, 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.* 📞 020/3166-6991. £.

**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 structure: Its skeleton of steel girders is clothed with ornate

## Tower Ghosts

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

The 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. The tragic shades of the Little Princes—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 slowly hacked to death by her inept executioner on May 27 1541—have been seen on its anniversary. The screams of Guy Fawkes, who gave up his co-conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot under torture, reputedly still echo around the grounds.

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

masonry using Cornish granite and Portland stone designed to harmonize elegantly with the neighboring Tower of London. Its lower span opens and closes thanks to some heavy-duty hydraulics at least once a day (a board next to the bridge tells you when). You can find out more at the “Tower Bridge Experience” tour, when you 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.** 📞 020/7403-3761. [www.towerbridge.org.uk](http://www.towerbridge.org.uk). Adults £8, £5.60 seniors, £3.40 children 5–15, free for children 4 & under. Ticket office is on northwest side of bridge. Daily Apr–Sept 10am–6:30pm, Oct–Mar 9:30am–6pm. Tube: Tower Hill.

*Tower Bridge.*



**4** ★★ **kids** **The Old Operating Theatre.** A wooden operating table where operations—usually amputations—were performed without anesthetic or antiseptic (leather restraints held the patient in place, while pain relief was provided by alcohol and the speed of the surgeon); an early pair of forceps, and other instruments of outdated medical practices will cure any complaints you may have about modern medicine. 🕒 30 min. 9a St. Thomas's St. ☎ 020//7188-2679. [www.thegarret.org.uk](http://www.thegarret.org.uk). Adults £5.90, £4.90 seniors, £3.40 children 15 & under. Daily 10:30am–5pm. Tube: London Bridge.

**5** ★★ **kids** **Tate Britain.** Housed in a charming neoclassical building, which looks a bit like a miniature British Museum, Tate Britain opened in 1894 thanks to generous donations of money and art from sugar mogul Sir Henry Tate. Today, it boasts the country's finest collection of domestic art, covering the period from the 16th century to the present day, and 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. 🕒 1½ hr. Millbank. ☎ 020/7887-8888. [www.tate.org.uk/britain/](http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/). Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Daily 10am–6pm. Tube: Pimlico.

The Tate's own **6** ★★ **Rex Whistler Restaurant** serves tasty modern British cuisine in a cheery, mural-filled dining room. It's a great place for afternoon tea or, on weekends, for a superior "full English" breakfast (£9.25). *In the Tate Britain.* ☎ 020/7887-8825. ££.

**7** ★★★ **kids** **Tate Modern.** The world's most popular modern art gallery, this offshoot of Tate Britain is housed in the gargantuan shell of a converted 1940s' brick power station. Through the main entrance, you enter a vast space, the Turbine Hall, where a succession of temporary exhibitions is held—the bigger and more ambitious, the better. Highlights have included 100 million ceramic sunflower seeds covering the floor (Ai Weiwei) and a maze made out of 14,000 polyethylene boxes (Rachel Whiteread). Spread over three levels, the permanent collection encompasses a great body of modern art dating from 1900 to now. It covers all the big hitters, including Matisse, Rothko, Pollock, Picasso, Dalí, Duchamp, and Warhol, and is arranged according to movements—surrealism, minimalism, cubism, expressionism, and so on. Free themed 45-minute guided tours of the collection are at 11am, noon, 2, and 3pm. A new gallery extension, taking the form of an asymmetrical, brick-and-glass pyramid, is due to open in 2012. 🕒 1½ hr. *Multimedia guides are available from the info*

*Tate Britain.*





The Turbine Hall, Tate Modern.

desks on levels 2 & 3 (£3.50). Bank-side. ☎ 020/7887-8888. [www.tate.org.uk/modern/](http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/). Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Daily 10am–6pm. Tube: Southwark, St. Paul's, or London Bridge.

