



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Rene Ehrhardt

Kids' London

London, 1 Day

Table of contents:

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 4

London Snapshot 7

Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: London is one of Europe's best playgrounds for kids. Nearly all the city's major museums have developed well-thought-out activities to entertain and inspire kids on weekends and show off the collections to their best advantage. Whether you make it to all the venues on this tour obviously depends on the temperaments and ages of your children.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - London

DAY NOTE: Science Museum: Designed to appeal to children of all ages, this great institution offers consistently arresting exhibits with fun features, including The Garden, an interactive play area for 3- to 6-year-olds on the Lower Ground Floor. Its seven levels of displays succeed in getting both kids and adults to understand the place of science in everyday life, even as they provide hours of amusement. Highlights include “Launchpad” (hands-on chemistry and physics fun), Foucault’s Pendulum, the Apollo 10 command module, and an IMAX theater (which charges a fee—buy your tickets as soon as you arrive). The gift shop is almost as interesting as the exhibits.

The Natural History Museum: This museum’s building alone is worth a look. Statues of beasts have been incorporated into its facade; and in the lobby, you’ll find charming stained-glass windows. Although not as edgy and modern as the Science Museum next door, this museum is no fossil. Its exhibits include modern dinosaur displays and an interactive rainforest. The gem, mineral, and meteorite exhibits are all top-notch. The old animal dioramas are still around, but the new Darwin Wing (a £70-million project years in the making) has left them in the dust; its highlights include ongoing events with naturalists, photographers, and explorers (not to mention its 28 million insects and 6 million plant specimens).

London Brass Rubbing Centre: Inside the crypt of St. Martin-in-the-Fields are 88 bronze plates of medieval subjects that kids (and adults) can reproduce by rubbing a waxy crayon over a piece of paper affixed to the plate. Admission is free, but rubbings start at £4.50 for a small drawing (a life-size knight will set you back £20). Kids love how they can produce impressive works of art with just a little effort. The Centre also sells great souvenirs.

Also in the basement of St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church, Café in the Crypt is a handy, no-fuss cafe that serves hot lunches, snacks, sweets, and drinks.

London Aquarium: You’d expect a bit more for your money at one of Europe’s top aquariums, but when it comes down to it, kids adore this place. There’s a petting tank of manta rays, a simulated coral reef with sea horses, and appropriately scary shark tanks.



London Aquarium



Natural History Museum

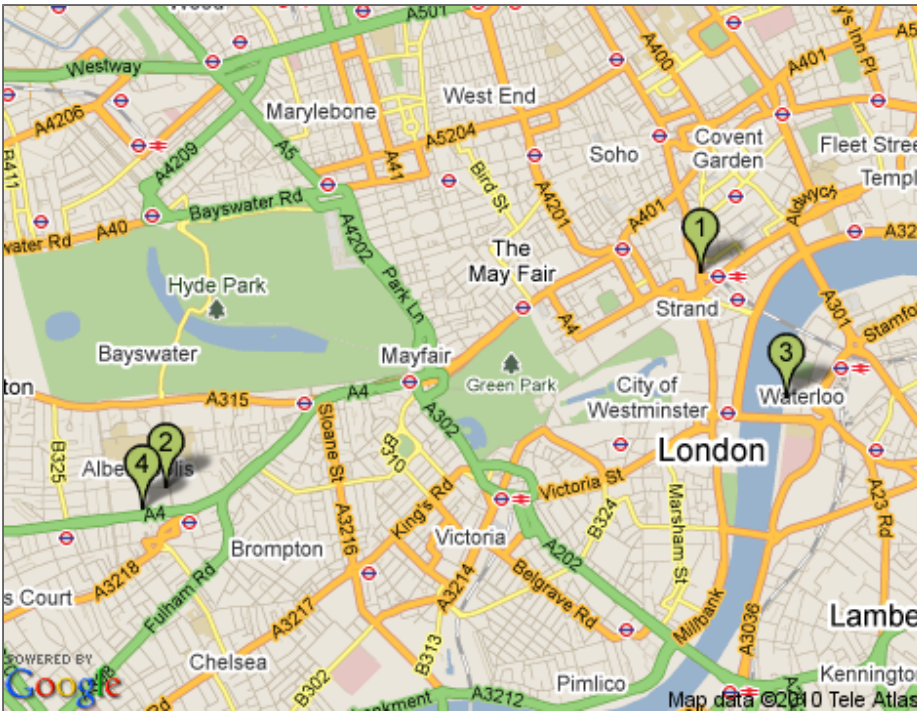


St. Martin-in-the-Fields



Science Museum

Day 1 - London



QUICK NOTE

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contact:

tel: 020/7766-1100
www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org

location:

London

hours:

Mon-Fri 9am-6pm; Sat-Sun
8:45am-7:30pm as long as
no service is taking place.
Concerts Mon, Tues, and Fri
1:05pm; Tues and Thurs-Sat
7:30pm

1 St. Martin-in-the-Fields

Photo Courtesy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields

DESCRIPTION: Designed by James Gibbs, a disciple of Christopher Wren, and completed in 1726, this classical church stands at the northeast corner of Trafalgar Square, opposite the National Gallery. Its spire, added in 1824, towers 56m (184 ft.) higher than Nelson's Column, which also rises on the square. The steeple became the model for many churches in colonial America. Since the first year of World War I (1914), the homeless have sought "soup and shelter" at St. Martin, a tradition that continues. At one time, the crypt held the remains of Charles II (he's in Westminster Abbey now), who was christened here, giving St. Martin a claim as a royal parish church. His mistress, Nell Gwynne, and the highwayman Jack Sheppard are both interred here. The floors of the crypt are actually gravestones, and the walls date from the 1500s. The little restaurant, **Café in the Crypt**, is still called "Field's" by its devotees. Also in the crypt is the **London Brass Rubbing Centre** (tel. **020/7930-9306**; www2.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/page/visiting/brass.html), with 88 exact copies of bronze portraits ready for use. Paper, rubbing materials, and instructions on how to begin are furnished, and there's classical music for you to enjoy as you proceed. Fees to make the rubbings start at £4.50. There's also a gift shop with brass-rubbing kits for children, ready-made rubbings, Celtic jewelry, miniature brasses, and model knights. The center is open Monday to Wednesday 10am to 7pm, Thursday to Saturday 10am to 10pm, and Sunday noon to 7pm. **Insider's tip:** In the back of the church is a crafts market. Also, lunchtime and evening concerts are staged Monday, Tuesday, and Friday at 1:05pm, and Tuesday, and Thursday to Saturday at 7:30pm. Lunch concerts are free, but evening tickets cost £6 to £24. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 0870/870-4868
www.sciencemuseum.org.uk

location:

London

hours:

Daily 10am-6pm

2 Science Museum

DESCRIPTION: This museum traces the development of science and industry and their influence on everyday life. These scientific collections are among the largest and most significant anywhere. On display is Stephenson's original rocket and the tiny prototype railroad engine; you can also see Whittle's original jet engine and the Apollo 10 space module. The King George III Collection of scientific instruments is the highlight of a gallery on 18th-century science. The museum has two hands-on galleries, as well as working models and video displays. The museum also presents a behind-the-scenes look at the science and technology that went into making the film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. Exhibitions showcase the artifacts and animatronics, costumes, and characters from the fable. The exhibition also offers a number of interactive displays -- for example, you are given the chance to be shrunk to the size of a hobbit. **Insider's tip:** A large addition to this museum explores such topics as genetics, digital technology, and artificial intelligence. Four floors of a new Welcome Wing shelter half a dozen exhibition areas and a 450-seat IMAX theater. On an upper floor, visitors can learn how DNA was used to identify living relatives of the Bleadon Man, a 2,000-year-old Iron Age man. On the third floor is the computer that Tim Berners-Lee used to design the World Wide Web

outside Geneva, writing the first software for it in 1990. Note also the marvelous interactive consoles placed strategically in locations throughout the museum. These display special itineraries, including directions to the various galleries for families, teens, adults, and those with special interests. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 020/7967-8000
www.londonaquarium.co.uk

