

# Hostelworld Guide for London

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Covering over 600 square miles, London is by far Europe's largest city. But don't let this put you off - many of its most famous landmarks are within walking distance of each other. From Big Ben and Westminster Abbey you can wander the streets only to find yourself at the bright lights of Piccadilly Circus. The English capital is also perfect for those who enjoy living life at a fast pace. With 47% of the city's population between the age of 16 and 44, there are fewer places on the planet with as much energy as London.

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Budget Tips  
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## The Essentials

### Getting There

**By plane:** London's three most used airports are Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. Each is connected to the city centre via an express train service although they are expensive. From Heathrow the cheapest way to the city is on the tube. From Gatwick the cheapest option is the Southern Services train, while from Stansted it is cheaper to get the bus to Victoria bus station.

**By train:** If you're travelling to London via train, your final destination will be Waterloo Station International.

**By bus:** All international buses travelling to London end up in Victoria Coach Station in the city centre.

### Getting Around

**On foot:** You can get around London's West End on foot and places such as Trafalgar Square and Buckingham Palace are within walking distance of each other.

**By tube:** London's underground network is arguably the easiest to use in the world. The tube is an essential part of any visit so invest off-peak travel cards for zones 1-2. They cost around £5.

**By bus:** Buses aren't as easy to use as the tube but their destination is stated clearly on the front.

### London facts

**Name:** London gets its name from 'Londinium', as this is what the Romans first called it when they founded the city.

**Population:** Greater London has a population of just over 7.5 million people.

**Founded:** London was founded in AD43 by the Romans.

**Area:** London covers an approximate area of 1,572km<sup>2</sup>/607 miles<sup>2</sup>.

## Climate

London's coldest months are December and January when frost is regularly seen in the mornings. February is also quite cold, and it isn't until March when the milder days and nights arrive. Summers aren't extremely hot, although in more recent years temperatures have been steadily rising. While it may look sunny, it is advised to carry an umbrella with you as you never know when it might rain in London! August is also quite warm and temperatures begin to drop in September, while October and November sees the temperature drop even further before winter arrives again.

### Average Monthly Stats

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
C	4	4.5	6.5	9.5	12	16	18	17	15	11	7.5	5.5
MM	77	72	64	58	57	58	59	62	65	70	78	81
☀	2	3	3	4.5	7	7	6	6	4.5	3	2	2

C: Average Temp Centigrade

MM: Average Rainfall

☀: Average Hrs Sunshine

### Good to know...

**Language:** English

**Currency:** British Pound

**Electricity:** 220 Volts AC/50Hz, 3-pin plug

**Area Code:** +44 (UK) 020 (London), local numbers are 8 digits

**Emergency Codes:** Ambulance 999, Fire 999, Police 999

**Time Zone:** GMT

**Central Post Office:** 24-28 William IV St, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N

**Main Tourist Office:** Britain Visitor Centre, 1 Lower Regent Street, Piccadilly Circus, London SW1Y 4XT

### Embassies / High Commissions

**US:** +44 (0)20 7499 9000 (E)

**Canada:** +44 (0)20 7258 6600 (HC)

**Australia:** +44 (0)20 7379 4334 (HC)

**South Africa:** +44 (0)20 7451 7299 (E)

**Ireland:** +44 (0)20 7235 2171 (E)

**Germany:** +44 (0)20 7824 1300 (E)

**Spain:** +44 (0)20 7235 5555 (E)

**Italy:** +44 (0)20 7312 2200 (E)

**New Zealand:** +44 (0)20 7930 8422 (HC)

**France:** +44 (0)20 7073 1000 (E)

## Cheap Eats

**Rock & Sole Plaice, 47 Endell St, Covent Garden** Fish and chips is one of the UK's best-known national dishes and chip shops can be found all over the city. This one in Covent Garden may be in the heart of tourist-land but the quality of their food makes it a local favourite. *Open Mon-Sat 11.30am-11.30pm; Sun 12pm-10pm.*

**The Monsoon, 78 Brick Lane, East End** Tacky as hell and not extremely pleasant to walk down due to pushy touts, London's famous Brick Lane is still a great place to go for a curry. 'Monsoon' is one of the better known on the strip and has very affordable mains. Be nice to the lippy tout and this price will include a free beer. *Open daily from 11am-midnight.*