**8 ★★ kids Wallace Collection.**

This collection offers an astonishing glimpse into the buying power of the English gentry following the French Revolution, when important art and furnishings were made homeless by the guillotine. In 1897, Lady Wallace left this entire mansion and its contents to the nation on the condition that they be kept intact,

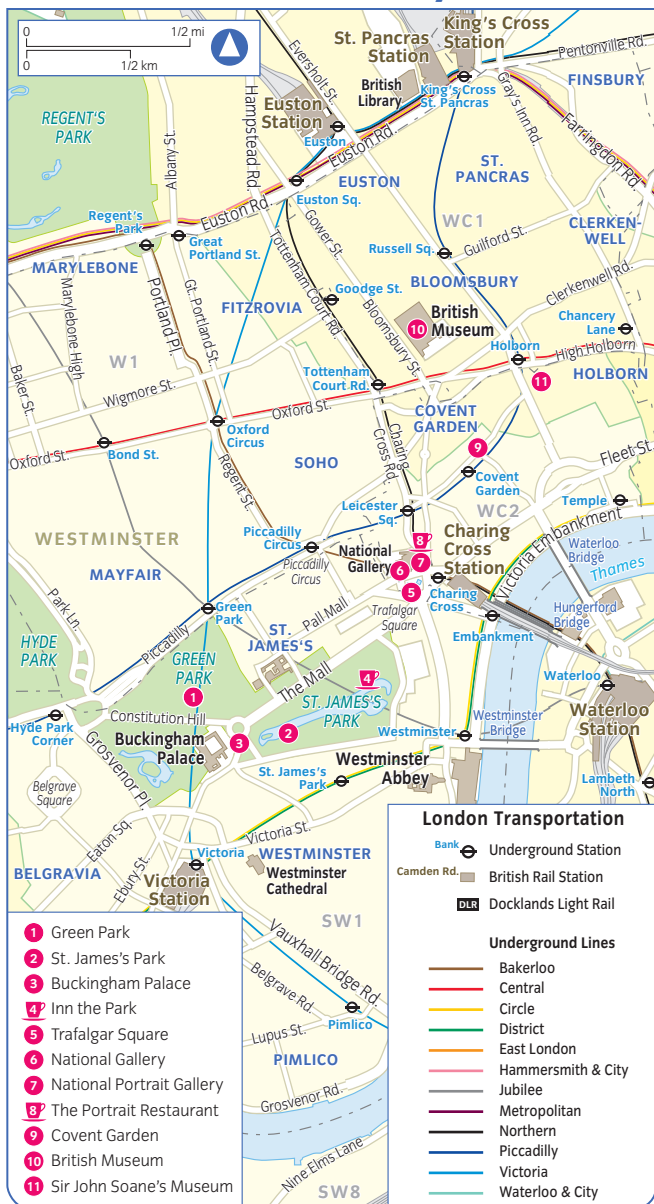
without additions or subtractions. The paintings are outstanding, with works by Titian, Gainsborough, Rembrandt, and Hals (including his famous *Laughing Cavalier*), and the collection also includes Sèvres porcelain, 18th-century French decorative art, and an array of European and Asian armaments that are works of art in their own right. 🕒 1 hr. Hertford House, Manchester Sq. ☎ 020/7563-9500. [www.wallacecollection.org](http://www.wallacecollection.org). Free admission. Daily 10am–5pm. Take a free guided tour at 11am Mon–Fri, 11:30am Wed & Sat, and 3pm Sun. Tube: Bond St.

## Sailing the Tate Boat

The Tate boat ferry service between the two Tate galleries on opposite banks of the Thames is one of London's more useful tourist creations. The same people who built the London Eye designed the ferry's dramatic Millbank Pier, and the colorful catamaran was decorated by the once *enfant terrible* of the British art scene, Damian Hirst. The 18-minute ride stops off en route at the London Eye (p 11, **6**), and makes a convenient and scenic way to get from one to the other.

Alas, it's not free. One-way ferry tickets cost £5 adults, £2.50 kids 5 to 15, free for kids 4 and under. If you have a London Travelcard (p 161), 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 ☎ 020/7887-8888 or check [www.tate.org.uk/tatetotate](http://www.tate.org.uk/tatetotate).