3 London Aquarium

London Aquarium

location:
London

hours:
Sept-July daily 10am-6pm;
Aug daily 10am-7pm

DESCRIPTION: One of the largest aquariums in Europe, this South Bank attraction boasts 350 species of fish, everything from British freshwater species to sharks that once patrolled the Pacific. Observe the bountiful riches of the coral reefs of the Indian Ocean and what lurks in the murky depths of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, including an array of eels, sharks, piranhas, rays, jellyfish, and other denizens of the deep. You ford a freshwater stream into a mangrove swamp to reach a tropical rainforest. The seawater, incidentally, is just normal Thames water mixed with 8 tons of salt at a time. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 020/7942-5000
www.nhm.ac.uk

4 Natural History Museum

location:
London

hours:
Mon-Sat 10am-5:50pm; Sun
11am-5:50pm

DESCRIPTION: This is the home of the national collections of living and fossil plants, animals, and minerals, with many magnificent specimens on display. The zoological displays are quite wonderful -- not up to the level of the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., but still definitely worthwhile. Exciting exhibits designed to encourage people of all ages to learn about natural history include "Human Biology -- An Exhibition of Ourselves," "Our Place in Evolution," "Origin of the Species," "Creepy Crawlies," and "Discovering Mammals." The Mineral Gallery displays marvelous examples of crystals and gemstones. Visit the Meteorite Pavilion, which exhibits fragments of rocks that have crashed into the earth, some from the farthest reaches of the galaxy. The dinosaur exhibit attracts the most attention, displaying 14 complete skeletons. "Earth Galleries" is an exhibition outlining humankind's relationship with planet Earth. Here, in the section "Earth Today and Tomorrow," visitors are invited to explore the planet's dramatic history from the big bang to its inevitable death. The latest development here is the new Darwin Centre. Dedicated to the great naturalist Charles Darwin, the center reveals the museum's scientific research and outreach facilities and activities. You're given an insider look at the storage facilities -- including 22 million preserved specimens -- and the laboratories of the museum. Fourteen behind-the-scenes free tours (ages 10 and up only) are given daily; you should book immediately upon entering the museum if you're interested. © Frommer's

London Snapshot

Local Info

London is the liveliest and most ever-changing city in Europe--"the scene" is constantly shifting. Here are some of the latest developments.

Getting to Know London

The big news is the opening of **St. Pancras International**, the new transportation hub for passengers arriving from the Continent on Eurostar. The finest architectural icon from the Age of Steam, with its gargoyles and Gothic Revival towers, has been beautifully restored to receive passengers.

Where to Stay

In hotel developments, **Andaz Liverpool Street Hotel**, 40 Liverpool St., EC2(tel. **020/796-1234**), has opened as part of a new division of Hyatt. Located between Shoreditch and Hoxton, this hotel was originally designed by Charles Barry, architect of the Houses of Parliament.

London's burgeoning array of boutique hotels added another charmer to the list, **The Sumner**, 54 Upper Berkeley St., W1, Marble arch(tel. **020/7723-2244**). Part of an 1820s Georgian Terrace, it is one of the finest small hotels in London, designer decorator and luxuriously appointed.

The biggest development for the luxury market, and generating the most media coverage, is **Haymarket Hotel**, 1 Suffolk Place, SW1(tel. **020/7470-4000**), next to the fabled Haymarket Theatre. Of all the hotels of London, this one makes the boldest statement in daring colors-- even acid green. Although daringly avant-garde, it still retains many of its original 19th-century John Nash architectural features.

With the Eurostar arriving at nearby St. Pancras, the rail terminus at Kings Cross is gaining importance. Those arriving from the Continent might want to seek out a restored B&B, **Jesmond Dene Hotel** at 27 Argyle St., WC1(tel. **020/7837-4654**). All the tastefully furnished and comfortable bedrooms have recently been refurbished.

There are many seedy hotels around Earl's Court, but not **20 Nevern Square**, 20 Nevern Square, SW5(tel. **020/7565-9555**),

which is a stately red-brick Victorian house that has been restored and furnished in part with Indonesian furniture and artifacts. From the porcelain vases in the lounge to the ornate bird cages, this is a hotel of character with excellent bedrooms.

Budding detectives may want to check into **Park Plaza Sherlock Holmes Hotel**, 108 Baker St., W1(tel. **020/7486-6161**), a converted boutique hotel that was once the London YWCA. Artifacts of the famous detective are displayed, and bedrooms come in a wide range of sizes and styles, including some loft suites.

Where to Dine

Among restaurants, **Scott's**, 20 Mount St., W1(tel. **020/7495-7309**), has reopened in a new location in Mayfair. It's been selling "cockles and mussels," along with elegant Dover sole, to Londoners in one place or another since 1851. It is now better than ever. For those who don't like fish, there is always an offering of braised pork cheeks.

It's called **Automat**, 33 Dover St., W1(tel. **020/7499-3033**), and this Mayfair eatery serves homesick Yankees and some of the discerning foodies of London. It's Mayfair's slice of the Big Apple.

Kitschy but chic, **Annex 3**, 16 Little Portland St., W1(tel. **020/7631-0700**), is one of the best French restaurants in London in spite of its Christmas tree decor. Exceptional products are used in this first-rate cuisine served on the fringe of Soho.

Down in Chelsea, **Tom's Kitchen**, 27 Cale St., SW3(tel. **020/7349-0202**), is a hot new place to dine. This former pub has been stylishly converted into a chic restaurant serving well-crafted British cuisine in a bustling brasserie atmosphere with an open kitchen.

In Notting Hill Gate, an Aussie, Brett Graham, lures serious foodies to the **Ledbury**, 127 Ledbury Rd., W11(tel. **020/7792-9090**), to sample his pan-European cuisine, with influences from the kitchens of Asia. He makes better roasted scallops with licorice than dear old Mom.

Out in Pimlico, **Roussillon**, 16 St. Barnabas St., SW1(tel. **020/7730-5550**), has quickly become known for its "vegecentric" cuisine, serving one of the best seven-course tasting menus in the city. Inspired by France but using essentially British produce, chef Alexis Gauthier serves an ever-changing array of inventive, market-fresh dishes.

The favorite of many a visiting celebrity is **Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester**, Park Lane, W1(tel. **020/7629-8866**), the London showcase for the world's most acclaimed chef. French cuisine in London rarely gets better. The cuisine is superbly precise, attractively served, inventive, and combines the flavor of France with market-fresh English ingredients.

London's most celebrated chef, Gordon Ramsay, has opened his own gastropub, **The Narrow**, 44 Narrow St., E14(tel. **020/7592-7950**), standing at a bend of the Thames in the Limehouse district. The menu is a modernized version of a nostalgic English kitchen.

After Dark

London's nightlife continues to heat up, as clubs open and close. A current favorite grunge night spot is **The Fridge**, Townhall Parade, SW2 in Brixton(tel. **020/7326-5100**). The Evening Standard called the club "London's ultimate melting pot." Pretty young things in Chelsea are flocking to a club, **151**, 151 Kings Rd., SW3(tel. **020/7351-6826**), which is known for its variety of theme nights. There's a bustling bar and an even busier dance floor.

Near Oxford Circus, **Studio Valbonne**, 62 Kingly St., W1(tel. **020/7434-0888**), hopes to return London to its superclub elegance back in the days when Boy George and Madonna were young and hot. There's an underlit dance floor to work off calories put on by those three-course Mediterranean dinners.

Las Vegas style gambling has come to London with the opening of the **Casino at the Empire**, Leicester Square, WC2(tel. **020/3014-1000**), in the very heart of London. You expect Frank Sinatra and

London Snapshot continued

fellow Rat Packers in tuxedos to show up any minute. For food, drinking, and dancing with Lady Luck, London offers no better casino than this.

Side Trips from London

Cambridge-- **Cotto**, 183 East Rd.(tel. **01223/302010**), has become a serious address for dining on a blend of British and Continental dishes. Lying above a small deli-bakery, the "no-frill no-choice" three-course fixed price dinners are hailed as the best in town-- and just wait until you sample their sourdough bread.

