



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Rene Ehrhardt

# Top Family-Friendly Attractions in London

## London, 7 Days

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Guide written by Nancy Solomon.

London is an amazing city and a great starting point for families wanting to experience an international destination for the first time. The combination of modern day life and rich history keeps everyone entertained. Because there is no language barrier, it's easy for families to get around and take in the information, plus there are endless activities, parks, and kid-oriented attractions. There is so much to see and do that prioritizing is a must.

**Note: Be sure to read the Day Notes for the kid-friendly details on recommended attractions.**

Ciao Bambino provides tips and advice around all things related to traveling with kids and is a guide to the best kid friendly hotels.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - London

**DAY NOTE:** Big Bus Double Decker Tour:

A must-do London experience that will give a broad overview of the city while providing easy transportation. My children learned a lot from the live guides on the bus (there is also a headset available, but they didn't like those). After the bus tour, think about a private guide. Although they can be expensive, it's money well spent. We used Context Travel for a Food Tour of London. I also recommend Clare McCoy, a Blue Badge Guide, who is excellent with families.

**Tower of London:**

This is my favorite site in London. It is not to be missed! There are few places that give you historical insight into medieval times like the Tower. The moat, the Beefeaters, the Jewels, everything has been well preserved and brings you right back to that time period. The Beefeater tour was amusing and the guide engaged my children from the beginning. You can even ice skate in the moat over the winter months. Be sure to check the website to see what special events are happening.

**Museum of London:**

A great way to get a visual overview of the history of London—the museum covers history from Roman Rule to present day times including the great fire and the plague. There are movies and model displays to deliver the information in multiple ways; this format makes it easier for children to absorb. Don't forget to pick up activity sheets at the front desk.

**Wagamama:**

A healthy and delicious noodle house, Wagamama is perfect for families. It's fast, reasonably priced and offers a variety of foods that kids like. They have locations all over the city.



### Big Bus Company (The)

Hop on, hop off city bus tour



### Tower of London

Beefeaters & Crown Jewels



### Museum of London

London History



### Wagamama

Original Slick Noodle Canteen

## Day 2 - London

**DAY NOTE:** Use this day to relax and explore the heart of London. Stroll through Piccadilly Circus (a simple walk through is sufficient) and enjoy highlights including Hamleys, Fortnum and Mason, and Covent Garden.

**Hamleys:**

A mega toy store loaded with original creations and people running displays of the toys. It's an easy and fun stop with kids right in the heart of the city.

**Fortnam and Mason:**

The food hall and restaurants in this grocery store is like no other. Think Tiffany's for food. Everything is beautiful and you can see why the Queen shops here. Look for more interesting items like Chocolate covered ant. Also, it's perfect spot to stock up for a picnic lunch

**Covent Garden:**

This is a family favorite and we went back multiple times. Kids love the outrageous street entertainers. There are a variety of dining options and the London Transportation Museum is an easy stop and located here.

**British Museum:**

This enormous museum needs to be tackled with a plan in mind. Highlights for kids include the Rosetta Stone, armor displays, and mummies. There are a series of different "trails" for families based on ages and interests. These "trails" and other activities are available at the Paul Hamlyn Library. You can also take a look online and choose what you'd like to see.



### Hamleys

A World-Famous Toy Wonderland



### Fortnum & Mason

An English Shopping Experience



### Covent Garden Piazza

Mimers, market & a mechanical museum

# Itinerary Overview

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nightlife



## London Transport Museum

Buses, trains and cabs



## British Museum

London's Top Historical Attraction

This fun and innovative museum is an easy stop along the Thames riverfront walk. When you enter the building, the Turbine Halls are striking (the building is a converted power station). This open space is a blast for kids. Amazing artwork and giant sculptures are casually displayed all over the museum. The low key atmosphere and interesting exhibits appeal to children of all ages. They even have an excellent online art site: <http://kids.tate.org.uk/>.

Imperial War Museum:

The Imperial War Museum has huge tanks and a terrific exhibit on the "Children's Experience of the War."

Natural History Museum:

Housed in a beautiful Victorian building, this museum has plenty of exhibits that will keep the young naturalist happy for hours, with excellent children's guides and resources. At the information desk you can buy discover guides

Younger children will enjoy the activities about the way we're made in the Human Biology Gallery, the nearby large mammals dominated by the Blue Whale suspended from the ceiling, and the hands-on activities in the Creepy Crawlies Gallery. Older children and teenagers should head for the Red Zone through the Earth Hall into a noisy, bubbling world of volcanoes and the earth being created. In the basement, you can check out the Investigate hands-on science centre for 7-14 year olds, where you can explore the world in more depth using the computers and microscopes.