# The Best in Three Days



**T**he tour begins with some of London's most utterly British attractions—the sweeping royal parks and the pomp and ceremony of the Changing of the Guard—and finishes with the gloriously elegant clutter of Sir John Soane's Museum. In between are the National Gallery and perhaps the finest museum of human civilization, the British Museum. **START: Tube to Green Park.**

**1 ★ kids Green Park.** London's royal parks are often busy affairs, filled with flowerbeds, statues, ponds, playgrounds, and more, but all you'll find here are acres of rolling green lawns and tall shady trees, plus, in summer, scores of local workers sunning their lunch hours away either on the grass or on the stripy deckchairs (£1.50) that represent the park's one formal facility. Founded in 1660 in order to allow Charles II to travel between St. James's Park and Hyde Park without leaving royal soil, the park's pared-down nature supposedly dates from the time the queen caught Charles giving flowers from the park to another woman. In a rage, she had all the flowerbeds torn up. 🕒 15 min. *Tube: Green Park.*

**2 ★★ kids St. James's Park.** Southeast of Green Park, this is arguably London's prettiest park. It's certainly difficult to believe that this was, until the 18th century, the center of a notorious scene, where prostitutes conducted their business and drunken rakes took unsteady aim at dueling opponents. It's now very respectable, with a wildfowl pond, weeping willows, and numerous flowerbeds. 🕒 30 min.

**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 home), is the setting for the pageantry of the **Changing of the Guard**, a London tradition that attracts more people than it

*View over the pond at St. James's Park.*





*Trafalgar Square.*

warrants. A better place to see all the queen's horses and all the queen's men in action is at Horse Guards Parade (p 71, 3). But if you're determined to watch the guards change here, arrive a half-hour early to get a seat by the statue of Victoria; it offers a reasonably good view. The ceremony begins at 11:30am sharp every day between May and July, and on alternate days for the rest of the year—in theory, anyway; it's often canceled in bad weather. 🕒 30 min. See p 35, 1.

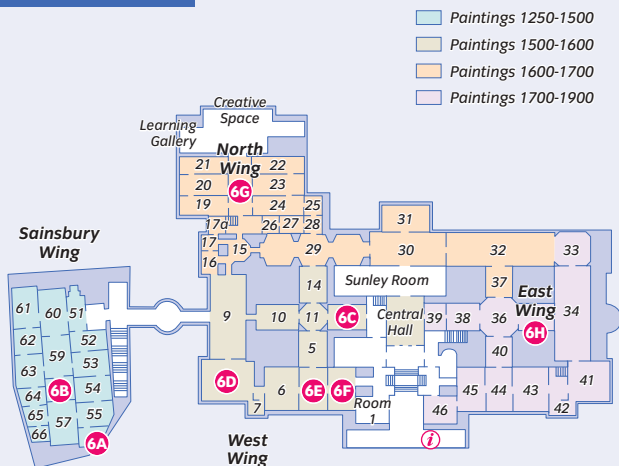
At the northeast end of St. James's Park is **4P ★★★ kids Inn the Park**. Skip the overpriced restaurant; the same chefs supply the cafeteria-style eatery, which features picturesque views of the London Eye and Whitehall. *In St. James's Park (by Pall Mall)*. 📞 020/7451-9999. £.

**5 kids Trafalgar Square.** Where a visit to this square once involved battling traffic and dodging pigeons,

a part-pedestrianization and a ban on pigeon-feeding means that it is now once again possible to appreciate the fine surroundings. Bordering the square are the National Gallery on the northern side, St. Martin-in-the-Fields to the east, and, in the northwest corner, the "Fourth Plinth," which hosts temporary art installations. Towering above them is a pillar topped with a statue of Britain's most revered naval hero, Horatio, Viscount Nelson. The square is the scene of rallies, demonstrations, and celebrations. 🕒 15 min.

**6 ★★★ kids National Gallery.** This outstanding art museum dominating the north side of 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 2,300 works representing the development of western European painting from 1250 to 1900.