Stratford-Upon-Avon-- Long a gastronomic wasteland, the food in the Bard's hometown has been vastly improved recently, especially with the opening of **Callands**, 13-14 Meer St.(tel. **01789/269304**), with its take on international cookery, especially British and Mediterranean dishes. An even better choice is the British/French cuisine served at **Malbec**, 6 Union St.(tel. **01789/269106**), where chef Simon Malin is known for his market-fresh cuisine served in unpretentious surroundings. On the lower level is a cellar with vaulted ceilings and flagstone floors. He doesn't shy away from such hearty fare as lamb's kidneys, free-range pork belly, or fresh squid.

On a cultural note, the **Royal Shakespeare Theatre**, Waterside(tel. **07189/403444**), will spend 2008 and beyond undergoing a major restoration, with a gala reopening scheduled for 2010. In the meantime, catch a Royal Shakespeare Company production in the nearby Courtyard Theatre.

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History

From Murky Beginnings to Roman Occupation

Britain was probably split off from the continent of Europe some 8 millennia ago by the continental drift and other natural forces. The early inhabitants, the Iberians, were later to be identified with stories of fairies, brownies, and "little people." These are the people whose ingenuity and enterprise are believed to have created Stonehenge, but despite that great and

mysterious monument, little is known about them.

They were replaced by the iron-wielding Celts, whose massive invasions around 500 B.C. drove the Iberians back to the Scottish Highlands and Welsh mountains, where some of their descendants still live today.

In 54 B.C., Julius Caesar invaded England, but the Romans did not become established there until A.D. 43. They went as far as Caledonia(now Scotland), where they gave up, leaving that land to "the painted ones," or the warring Picts. The wall built by Emperor Hadrian across the north of England marked the northernmost reaches of the Roman Empire. During almost 4 centuries of occupation, the Romans built roads, villas, towns, walls, and fortresses; they farmed the land and introduced first their pagan religions, then Christianity. Agriculture and trade flourished.

From Anglo-Saxon Rule to the Norman Conquest

When the Roman legions withdrew around A.D. 410, they left the country open to waves of invasions by Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, who established themselves in small kingdoms throughout the former Roman colony. From the 8th through the 11th century, the Anglo-Saxons contended with Danish raiders for control of the land. By the time of the Norman Conquest, the Saxon kingdoms were united under an elected king, Edward the Confessor. His successor was to rule less than a year before the Norman invasion.

The date 1066 is familiar to every English schoolchild. It marked an epic event, the only successful military invasion of Britain in history, and one of England's great turning points: King Harold, the last Anglo-Saxon king, was defeated at the Battle of Hastings, and William of Normandy was crowned William I. To wander those ancient battlefields, visit Hastings and Battle.

One of William's first acts was to order a survey of the land he had conquered, assessing all property in the nation for tax purposes. This survey was called the Domesday Book, or "Book of Doom," as some pegged it. The resulting document

was completed around 1086 and has been a fertile sourcebook for British historians ever since.

Norman rule had an enormous impact on English society. All high offices were held by Normans, and the Norman barons were given great grants of lands; they built Norman-style castles and strongholds throughout the country. French was the language of the court for centuries-- few people realize that heroes such as Richard the Lionheart probably spoke little or no English.

From the Rule of Henry II to the Magna Carta

In 1154, Henry II, the first of the Plantagenets, was crowned(reigned 1154-89). This remarkable character in English history ruled a vast empire-- not only most of Britain but Normandy, Anjou, Brittany, and Aquitaine in France.

Henry was a man of powerful physique, both charming and terrifying. He reformed the courts and introduced the system of common law, which still operates in moderated form in England today and also influenced the American legal system. But Henry is best remembered for ordering the infamous murder of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. Henry, at odds with his archbishop, exclaimed, "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?" His knights, overhearing and taking him at his word, murdered Thomas in front of the high altar in Canterbury Cathedral.

Henry's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, the most famous woman of her time, was no less of a colorful character. She accompanied her first husband, Louis VII of France, on the Second Crusade, and it was rumored that she had a romantic affair at that time with the Saracen leader, Saladin. Domestic and political life did not run smoothly, however, and Henry and Eleanor and their sons were often at odds. The pair has been the subject of many plays and films, including *The Lion in Winter*, *Becket*, and T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Two of their sons were crowned kings of England. Richard the Lionheart actually spent most of his life outside England, on crusades, or in France. John was forced

London Snapshot continued

by his nobles to sign the Magna Carta at Runnymede, in 1215-- another date well known to English schoolchildren.

The Magna Carta guaranteed that the king was subject to the rule of law and gave certain rights to the king's subjects, beginning a process that eventually led to the development of parliamentary democracy as it is known in Britain today. This process would have enormous influence on the American colonies many years later. The Magna Carta became known as the cornerstone of English liberties, though it only granted liberties to the barons. It took the rebellion of Simon de Montfort half a century later to introduce the notion that the boroughs and burghers should also have a voice and representation.

The Black Death & the Wars of the Roses

In 1348, half the population died as the Black Death ravaged England. By the end of the century, the population of Britain had fallen from 4 million to 2 million.

England also suffered in the Hundred Years' War, which went on intermittently for more than a century. By 1371, England had lost much of its land on French soil. Henry V, immortalized by Shakespeare, revived England's claims to France, and his victory at Agincourt was notable for making obsolete the forms of medieval chivalry and warfare.

After Henry's death in 1422, disputes among successors to the crown resulted in a long period of civil strife: the Wars of the Roses, between the Yorkists, who used a white rose as their symbol, and the Lancastrians with their red rose. The last Yorkist king was Richard III, who got bad press from Shakespeare, but who is defended to this day as a hero by the people of the city of York. Richard was defeated at Bosworth Field, and the victory introduced England to the first Tudor, the shrewd and wily Henry VII.

The Tudors Take the Throne

The Tudors were unlike the kings who had ruled before them. They introduced into England a strong central monarchy with far-reaching powers. The system worked

well under the first three strong and capable Tudor monarchs, but it began to break down later when the Stuarts came to the throne.

Henry VIII is surely the most notorious Tudor. Imperious and flamboyant, a colossus among English royalty, he slammed shut the door on the Middle Ages and introduced the Renaissance to England. He is best known, of course, for his treatment of his six wives and the unfortunate fates that befell five of them.

Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, failed to produce an heir. His ambitious mistress, Anne Boleyn, became pregnant, and he tried to annul his marriage, but the pope refused, and Catherine contested the action. Defying the power of Rome, Henry had his marriage with Catherine declared invalid and secretly married Anne Boleyn in 1533.

The events that followed had profound consequences and introduced the religious controversy that was to dominate English politics for the next 4 centuries. Henry's break with the Roman Catholic Church and the formation of the Church of England, with himself as supreme head, was a turning point in English history. It led eventually to the Dissolution of the Monasteries, civil unrest, and much social dislocation. The confiscation of the church's land and possessions brought untold wealth into the king's coffers, wealth that was distributed to a new aristocracy that supported the monarch. In one sweeping gesture, Henry destroyed the ecclesiastical culture of the Middle Ages. Among those executed for refusing to cooperate with Henry's changes was Sir Thomas More, humanist, international man of letters, and author of *Utopia*.

Anne Boleyn bore Henry a daughter, the future Elizabeth I, but failed to produce a male heir. She was brought to trial on a trumped-up charge of adultery and beheaded; in 1536, Henry married Jane Seymour, who died giving birth to Edward VI. For his next wife, he looked farther afield and chose Anne of Cleves from a flattering portrait, but she proved disappointing-- he called her "The Great

Flanders Mare." He divorced her the same year and next picked a pretty young woman from his court, Catherine Howard. She was also beheaded on a charge of adultery but, unlike Anne Boleyn, was probably guilty. Finally, he married an older woman, Catherine Parr, in 1543. She survived him.