**The Forum, 62 Great Russell Street, Holborn** Conveniently located right across the road from the British Museum, this sandwich bar is a cut above the rest in Central London. Choose from a variety of sandwich fillings that are served on deliciously fresh bread. *Open Mon-Sat 8am-7pm.*

## Bangers and mash



**S&M Café, 48 Brushfield St, East End** According to the S&M Café, sausage and mashed potato is 'the world's no. 1 comfort food'. This could be discussed at length, but there is no denying that the sausages dished out here all day are devilishly tasty. Choose from 'lamb and mint', 'traditional' and other types of sausage and compliment them with traditional mash and gravy. They also do a mean breakfast. *Open daily from 8am-10pm.*

**Frank's Café, 52 Neal Street, Covent Garden** Most of the cafés in the trendy Covent Garden district tend to be more expensive than those in other parts of the city. But this café lends itself to those of us who aren't as flush with cash as others, offering cheap breakfast sandwiches along with reasonably priced mains. *Open Mon-Sat 7.30am-7.30pm.*

## After Dark

**The Big Chill Bar, Dray Walk off Brick Lane, East End** This bar practices what it preaches...some of the time. On Thursday or Sunday evenings you can expect a relaxed vibe, making it perfect for a drink after a curry on Brick Lane. But stop by on Friday or Saturday and things are different as it's a lot busier. Chill by name...chill by nature. Sometimes at least. *Open Sun-Thurs 12 noon-midnight, Fri & Sat 12 noon-1am.*

**Bluu, 1 Hoxton Square, Hoxton** Ask most Londoners where they like to socialise and they'll tell you the Shoreditch/Hoxton area thanks to an abundance of bars there. Bluu just behind Old Street gets busy on Thursday night and stays that way until Sunday. Expect all types of music and crowds. *Open Sun-Thurs 12 noon-11.30pm, Fri & Sat 10am-midnight.*

## Gay / Lesbian London

London has a thriving gay and lesbian scene and Soho is the heart of gay London. Most gay bars and clubs can be found on either Old Compton Street or Wardour Street, the most popular being **Compton's of Soho** on Old Compton Street and **Freedom** on Wardour Street. **G.A.Y.** on Charing Cross Road is London's best known club.

**The Enterprise, 2 Haverstock Hill, Camden** This Camden bar has many elements that combine to make it the perfect place to have a few cold beers. It has smoke-stained walls, old wooden seats, a crowd made up of Camden's best and a soundtrack that will ensure chit-chat is replaced by singing by beer number four. *Open daily from 12 noon-midnight.*

**Bar Soho, 23-25 Old Compton Street, Soho** While many regard it as too touristy and overpriced, Soho is the heart and soul of Central London's nightlife so sampling it is a must. Due to the constant stream of people through its doors, downing a beer here is extremely enjoyable. The décor is chic, as is the crowd, but thankfully it isn't too pretentious. *Open Mon-Thurs 12 noon-1am, Fri & Sat 12 noon-3am, Sun 4pm-12.30am.*

**Fabric, 77a Charterhouse St, Barbican** London's club scene is legendary throughout the world and Fabric is one of the city's best known clubs on the underground scene. With three rooms, here you can catch DJs spin tunes or watch live acts at the club's renowned 'Fabric Live' events. *Open Fri-Sun 10pm-8am; admission varies.*

## Don't Miss

**Tower of London, Tower Hill** Home to beefeaters, ravens, and the crown jewels, three things synonymous with the English capital, no trip to London is complete without visiting the Tower of London. Highlights of this landmark attraction include the Crown Jewels, the White Tower and 'Torture at the Tower'. *Open Tues-Sat 9am-5.30pm and Sun-Mon 10am-5.30pm; adults £17, students £14.50.*

## A bird's eye view



**Merlin Entertainments London Eye, at Jubilee Gardens, West End** £20 may seem a lot to spend to stand in a capsule for 30 minutes, but going to London and not boarding the London Eye is like visiting Paris without going up the Eiffel Tower. This is the world's largest observation wheel and views over the English capital from the top are breathtaking, particularly those of the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben. *Open daily from 10am-9pm; adults £19.98, children under 4 £11.82, children under 4 FREE.*

**Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, Bridge St/Parliament Square, West End** Located along the banks of the Thames, these buildings are truly awe inspiring and it is difficult to do anything else but gaze at them for a while. You may find it interesting to know that it isn't the actual clock which is Big Ben, but the 14-ton bell inside it.