## National Gallery



Start in the **6A** ★★★ **Sainsbury Wing's Room 56**, where you'll find early European works, including Van Eyck's haunting *The Arnolfini Portrait*. Note the words inscribed over the mirror: JAN VAN EYCK WAS HERE/1434. For a contrast in mood, go to **6B** **Room 58** for Botticelli's voluptuous *Venus and Mars*. The **6C** **West Wing's Room 12** holds Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, its colors still vibrant after 500 years; in **6D** **Room 8** is an ethereal Raphael painting of *The Madonna of the Pinks* (1506) as well as a couple of Michelangelos. Holbein's *Ambassadors* is in **6E** **Room 4**; the skull in the foreground looks distorted unless you look at it from a

side angle. Pay your respects to da Vinci in **6F** **Room 2**, and then leave the Renaissance for the **6G** **North Wing** and Dutch, French, and Spanish masterpieces from 1600 to 1800, including Rembrandt's self-portrait at the age of 34 in Room 24. Finish at the **6H** **East Wing** and the works of Impressionists van Gogh (including his *Sunflowers* in Room 45 just inside the main entrance), Monet, and Renoir, among others. ⌚ 1½ hr. **Trafalgar Sq.** ☎ 020/7747-2285. [www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk). **Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Daily 10am–6pm, till 9pm Fri. Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Sq.**

**7** ★★ **kids National Portrait Gallery.** Adjacent to the National Gallery, the NPG is the best place to put faces to the names of those who

have shaped Britain politically, socially, and culturally. The gallery's 10,000-plus portraits take in everyone from King Harold II (b. 1022),



A cafe within Covent Garden market.

Henry VIII, Shakespeare, and Charles Dickens, to modern figures such as David Bowie and Princess Diana. Start at the top, where the earliest works are located. ⌚ 1 hr. 2 St. Martin's Lane. ☎ 020/7306-0055. [www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk). Free admission, except for temporary exhibits. Sat–Wed 10am–6pm, Thurs–Fri 10am–9pm. Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Sq.

**8** ★★★ **The Portrait Restaurant**, on the top floor of the NPG, commands spectacular views over Trafalgar Square. It's open throughout the day and for dinner Thursday to Saturday, and serves a mean afternoon tea. For cheaper snacks try the Portrait Café. **National Portrait Gallery**, 2 St. Martin's Lane. ☎ 020/7312-2490. ££.

**9** ★★★ **kids Covent Garden**. The great fruit and vegetable market that used to form this area's centerpiece moved out in the early 1970s but the glorious 19th-century

market buildings remain. **Jubilee Market**, with inexpensive whatnots, is set on the southern side of the arcade; at the western end you'll find antiques, crafts, and flea market goods. A motley collection of jugglers and physical comedians perform on the piazza, while in the main market building you may experience an operatic performance given by professionals from the neo-classical **Royal Opera House**, which faces the arcade. ⌚ 30 min. Tube: Covent Garden.

**10** ★★★ **kids British Museum**. You could spend days exploring this world-renowned museum, but an hour or so is enough to get a flavor of what it has to offer. If you're visiting on a Friday, you can stay till 8:30pm and enjoy a range of additional events, including films and lectures. ⌚ 1 hr. See tour p 26.

**11** ★★ **Sir John Soane's Museum**. The distinguished British architect Sir John Soane (1753–1837) was also an avid collector. The bulk of this collection was amassed at the height of empire, when antiquities could be removed from their country of origin and displayed casually in one's home. Ancient tablets, sculptures, paintings (including William Hogarth's celebrated *Rake's Progress*), architectural models, and even an Egyptian sarcophagus are strewn around in no particular order, and the haphazardness of the display is part of the museum's charm. On the first Tuesday evening of each month, visitors can explore the museum by candlelight. ⌚ 1 hr. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. ☎ 020/7405-2107. [www.soane.org](http://www.soane.org). Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, late night first Tues of month 6–9pm. Tube: Holborn. ●