Henry's heir, sickly Edward VI (reigned 1547-53), did not live long. He died of consumption-- or, as rumor has it, overmedication. He was succeeded by his sister, Mary I (reigned 1553-58), and the trouble Henry had stirred up with the break with Rome came home to roost for the first time. Mary restored the Roman Catholic faith, and her persecution of the adherents of the Church of England earned her the name of "Bloody Mary." Some 300 Protestants were executed, many burned alive at the stake. She made an unpopular and unhappy marriage to Philip of Spain; despite her bloody reputation, her life was a sad one.

Elizabeth I (reigned 1558-1603) came next to the throne, ushering in an era of peace and prosperity, exploration, and a renaissance in science and learning. An entire age was named after her: the Elizabethan age. She was the last great and grand monarch to rule England, and her passion and magnetism were said to match her father's. Through her era marched Drake, Raleigh, Frobisher, Grenville, Shakespeare, Spenser, Byrd, and Hilliard. During her reign, she had to face the appalling precedent of ordering the execution of a fellow sovereign, Mary, Queen of Scots. Her diplomatic skills kept war at bay until 1588, when at the apogee of her reign, the Spanish Armada was defeated. She will be forever remembered as "Good Queen Bess." To see where she lived as a young girl, you can visit Hatfield House.

From the Restoration to the Napoleonic Wars

The reign of Charles II was the beginning of a dreadful decade that saw London decimated by the Great Plague and destroyed by the Great Fire.

His successor, James II, attempted to return the country to Catholicism, an

London Snapshot continued

attempt that so frightened the powers that be that Catholics were for a long time deprived of their civil rights.

James was deposed in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 and succeeded by his daughter Mary (1662-94) and William of Orange (1650-1702). (William of Orange was the grandson of Charles I, the tyrannical king whom Cromwell helped to depose.) This secured a Protestant succession that has continued to this day. These tolerant and levelheaded monarchs signed a bill of rights, establishing the principle that the monarch reigns not by divine right but by the will of Parliament. William outlived his wife, reigning until 1702.

Queen Anne then came to the throne ruling from 1702 until her own death in 1714. She was the sister of Mary of Orange and was another daughter of James II. The last of the Stuarts, Anne marked her reign with the most significant event, the 1707 Act of Union with Scotland. She outlived all her children, leaving her throne without an heir.

Upon the death of Anne, England looked for a Protestant prince to succeed her and chose George of Hanover who reigned from 1714-27. Though he spoke only German and spent as little time in England as possible, he was chosen because he was the great-grandson of James I. Beginning with this "distant cousin" to the throne, the reign of George I marked the beginning of the 174-year rule of the Hanoverians who preceded Victoria.

George I left the running of the government to the English politicians and created the office of prime minister. Under the Hanoverians, the powers of Parliament were extended, and the constitutional monarchy developed into what it is today.

The American colonies were lost under the Hanoverian George III, but other British possessions were expanded: Canada was won from the French in the Seven Years' War (1756-63), British control over India was affirmed, and Captain Cook claimed Australia and New Zealand for England. The British became embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars (1795-1815), achieving two of their greatest victories and acquiring

two of their greatest heroes: Nelson at Trafalgar and Wellington at Waterloo.

The Industrial Revolution and the Reign of Victoria

The mid- to late 18th century saw the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. This event changed the lives of the laboring class, created a wealthy middle class, and transformed England from a rural, agricultural society into an urban, industrial economy. England was now a world-class financial and military power. Male suffrage was extended, though women were to continue under a series of civil prohibitions for the rest of the century. To see the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, visit Ironbridge.

Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901) coincided with the height of the Industrial Revolution. When she ascended the throne, the monarchy as an institution was in considerable doubt, but her 64-year reign, the longest tenure in English history, was an incomparable success.

The Victorian era was shaped by the growing power of the bourgeoisie, the Queen and her consort's personal moral stance, and the perceived moral responsibilities of managing a vast empire. During this time, the first trade unions were formed, a public (state) school system was developed, and railroads were built.

Victoria never recovered from the death of her German husband, Albert. He died from typhoid fever in 1861, and the Queen never remarried. Though she had many children, she found them tiresome but was a pillar of family values nonetheless. One historian said her greatest asset was her relative ordinariness.

Middle-class values ruled Victorian England and were embodied by the Queen. The racy England of the past went underground. Our present-day view of England is still influenced by the attitudes of the Victorian era, and we tend to forget that English society in earlier centuries was famous for its rowdiness, sexual license, and spicy scandal.

Victoria's son Edward VII (reigned 1901-10) was a playboy who had waited too long in the wings. He is famous for mistresses,

especially Lillie Langtry, and his love of elaborate dinners. You can actually spend the night at Langtry Manor Hotel in Bournemouth, which the king built for his favorite mistress. During his brief reign, he, too, had an era named after him: the Edwardian age. Under Edward, the country entered the 20th century at the height of its imperial power. At home, the advent of the motorcar and the telephone radically changed social life, and the women's suffrage movement began.

World War I marked the end of an era. It had been assumed that peace, progress, prosperity, empire, and even social improvement would continue indefinitely. World War I and the troubled decades of social unrest, political uncertainty, and the rise of Nazism and fascism put an end to these expectations.

The Winds of War

World War II began in 1939, and soon thereafter Britain found a new and inspiring leader, Winston Churchill. Churchill led the nation during its "finest hour." You can visit Churchill's private home, Chartwell in Kent and the underground Cabinet War Rooms in London where he rode out parts of World War II. From the time the Germans took France, Britain stood alone against Hitler. The evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940, the blitz of London, and the Battle of Britain were dark hours for the British people, and Churchill is remembered for urging them to hold onto their courage. Once the British forces were joined by their American allies, the tide finally turned, culminating in the D-day invasion of German-occupied Normandy. These bloody events are still remembered by many with pride, and with nostalgia for the era when Britain was still a great world power.

The years following World War II brought many changes to England. Britain began to lose its grip on an empire (India became independent in 1947), and the Labour government, which came into power in 1945, established the welfare state and brought profound social change to Britain.

Queen Elizabeth Rules to the Present Day

London Snapshot continued

Upon the death of the "wartime king," George VI, Elizabeth II ascended the throne in 1953. Her reign has seen the erosion of Britain's once-mighty industrial power, and, in recent years, a severe recession.

Political power has seesawed back and forth between the Conservative and Labour parties. Margaret Thatcher, who became prime minister in 1979, seriously eroded the welfare state and was ambivalent toward the European Union. Her popularity soared during the successful Falklands War, when Britain seemed to recover some of its military glory for a brief time.

Though the Queen has remained steadfast and punctiliously has performed her ceremonial duties, rumors about the royal family abounded, and in the year 1992, which Queen Elizabeth labeled *an annus horribilis*, a devastating fire swept through Windsor Castle, the marriages of several of her children crumbled, and the Queen agreed to pay taxes for the first time. Prince Charles and Princess Diana agreed to a separation, and there were ominous rumblings about the future of the House of Windsor. By 1994 and 1995, Britain's economy was improving after several glum years, but Conservative prime minister John Major, heir to Margaret Thatcher's legacy, was coming under increasing criticism.

The IRA, reputedly enraged at the slow pace of peace talks, relaunched its reign of terror across London in February 1996, planting a massive bomb that ripped through a building in London's Docklands, injuring more than 100 people and killing two. Shattered, too, was the 17-month cease-fire by the IRA, which brought hope that peace was at least possible. Another bomb went off in Manchester in June.

Headlines about the IRA bombing gave way to another big bomb: the end of the marriage of Princess Diana and Prince Charles. The Wedding of the Century had become the Divorce of the Century. The lurid tabloids had been right all along about this unhappy pair. But details of the \$26-million divorce settlement didn't satisfy the curious: Scrutiny of Prince Charles's relationship with Camilla Parker-Bowles, as

well as gossip about Princess Diana's love life, continued in the press.

In 1997, the political limelight now rested on the young Labour Leader Tony Blair. From his rock-star acquaintances to his "New Labour" rhetoric chock-full of pop-culture buzzwords, he was a stark contrast to the more staid Major. His media-savvy personality obviously registered with the British electorate. On May 1, 1997, the Labour Party ended 18 years of Conservative rule with a landslide election victory. At age 44, Blair became Britain's youngest prime minister in 185 years, following in the wake of the largest Labour triumph since Winston Churchill was swept out of office at the end of World War II.