**Buckingham Palace, Buckingham Palace Road, West End** This majestic building is one of London's best known landmarks and home to the most famous royal family in the world. Located at the end of 'The Mall', it has been the site for many famous occasions over the years. Try to coincide your trip with the Changing of the Guard.

**Trafalgar Square, West End** Once home to innumerable pigeons, Trafalgar Square is now London's greatest square. Home to Nelson's Column and the landmark lion statues, it is also where you will find the country's famed National Gallery.

## Mark Your Calendar

**January - New Year's Day Parade** If you think you can bear the noise after the New Year's Eve celebrations, get down to the city centre to see this parade which has over 10,000 performers.

**February - Chinese New Year** Martial arts demonstrations, colourful parades and stages showcasing the best in Chinese talent can be seen in Chinatown, Trafalgar Square and Leicester Square for these annual celebrations.

**March - St Patrick's Day Festival** On the Sunday closest to St Patrick's Day the English capital is painted green to celebrate Ireland's national day. Highlights are a huge parade and a festival at the South Bank.

**April - London Marathon** Over 30,000 athletes test their endurance levels and take to the streets for this 26 mile race. All those watching are treated to free entertainment along the course.

**May - Baishakhi Mela** In May London's Bengalese community celebrates its New Year. Brick Lane in East London becomes one of the most vibrant areas of the city during the festival.

**June - Wimbledon Championships** The world's most illustrious tennis championship attracts the jolliest of people to SW19 for lashings of strawberries and cream along with lots of tennis.

**July - Respect Festival** London's annual Respect Festival is a free anti-racist and multicultural event and attracts thousands to its free concert which is staged in Victoria Park.

**August - Notting Hill Carnival** The Notting Hill Carnival sees over one million people take to the streets for this two-day festival.

**September - Thames Festival** Street theatre; a riverside bazaar and night markets; firework displays - you can find all this and more at one of London's most famed features on the third weekend of September.

**October - Trafalgar Day Parade** This annual parade commemorates the Battle of Trafalgar. Afterwards wreaths are laid at Nelson's Column.

**November - Guy Fawkes Night at Alexander Palace** To celebrate Guy Fawkes Night (5th) a huge fireworks display, bonfire and festival takes place at this palace in North London.



## Neighbourhood Watch

**Notting Hill** Immortalised by a film involving a floppy-haired Englishman and a fiery Hollywood superstar, Notting Hill isn't a whole lot like the eponymous film. In saying that, it is one of the city's nicest areas, brimming with shops, bars and restaurants. Saturday morning is a particularly good time to visit thanks to the Portobello Road Markets.

## Alternative London



**Camden** From the second you leave Camden tube station you realise one thing: 'this place is like nowhere else in London'. Hang a right and stroll down Camden High Street to hear lazy reggae beats and stall sellers advertising their specials. Further up on the way to Chalk Farm Road pass authentic punks trying to weasele money from snap-happy tourists.

**Greenwich** Located along the banks of the River Thames in South-East London, a trip to Greenwich is a great excuse to catch a ferry down the river. Once you step off you will be treated to the National Maritime Museum (which is free), green parks and amazing views up the Thames.

**Shoreditch** When discussing which district is the best place to go out with Londoners, one area that repeatedly pops up in conversation is Shoreditch in London's East End. Here (and in the neighbouring Hoxton district) you will find bar after bar after bar. If you're one who likes to party then make sure to make this trip east bound - you'll have a good night.

**'The City'** While the area around Westminster, Trafalgar Square, Covent Garden and Soho may seem like the city centre, this is the area known as the 'West End'. Instead it's over the east end that Londoners call 'The City'. The area's main attraction is the British Museum. Other than that and the 'gherkin' building there isn't a whole lot to see apart from a lot of busy suits rushing around the place. Still good to see nonetheless.