Science Museum:

When you walk into the spacious entrance of the Science museum, the first impressions are of space, light and color. This museum has loads of hands-on activities to suit all ages, from toddlers to teens. Beside the information desk are touch screens to help plan your visit. On every floor you can find hands on activity areas designed for different age groups and in between plenty of larger exhibits like cars, boats, planes and even a space capsule.

For toddlers, there's The Garden in the basement for fun with water play, climbing and exploring areas, and on the ground Floor, the Pattern Pod is an enclosed area for 5-8 year olds to explore all aspects of pattern and touch. Both have buggy parking areas, cafes and picnic areas nearby, and there are 'Explainers' in Orange T-shirts to help you. Launchpad is ideal for 8-14 year olds with two large areas full of hands-on activities to explore how things work and I saw groups of teenagers enjoying the galleries demonstrating how energy affects our lives.

London Eye:

## Day 3 - London

**DAY NOTE:** Royalty is important in London and novel for kids (at least American kids). With enthralling stories of kings and queens, the whole family will be eager to see the royal sites.

Buckingham Palace/Royal Mews/The Orangery:

At Buckingham Palace, the pageantry displayed with the Changing of the Guard is well worth waiting wading through the crowds. You can see what "royal treatment" means for horses at the Royal Mews and the "coloring room" offers a quick family break. Embrace the British tradition of high tea at the Orangery

London Parks:

London offers a vast selection of public parks, including Kensington Park (Princess Diana's playground with a pirate ship), Regent Park (zoo), Hyde Park (swimming, boating, and fishing)—all are outstanding.



## Changing of the Guard

Royal ritual at Buckingham Palace



## Royal Mews



## The Orangery



## Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

Largest royal park

## Day 4 - London

**DAY NOTE:** Perfect options for rainy days, London has an amazing collection of museums. Pre-screen them online to see which ones interest your group the most.

Tate Modern:

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

This giant Ferris wheel offers amazing view for everyone on board. You may want to save this to the end of your trip, so that the children recognize what they are seeing.



**Tate Modern**  
Today's Rising Stars



**Imperial War Museum**  
The People Behind The Wars



**Natural History Museum**  
One of London's Most Popular Museums

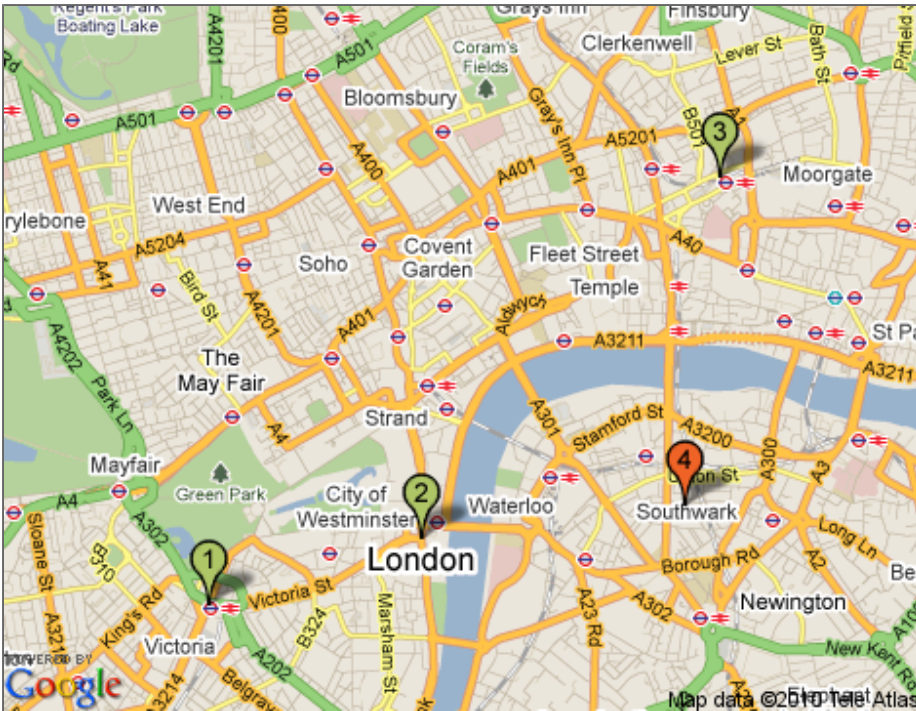


**Science Museum**  
Hands-On Experience



**London Eye**  
Sightseeing Cruise

# Day 1 - London



## QUICK NOTE

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### Wagamama:

A healthy and delicious noodle house, Wagamama is perfect for families. It's fast, reasonably priced and offers a variety of foods that kids like. They have locations all over the city.