Blair's election-- which came just at the moment when London was being touted by the international press for its renaissance in art, music, fashion, and dining-- had many British entrepreneurs poised and ready to take advantage of what they perceived as enthusiasm for new ideas and ventures. Comparisons to Harold Macmillan and his reign over the Swinging Sixties were inevitable, and insiders agreed that something was in the air.

However, events took a shocking turn in August 1997 when Princess Diana was killed-- along with her companion, Harrods heir Dodi al-Fayed-- in a high-speed car crash in Paris. The ancestral home of the late Princess at Althorp is open to the public.

"The People's Princess" still continued to dominate many headlines in 1998 with bizarre conspiracy theories about her death. But the royal family isn't the real force in Britain today.

Blair led Britain on a program of constitutional reform without parallel in the last century. Critics feared that Blair would one day preside over a "dis-united" Britain, with Scotland breaking away and Northern Ireland forming a self-government.

Of course, the future of the monarchy still remains a hot topic of discussion in Britain. There is little support for doing away with the monarchy in Britain today in spite of wide criticism of the royal family's behavior in the wake of Diana's death. Apparently,

if polls are to be believed, some three-quarters of the British populace want the monarchy to continue. Prince Charles is even making a comeback with the British public and has appeared in public-- to the delight of the paparazzi-- with his longtime mistress, now wife, Camilla Parker-Bowles. At the very least, the monarchy is good for the tourist trade, on which Britain is increasingly dependent. And what would the tabloids do without it?

The big news among royal watchers in Britain early in 2002 was the death of Princess Margaret at age 71, followed 7 weeks later by the death of Queen Mother Elizabeth at the age of 101. The most popular royal, the Queen "Mum" was a symbol of courage and dignity, especially during the tumultuous World War II years when London was under bombardment from Nazi Germany. The remains of the Queen Mother were laid to rest alongside her husband in the George VI Memorial Chapel at St. George's at Windsor Castle. The ashes of Princess Margaret were also interred with her parents in the same chapel.

At the dawn of the millennium, major social changes occurred in Britain. No sooner had the year 2000 begun than Britain announced a change of its code of conduct for the military, allowing openly gay men and women to serve in the armed forces. The action followed a European court ruling in the fall of 1999 that forbade Britain to discriminate against homosexuals. This change brings Britain in line with almost all other NATO countries, including France, Canada, and Germany. The United States remains at variance with the trend.

After promising beginnings, the 21st century got off to a bad start in Britain. In the wake of mad-cow disease flare-ups, the country was swept by a foot-and-mouth-disease epidemic that disrupted the country's agriculture and threatened one of the major sources of British livelihoods, its burgeoning tourist industry. After billions of pounds in tourism were lost the panic has now subsided. The government has intervened to take whatever preventive measure it can.

London Snapshot continued

Following the terrorist attack on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, Tony Blair and his government joined in a show of support for the United States, condemning the aerial bombardments and loss of life. Not only that, but British also joined in the war in Afghanistan against the dreaded Taliban. However, by 2003 Blair's backing of George Bush's stance against President Saddam Hussein of Iraq brought his popularity to an all-time low.

Britain's involvement in Iraq remained an unpopular cause. In February of 2003, an estimated million protesters, the largest demonstration in the history of London, gathered to oppose military intervention in Iraq.

On an economic front, Britain still shies away from joining the so-called euro umbrella. In June of 2003, Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown declared that abandoning the British pound sterling in favor of the euro, prevailing on the continent, was not right for the country at this time.

England has long endured terrorist attacks from the IRA, but was shaken on the morning of July 7, 2005, when four suicide bombs were detonated on public transportation in London, killing 52 victims. These bombs, though not the work of the IRA, were the deadliest attacks suffered by the city since the darkest days of World War II.

Following the 2005 election, Blair's population plummeted, and he resigned in May 2007. Succeeding him was Gordon Brown, his Chancellor of the Exchequer who became Prime Minister in June 2007. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Hotel Insights

Best Newcomer: Opposite the historic Haymarket Theatre, the **Haymarket Hotel**, 1 Suffolk Place SW1 (tel. **08707/544447**), is an idyllic choice for theater-goers. In an original 19th century building by John Nash, a modern, sophisticated hotel in bold colors has been created. **Best in the East End:** The first luxury hotel to be built in Holborn, **Renaissance London Chancery**

Court, 252 High Holborn, WC1 (tel. **800/468-3571** or 020/7829-9888), opened in 2001 and became an instant hit. A 1914 landmark building has been stunningly transformed into this citadel of luxury and plush comfort. **Best for a Romantic Getaway:** Hip couples check into the **Covent Garden Hotel**, 10 Monmouth St., WC2 (tel. **800/553-6674** or 020/7806-1000), which has been hailed as 1 of the 25 hottest places to stay in the world. The former hospital is now the epitome of chic comfort, with rooms so elegant and stylish that romance is inevitable. **Best Historic Hotel:** Founded by the former manservant to Lord Byron, the stylish **Brown's Hotel**, 30 Albemarle St., W1 (tel. **020/7493-6020**), dates back to Victorian times. It's one of London's most genteel hotels, with its legendary afternoon tea and paneled bar. **Best for Business Travelers:** Wheelers and dealers head to **The Langham**, 1C Portland Place, W1 (tel. **800/223-6800** or 020/7636-1000), which boasts sleek styling and grand public rooms. At times, it seems all the world's business is conducted from this nerve center. **Best Trendy Hotel: St. Martins Lane**, 45 St. Martin's Lane (tel. **800/697-1791** or 020/7300-5500), is almost without challenge in this category. Ian Schrager has brought New York cutting-edge style to a 1960s building in Covent Garden. It's his first hotel outside the U.S., and it's eccentric, irreverent, and whimsical. Would Nicole Kidman go anywhere else? **Best for Thoroughly British Ambience:** In a gaslit courtyard in back of St. James's Palace, **Dukes Hotel**, 35 St. James's Place, SW1 (tel. **800/381-4702** or 020/7491-4840), has an unsurpassed dignity. From the bread-and-butter pudding served in the clubby dining room to the impeccable service, at Dukes there will always be an England. **Best Service: 22 Jermyn Street**, 22 Jermyn St., SW1 (tel. **800/682-7808** or 020/7734-2353), does more for its guests than any other hotel in London. The owner has outfitted a room on the sixth floor with a superbly equipped computer center, which guests are free to use. He'll also inform you of the best restaurants and shopping, and even what's hot in theater. The staff won't deny any reasonable request-- they even grant some unreasonable ones. **Best Location:** Creaky, quirky, **The Fielding Hotel**, 4 Broad Court, Bow Street, WC2 (tel. **020/7836-8305**), is hardly London's finest, but oh, the location! It's in an alleyway

in the center of Covent Garden-- the heart of London excitement-- almost opposite the Royal Opera House, with pubs, shops, markets, restaurants, even street entertainment, right outside your door. Stay here, and London is at your fingertips. **Best Boutique Hotel: The Beaufort**, 33 Beaufort Gardens, SW3 (tel. **020/7584-5252**), is a gem that's sure to charm. Personal service and tranquillity combine for a winning choice, a private but not snobbish place 183m(600 ft.) from the famed Harrods Department Store. **Best Inexpensive Hotel:** In this price category, it's hard to be chic, but **The Pavilion**, 34-36 Sussex Gardens, W2 (tel. **020/7262-0905**), manages to do it. Known for its bedrooms' wacky themes, this theatrical and slightly outrageous hotel attracts models and music-industry folks. Rooms range in decor from Asian bordello ("Enter the Dragon") to 1970s kitsch ("Honky-Tonk Afro"). **Best for Families Who Don't Want to Break the Bank: The Colonnade**, 2 Warrington Crescent, W9 (tel. **020/7286-1052**), stands in the canal-laced Little Venice section. Located in a safe residential area, this family-friendly hotel lets children under 12 stay free in their parent's room and the staff can also arrange babysitting. **Best B&B:** Year after year, **Aster House**, 3 Sumner Place, SW7 (tel. **020/7581-5888**), keeps its standards high and remains one of London's best B&Bs. A friendly, inviting, welcoming place, it's safely tucked away on a tree-lined street in the heart of South Kensington. **Best for Value:** In historic Bloomsbury, site of the British Museum, **The Jenkins Hotel**, 45 Cartwright Gardens, WC1 (tel. **020/7387-2067**), has been hailed by London's Mail on Sunday as 1 of the city's "10 best hotel values"-- and we heartily concur. This homey, Georgian-style hotel is straight out of an Agatha Christie TV show (indeed, it was featured on Poirot). © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Restaurants Insights