## Retail Therapy

**Oxford Street** Oxford is, without any doubt, London's flagship shopping street. When you're not weaving your way in and out of people's way, you can buy items from many of the world's top stores.

**Covent Garden** As you would expect from London's trendiest area, this is where you can find all the hippest clothes shops. Sprinkled among these are a wide range of specialist sports and music shops.

**Harrods, 87 Brompton Road, Knightsbridge** Okay, so you mightn't have the capital to splash out on some luxury items in London's most exclusive department store, but that doesn't mean you can't do some browsing. This is one of the most famous department stores in the world and well-worth the short tube ride. And if you're a child at heart you will love the toy section. *Open Mon-Sat 10am-7pm, Sun 12 noon-6pm.*

**High Street Kensington** If you're intent on doing damage to your flexible friend when in the British capital, but are also intent on avoiding the crowds on Oxford Street in the process, the affluent suburb of Kensington has a high street to rival London's flagship shopping street. Convenient to reach thanks to its very own tube stop, you'll find many of the world's top brands here.

## London's Markets



**Camden Market** (*open daily from 10.30am-6pm*) is one of the English capital's best-known markets and is full of bargains for those willing to rummage through its thousands of stalls and rails. **Portobello Market** (*open Saturdays from 8am-4pm*) is just as well-known but is more popular with resellers of antiques. Other markets in and around the city centre include **Greenwich Market** where you can pick up old bits of bric-a-brac and **Berwick Street** in Soho where you will find some of the cheapest and freshest fruit in London.

## Budget Tips

**Get cheap pub grub** As eating out in London can be expensive at the best of times, if you're with somebody else and are about to get something to eat, keep an eye out for traditional English pubs doing 'two for one' deals. With these promotions you can get two very reasonably priced meals.

**Visit Speaker's Corner** Since 1872, 'Speaker's Corner' in the north east of Hyde Park has been the spot where thousands have practised their right of free speech, voicing their opinion on everything from politics to England's national football team. If you're wandering through London's best-known park on a Sunday morning and are looking for some free entertainment then look no further.

## Broke? Visit a museum



If you find yourself broke in London, don't fret. Many of its top museums are free. This includes the **British Museum** on Great Russell Street, the **National Gallery** and **National Portrait Gallery** on Trafalgar Square, the **Natural History Museum**, **Science Museum** and **Victoria and Albert Museum**, all in South Kensington, and the **Museum of London** at 150 London Wall.

**Get cheap tickets for West End shows** Going to the theatre in London isn't cheap. Ticket prices range from £20-£50. The TKTS booth in Leicester Square is the official ticket booth, even for half-price tickets on the same day as the performance. But shop around the handful of ticket vendors in the locality you will find even cheaper tickets.

**Stroll up the Thames** Many of London's best-known landmarks can be found along the River Thames. Take the tube to Tower Hill and begin your walk at Tower Bridge and the Tower of London. Then go west towards Westminster Bridge, passing Tate Modern, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and more on the way.

## A Day in London...



Get the tube to Westminster tube station and start your day by taking in breathtaking views of Big Ben, Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament.



The other side of the River Thames is the Merlin Entertainments London Eye. Board a 'flight' for great views of the city.



Cross back over the Thames and make your way to 'The Mall'. That building you will see in the distance is Buckingham Palace, one of the world's best-known palaces.



Work your way back up to Piccadilly Circus, London's answer to Times Square. After taking a few photos, find somebody handing out flyers for £5 buffets and get a feed!



Pick up a cheap ticket for a show around Leicester Square. After that mosey down to Trafalgar Square and visit the National Gallery and Portrait Gallery.



Go people watching and window shopping around Covent Garden and Soho. These are two of the trendiest areas of the English capital - you might even spot a celeb!



Staying in Covent Garden, find 'Frank's Café' on Neal Street for some cheap eats before going to see a show in the West End.



London's West End is one of the city's most vibrant areas. Go for a few drinks in this infamous part of London Town.



If you have the energy finish the night off in one of London's numerous nightclubs! One of the city's best known is called 'The End'.