St. John, 26 St. John St., EC1 (tel. **020/7251-0848**): In a former smokehouse north of Smithfield Market, this is London's major venue for serious carnivores. Chef Fergus Henderson is England's biggest devotee of offal cuisine-- meaning "nose-to-tail cookery." This earthy food obviously will not appeal to vegetarians, but it would delight a reincarnated Henry VIII. **Fifteen**, 15 West

London Snapshot continued

Land Place, W1 (tel. **0871/330-1515**; www.fifteenrestaurant.com): In Shoreditch, the author of *The Naked Chef*, Jamie Oliver, takes "disadvantaged" young people and trains them from scratch. In just 4 months, they are tempting you with their modern British cuisine as chefs of the day. Amazingly, the food you're served is praiseworthy, even attracting some of London's Michelin-starred chefs. **Simpson's-in-the-Strand**, 100 the Strand, WC2 (tel. **020/7836-9112**): At least once forsake London's trendy restaurants and dine as Sir Winston did back in the post-war '50s when he was prime minister. It's partaking of "The Deadly Sins" to dine here: roast sirloin of beef; steak, kidney, and mushroom pie; and roast saddle of mutton with red currant jelly. **Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's**, Brook Street, W1 (tel. **020/7499-0099**): We'd cast our vote for Ramsay as the hottest and most talented chef in London today. In the city's swankiest hotel, he dazzles serious international foodies with his take on modern Continental cuisine using, for the most part, British products. Close your eyes and point to any item on the menu-- chances are, you'll be delighted. **Sketch**, 9 Conduit St., W1 (tel. **087/0777-4488**; www.sketch.uk.com): Hailed by the British press as a "camp wonderland," this is a restaurant, tearoom, art gallery, bar, and patisserie. There is no more chic joint at which you could be at night. The Continental and modern British cuisine is divine as well. **Club Gascon**, 57 W. Smithfield, EC1 (tel. **020/7796-0600**): Chef Pascal Aussignac is all the rage, bringing a corner of southwestern France to London-- and that spells Armagnac, foie gras, and duck confit. This bistro stands next to the famous meat market in Smithfield, and it's the best place in town for a foie gras pig out. **Best Spot for a Celebration**: There's no spot in all of London that's more fun than **Quaglino's**, 16 Bury St., SW1 (tel. **020/7930-6767**), which serves Continental cuisine. On some nights, as many as 800 diners show up at Sir Terence Conran's gargantuan Mayfair eatery. It's the best place in London to celebrate almost any occasion-- and the food's good, too. There's live jazz every evening and on Sunday at lunch. **Best Newcomer**: Down in Chelsea, a former pub has been stylishly converted into **Tom's Kitchen**, 27 Cale St., SW3 (tel. **020/7349-0202**), a dream come true for its talented chef Tom Aikens. He

fashions only the freshest of ingredients into a finely honed British cuisine. Even his fish and chips are seductive. **Best Place for Spotting Celebrities**: If Demi and Ashton, or virtually any visiting celebrities are in town, chances are they'll be hiding out behind a translucent silk curtain in the center of London's hot new restaurant, **Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester**, on the lobby level of the chic Dorchester hotel, Park Lane (tel. **020/7629-8866**). A chefmaestro many critics hail as the world's greatest has crossed the Channel to open this citadel of haute cuisine. **Best for Seafood**: After a long slumber, the famous **Scott's**, 20 Mount St., W1 (tel. **020/7495-7309**), has reopened in a swank restaurant in Mayfair. It began as an oyster warehouse in 1851, but gone from that rustic beginning to Mayfair glitter, peddling market-fresh Dover sole and "cockles and mussels." **Best Gastro Pub**: At last London's enfant terrible chef, Gordon Ramsay, has entered the gastro-pub sweepstakes by opening **The Narrow**, 44 Narrow St., E14 (tel. **020/7592-7950**). Pub grub never tasted like this. Some of the dishes will put hair on your chest even if you don't want it-- whole baked gilthead bream or braised Gloucester pig cheeks with neeps (turnips). **Best English Breakfast**: Serving traders at the Smithfield meat market since 1898, **Fox and Anchor**, 115 Charterhouse St., EC1 (tel. **020/7250-1300**), offers the "Full House" breakfast, a plate with eight items ranging from black pudding to kidneys and bacon. With a Black Velvet (champagne with Guinness), the day is yours. **Best for American Cuisine**: A celebrity favorite with homesick expats, **Automat**, 33 Dover St., W1 (tel. **020/7499-3033**), is Mayfair's slice of the Big Apple, serving perhaps the best U.S. beef in London, including New York strip sirloin. All those familiar favorites are dished up here, even chili con carne. **Best Continental Cuisine**: **Le Gavroche**, 43 Upper Brook St., W1 (tel. **020/7408-0881**), was one of the first London restaurants to serve modern French cuisine, and it's lost none of its appeal. If you want to know why, order pigeonneau de Bresse en vessie aux deux celeris: The whole bird is presented at your table, enclosed in a pig's bladder; the pigeon is removed, and then carved and served on a bed of braised fennel and celery. Trust us-- it's fabulous. **Best for Value**: Called the market leader in cafe salons, **Veronica's**, 3 Hereford Rd., W2 (tel.

020/7229-5079), serves not only some of the best traditional British fare, but also some of the most affordable. Many of the chef's recipes are based on medieval or Tudor culinary secrets, and some even go back to the days of the conquering Romans. **Best Modern British Cuisine**: Just north of Smithfield Market, **St. John**, 26 St. John St., EC1 (tel. **020/7251-0848**), serves a modern interpretation of British cuisine like none other in town. The chefs here believe in using offal (those parts of the animal usually discarded)-- after all, why use just parts of the animal when you can use it all? Although some diners are a bit squeamish at first, they're usually hooked once they get past the first bite. Book ahead of time. **Best Traditional British Cuisine**: There is no restaurant in London quite as British as **Simpson's-in-the-Strand**, 100 the Strand, WC2 (tel. **020/7836-9112**), which has been serving the finest English roast beef since 1828. Henry VIII, were he to return, would surely pause for a feast here. This place is such a British institution that you'll think they invented roast saddle of mutton. **Best for Kids**: The owner, the Earl of Bradford, feeds you well and affordably at **Porters English Restaurant**, 17 Henrietta St., WC2 (tel. **020/7836-6466**). Kids of all ages dig Lady Bradford's once secretly guarded recipe for banana-and-ginger pudding, along with classic English pies, including such old-fashioned favorites as lamb and apricot; and ham, leek, and cheese. **Best Indian Cuisine**: London's finest Indian food is served at **Café Spice Namaste**, in a landmark Victorian hall near Tower Bridge, 16 Prescott St., E1 (tel. **020/7488-9242**). You'll be tantalized by an array of spicy southern and northern Indian dishes. We like the cuisine's Portuguese influence; the chef, Cyrus Todiwala, is from Goa (a Portuguese territory absorbed by India), where he learned many of his culinary secrets. **Best Italian Cuisine**: At **Zafferano**, 15 Lowndes St., SW1 (tel. **020/7235-5800**), chefs prepare delectable meals with ingredients that conjure up the Mediterranean. The most refined palates of Knightsbridge come to this chic, rustic trattoria for dishes like pheasant and black-truffle ravioli with rosemary. **Best Innovative Cuisine**: Irish chef Richard Corrigan brings sophisticated modern British cuisine to **Lindsay House**, 21 Romilly St., W1 (tel. **020/7439-0450**). The menu is dependent on what looks good

London Snapshot continued

at the daily market combined with the chef's inspiration. After you sample his breast of wood pigeon with foie gras and pumpkin chutney, you'll want to kidnap him for your kitchen. **Best Wine-Bar Food: Cork & Bottle Wine Bar**, 44-46 Cranbourn St., WC2 (tel. **020/7734-7807**), serves the best wine-bar food in London. The ham-and-cheese pie alone is worth the trek across town-- it's hardly your typical quiche. Also try the prawns with garlic and asparagus, or the lamb in ale. The wine selection is superb, with a strong emphasis Australian selections. **Best Cantonese Cuisine: Fung Shing**, 15 Lisle St., WC2 (tel. **020/7437-1539**), is a culinary landmark, serving the finest Cantonese cuisine in London, both traditional and innovative. The seasonal specials are the way to go. Stewed duck with yams, tender ostrich in yellow-bean sauce, and a delectable whole sea bass are some of the delicious treats. **Best Japanese Cuisine: Robert De Niro and his gang** have generated much excitement about **Nobu**, in the Metropolitan Hotel, 19 Old Park Lane, W1 (tel. **020/7447-4747**). The sushi chefs create gastronomic pyrotechnics with their raw dishes.

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Nightlife Insights

From the fringes of the East End to the bowels of West Brompton and beyond, London pulsates with more nightlife than any other capital of Europe. Bette Midler once said that when it's three o'clock in the morning in New York, it's 1938 in London. But she said that a long time ago. Times have changed. London is an all-night party town.

The draconian liquor laws of yesterday have been relaxed a bit. Even if your favorite pub closes at 11pm, there are still bars and late-night joints awaiting your business. Bars, in fact, are no longer places to drop in for a drink, but often an all-night venue unto themselves. Many bars are attached to fashionable restaurants with dinner menus, dance floors, and even DJs, so they are looking more and more like nightclubs.

There is such diversity here: a night at the theater, a supper club, a dance club, a fashionable bar, an old-fashioned pub

with literary associations, an evening at a Covent Garden opera or the Royal Ballet, a classical music concert at Albert Hall, an intimate jazz club, even a first-run movie or a gay time at a cruisy bar. You name it: London has it.

The Tube may shut down early but there are always night buses to get you back to your hotel. Taxis are available 24 hours but are expensive.

Weekly publications such as Time Out carry full entertainment listings, including data on restaurants, nightclubs, and bars. You'll also find listings in daily newspapers, notably the Times and the Telegraph.

The Best of London's Pubs: The World's Greatest Pub Crawl-- Dropping into the local pub for a pint of real ale or bitter is the best way to soak up the character of the different villages that make up London. You'll hear local accents and slang, and see firsthand how far removed upper-crust Kensington is from blue-collar Wapping. Catch the local gossip or football talk-- and, of course, enjoy some of the finest ales, stouts, ciders, and malt whiskies in the world.

Gay & Lesbian Nightlife--Time Out also carries listings on gay and lesbian clubs. Another good place for finding out what's hot and hip is **Prowler Soho**, 3-7 Brewer St., Soho, W1 (tel. **020/7734-4031**; Tube: Piccadilly Circus), the largest gay lifestyle store in London. It's open until 10pm Monday to Saturday, Sunday noon to 8pm. On the Web, **www.gingerbeer.co.uk** is the best site for lesbians to find out what's going on in London, and the magazine that all bona fide lesbians read is G3 (**www.g3magazine.co.uk**).

Las Vegas Nights in the Heart of London

If James Bond were to arrive in town with his latest Pussy Galore, he might invite her to spend a night at **Casino at the Empire** (Leicester Square, WC2; tel. **020/3014-1000**; Tube: Leicester Sq.), in the heart of London. For ages the Empire, with its iconic art deco decor, was one of the most famous dance palaces in the U.K. But the foxtrot and tango have given way to gaming tables, chic bars, and dining enclaves.

It succeeds in recreating the classy days of gaming, and you expect Frank Sinatra and his Rat Pack in tuxes to show up at any minute. Choose your spot for the evening's debauchery; ours is The Icon Room on the second landing, a cocktail lounge with a balcony overlooking the masses of Leicester Square. It evokes a French boudoir with its crimson furnishings.

The Shadow Bar nearby features live entertainment and evokes Las Vegas with its deep seat lounges and illuminated dance floor. FuLuShou serves decent Asian fusion cuisine, with exotic teas a feature. Or else sample the succulent grilled meats and fresh seafood in Flame. There's even a ice cream parlor and coffee bar upstairs.

State-of-the-art electronic games include roulette, punto banco, blackjack, three-card poker, and other ways to lose your money in the glamorous ground floor casino. To become a member, you can present a driving license or passport to the reception. The club is open Sunday to Friday noon to 6am and Saturday noon to 4am.

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Things to Do Insights

Watching the Sunset at Waterloo Bridge: This is the ideal place for watching the sun set over Westminster. You can see the last rays of light bounce off the dome of St. Paul's and the spires in the East End.

Enjoying a Traditional Afternoon Tea: At The Ritz Hotel, 150 Piccadilly, W1 (tel. **020/7493-8181**), the tea ritual carries on as it did in Britain's heyday. You could invite the Queen of England herself here for a "cuppa." The pomp and circumstance of the British Empire live on at The Ritz-- only the Empire is missing. **Cruising London's Waterways:** In addition to the Thames, London has an antique canal system, with towpath walks, bridges, and wharves. Replaced by the railroad as the prime means of transportation, the canal system was all but forgotten until it was rediscovered by a new generation. Now undergoing a process of urban renewal, the old system has been restored, with bridges painted and repaired, and paths cleaned up, for you to enjoy. **Spending Sunday Morning at Speakers Corner:** At the northeast corner of Hyde Park, a

London Snapshot continued

British tradition carries on. Speakers sound off on every imaginable subject, and "in-your-face" hecklers are part of the fun. You might hear anything from denunciations of the monarchy to antigay rhetoric. Anyone can get up and speak. The only rules: You can't blaspheme, be obscene, or incite a riot. The tradition began in 1855-- before the legal right to assembly was guaranteed in 1872-- when a mob of 150,000 gathered to attack a proposed Sunday Trading Bill. **Studying the Turners at the Tate Britain:** When he died in 1851, J. M. W. Turner bequeathed his collection of 19,000 watercolors and some 300 paintings to the people of Britain. He wanted his finished works, about 100 paintings, displayed under one roof. Today you see not only the paintings but also glimpses of Turner's beloved Thames through the museum's windows. The artist lived and died on the river's banks and painted its many changing moods. **Strolling through Covent Garden:** George Bernard Shaw got his inspiration for Pygmalion here, where the cockney lass who inspired the character of Eliza Doolittle sold violets to wealthy opera-goers. The old market, with its cauliflower peddlers and butchers in blood-soaked aprons, is long gone. What's left is London's best example of urban renewal and one of its hippest shopping districts. There's an antiques market on Monday and a crafts market Tuesday through Saturday. When you're parched, there are plenty of pubs to quench your thirst, including the **Nag's Head**, 10 James St., WC2(tel. **020/7836-4678**), an Edwardian pub that'll serve you a draft of Guinness and a plate of pork cooked in cider. **Rowing on the Serpentine:** When the weather's right, head to Hyde Park's 17-hectare(42-acre) man-made lake-- the name derives from its winding, snakelike shape-- dating from 1730. At the Boathouse, you can rent boats by the hour. It's an idyllic way to spend a sunny afternoon. Renoir must have agreed; he depicted the custom on canvas. **Making a Brass Rubbing:** Take home some costumed ladies and knights in armor from England's age of chivalry. Make your very own brass rubbing in the crypt of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square; the staff there will be happy to show you how. **Getting to Know North London on a Sunday:** Head for Hampstead Heath off Well Walk and take the right fork, which leads to an open field with a panoramic view of London. Cap your jaunt with a visit

to the **Freud Museum**, open on Sunday until 5pm. **Dining at Rules: Rules**, at 35 Maiden Lane, WC2(tel. **020/7836-5314**), was established as an oyster bar in 1798; it may be the oldest restaurant in London. Long a venue for the theatrical elite and literary beau monde, it still serves the same dishes that delighted Edward VII and his mistress, Lillie Langtry, who began their meals with champagne and oysters upstairs. Charles Dickens had a regular table. If you're looking for an old-fashioned British dessert, finish off with the treacle sponge or apple suet pudding. **Spending an Evening at the Theater:** London is the theatrical capital of the world. The live stage offers a unique combination of variety, accessibility, and economy-- and maybe a look at next season's Broadway hit. **Crawling the London Pubs:** Americans bar-hop; Londoners pub-crawl. With some 5,000 pubs within the city limits, you would certainly be crawling if you tried to have a drink in each of them! While making the rounds, you can partake of that quintessentially British fare known as "pub grub," which could be anything from a ploughman's lunch(a hunk of bread, cheese, and a pickle) to shepherd's pie, to nouveau British cuisine. Today, in the right places, some of that pub grub tastes better than the fare served in many restaurants. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Travel Tips

By Public Transportation

The London Underground and the city's buses operate on the same system of six fare zones. The fare zones radiate in rings from the central zone 1, which is where most visitors spend the majority of their time. Zone 1 covers the area from Liverpool Street in the east to Notting Hill in the west, and from Waterloo in the south to Baker Street, Euston, and King's Cross in the north. To travel beyond zone 1, you need a multi-zone ticket. Note that all single one-way, round-trip, and 1-day pass tickets are valid only on the day of purchase. Tube and bus maps should be available at any Underground station. You can download them before your trip from the excellent **London Transport(LT)** website www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl. There are also **LT Information Centres** at several major

Tube stations: Euston, King's Cross, Oxford Circus, St. James's Park, Liverpool Street Station, and Piccadilly Circus, as well as in the British Rail stations at Euston and Victoria and in each of the terminals at Heathrow Airport. Most of them are open daily(some close Sun) from at least 9am to 5pm. A 24-hour public-transportation information service is also available at tel. **020/7222-1234**.

Discount Passes-- If you plan to use public transportation a lot, investigate the range of fare discounts available.

Travelcards offer unlimited use of buses, Underground, Docklands Light Railway, and National Rail services in Greater London for any period ranging from a day to a year. Travelcards are available from Underground ticket offices, LT Information Centres, main post offices in the London area, many newsagents, and some newsstands. Children younger than age 11 generally travel free on the Tube and buses.

The **1-Day Travelcard** allows you to go anywhere throughout Greater London. For travel anywhere within zones 1 and 2, the cost is £6.80(\$14) for adults or £3.40(\$6.80) for children 5 to 15. The **Off-Peak 1-Day Travelcard**, which is valid after 9:30am on weekdays is even cheaper. For two zones, the cost is £5.30(\$11) for adults and £3.30(\$6.60) for children 5 to 15.

The system now features a **3-Day Travel Card**, allowing adults to travel within zones 1 and 2 for £17 to £22(\$34-\$44), and allowing children to go for £8.70 to £9.50(\$17-\$19).

1-Week Travelcards cost adults £24(\$48) and children £12(\$24) for travel in zones 1 and 2.

Consider purchasing the **Oyster Card**(www.oystercard.com), a travel discount card that's all the rage. You can prepay for single fares, which cost considerably less than a paper ticket-- usually about half the price. Oysters are valid on the Tube, DLR, tram, and National Rail services within your chosen zones and across the entire London bus network. For 24-hour information, call the Oyster hot line at tel. **0871/2301100**. The card has a daily

London Snapshot continued

price cap, meaning you never pay more than £3(\$6) regardless of how many trips you make in 1 day. You can buy an Oyster Card at any ticket office.

The Underground-- The Underground, or Tube, is the fastest and easiest way to get around. All Tube stations are clearly marked with a red circle and blue crossbar. Routes are conveniently color-coded.

If you have British coins or a credit card, you can get your ticket at a vending machine. Otherwise, buy it at the ticket office. You can transfer as many times as you like as long as you stay in the Underground. Children 4 and younger travel free if accompanied by an adult.

Slide your ticket into the slot at the gate and pick it up as it comes through on the other side and hold on to it-- it must be presented when you exit the station at your destination. If you're caught without a valid ticket, you'll be fined £20(\$40) on the spot. If you owe extra money, you'll be asked to pay the difference by the attendant at the exit. The Tube runs roughly from 5am to 12:30am(7:30am-10:30pm Sun). After that you must take a taxi or night bus to your destination. For information on the London Tube system, call the **London Underground** at tel. **020/7222-1234**, but expect to stay on hold for a good while before a live person comes on the line. Information is also available on **www.tfl.gov.uk**.

The Jubilee Line Extension has been extended eastward to serve the growing suburbs of the southeast and the Docklands area. This east-west axis helps ease traffic on some of London's most hard-pressed underground lines. The line also makes it much easier to reach Greenwich.

By Bus-- The comparably priced bus system is almost as good as the Underground and gives you better views

of the city. To find out about current routes, pick up a free bus map at one of London Transport's Travel Information Centres, listed above. The map is available in person only, not by mail. You can also obtain a map at **www.tfl.gov.uk**.

As with the Underground, fares vary according to distance traveled. Generally, bus fares are £2 to £3(\$4-\$6). If you want your stop called out, simply ask the conductor or driver. To speed up bus travel, passengers have to purchase tickets before boarding. Drivers no longer collect fares on board. Some 300 roadside ticket machines serve stops in central London. You'll need the exact fare, however, as ticket machines don't make change.

Buses generally run 24 hours a day. A few night buses have special routes, running once an hour or so; most pass through Trafalgar Square. Keep in mind that night buses are often so crowded(especially on weekends) that they are unable to pick up passengers after a few stops. You may find yourself waiting a long time. Consider taking a taxi. Call the 24-hour **hot line**(tel. **020/7222-1234**) for schedule and fare information.

By Taxi

London cabs are among the most comfortable and best-designed in the world. You can pick one up either by heading for a cab rank or by hailing one in the street. (The taxi is available if the yellow taxi sign on the roof is lit.) To **call a cab**, phone tel. **0871/871-8710**.

The meter starts at £2.20(\$4.40), with increments of £2(\$4) per mile thereafter, based on distance or time. Surcharges are imposed after 8pm and on weekends and public holidays. All these tariffs include VAT: Tip 10% to 15%.

If you call for a cab, the meter starts running when the taxi receives instructions

from the dispatcher, so you could find that the meter already reads a few pounds more than the initial drop of £2.20(\$4.40) when you step inside.

Minicabs are also available, and they're often useful when regular taxis are scarce or when the Tube stops running. These cabs are meterless, so you must negotiate the fare in advance. Unlike regular cabs, minicabs are forbidden by law to cruise for fares. They operate from sidewalk kiosks, such as those around Leicester Square. If you need to call one, try **Brunswick Chauffeurs/Abbey Cars**(tel. **020/8969-2555**) in west London or **Newham Minicars**(tel. **020/8472-1400**) in south London. Minicab kiosks can be found near many Tube or BritRail stops, especially in outlying areas.

If you have a complaint about taxi service or if you leave something in a cab, contact the **Public Carriage Office**, 15 Penton St., N1 9PU(Tube: Angel Station). If it's a complaint, you must have the cab number, which is displayed in the passenger compartment. Call tel. **0845/602-7000** or 020/7222-1234 with complaints.

By Bicycle

One of the most popular bike-rental shops is **On Your Bike**, 52-54 Tooley St., London Bridge, SE1(tel. **020/7378-6669**; **www.onyourbike.com**; Tube: London Bridge), open Monday to Friday 7:30am to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 6pm, and Sunday 11am to 5pm. The first-class mountain bikes, with high seats and low-slung handlebars, cost £12(\$24) for the first day and £8(\$16) for each day thereafter, or £35(\$70) per week, and require a 1 pence deposit on a credit card, so they will have your credit card number.

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