**contact:**

tel: +44 20 7233 9533  
fax: +44 20 7828 0638  
http://www.bigbus.co.uk

**location:**

48 Buckingham Palace Road  
London London SW1W 0RN

## 1 Big Bus Company (The)

**DESCRIPTION:** You've probably seen these buses - along with London double-deckers, tour buses and more tour buses. Regardless of your usual attitude towards guided tours, these hop-on, hop-off tours are a good way to get an overview of the city, and you can make mental notes of where to go for a more thorough visit. The price you pay with The Big Bus Company is for a 24-hour ticket; during this time you can travel anywhere on the tour network, which encompasses stops over just about all of central London. Included in the price is a free walking tour and Thames River cruise, as well as numerous discounts for West End shows. Guide tapes are available in 12 languages, and the company won the London Sightseeing Tour of the Year award. Be careful when choosing the open-air rooftop, because London is notorious for fickle weather. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Big Bus Company

**contact:**

tel: 0870/756-7070  
www.tower-of-london.org.uk

**location:**

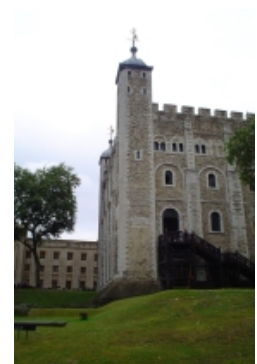
202-203 Grange Road  
London SE1 3AA

**hours:**

Mar-Oct Tues-Sat 9am-6pm,  
Sun and Mon 10am-6pm;  
Nov-Feb Tues-Sat 9am-5pm,  
Sun and Mon 10am-5pm

## 2 Tower of London

**DESCRIPTION:** This ancient fortress continues to pack in the crowds with its macabre associations with the legendary figures imprisoned and/or executed here. There are more spooks here per square foot than in any other building in the whole of haunted Britain. Headless bodies, bodiless heads, phantom soldiers, icy blasts, clanking chains -- you name them, the Tower's got them. Centuries after the last head rolled on Tower Hill, a shivery atmosphere of impending doom still lingers over the Tower's mighty walls. Plan on spending a lot of time here. The Tower is actually an intricately patterned compound of structures built through the ages for varying purposes, mostly as expressions of royal power. The oldest is the **White Tower**, begun by William the Conqueror in 1078 to keep London's native Saxon population in check. Later rulers added other towers, more walls, and fortified gates, until the buildings became like a small town within a city. Until the reign of James I (beginning in 1603), the Tower was also one of the royal residences. But above all, it was a prison for distinguished captives. Every stone of the Tower tells a story -- usually a gory one. In the **Bloody Tower**, according to Shakespeare, Richard III's henchmen murdered the two little princes (the young sons of his brother, Edward IV). Richard knew his position as king could not be secure as long as his nephews were alive, and there seems no reasonable doubt that the princes were killed on his orders. Attempts have been made by some historians to clear his name, but Richard remains the chief suspect, and his deed caused him to lose the "hearts of the people," according to the Chronicles of London at the time. Sir Walter Raleigh spent 13 years in the Bloody Tower before his date with the executioner. On the walls of the **Beauchamp Tower**, you can still read the last messages scratched by despairing prisoners. Through **Traitors' Gate** passed such ill-fated, romantic figures as Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex and a favorite of Elizabeth I. A plaque marks the eerie place at **Tower Green** where two wives of Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, plus Sir Thomas More, and the 9-day queen, Lady Jane Grey, all lost their lives. The Tower, besides being a royal palace, a fortress, and a prison, was also an armory, a treasury, a menagerie, and, in 1675, an astronomical observatory. Reopened in 1999, the White Tower holds the **Armouries**, which date from the reign of Henry VIII, as well as a display of instruments of torture and execution that recall some of the most ghastly moments in the Tower's history. In the Jewel House, you'll find the Tower's greatest attraction, the **Crown Jewels** -- some of the world's



most precious stones set into robes, swords, scepters, and crowns. The Imperial State Crown is the most famous crown on earth; made for Victoria in 1837, it's worn today by Queen Elizabeth II when she opens Parliament. Studded with some 3,000 jewels (principally diamonds), it includes the Black Prince's Ruby, worn by Henry V at Agincourt. The 530-carat Star of Africa, a cut diamond on the Royal Sceptre with Cross, would make Harry Winston turn over in his grave. You'll have to stand in long lines to catch just a glimpse of the jewels as you and hundreds of others scroll by on moving sidewalks, but the wait is worth it. The presumed prison cell of Sir Thomas More is open to the public. More left this cell in 1535 to face his executioner after he'd fallen out with King Henry VIII over the monarch's desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon, the first of his six wives. More is believed to have lived in the lower part of the Bell Tower, here in this whitewashed cell, during the last 14 months of his life, although some historians doubt this claim. A **palace** inhabited by King Edward I in the late 1200s stands above Traitors' Gate. It's the only surviving medieval palace in Britain. Guides at the palace are dressed in period costumes, and reproductions of furniture and fittings, including Edward's throne, evoke the era, along with burning incense and candles. In 2004 several improvements were made, including the opening of a Visitors Center and the restoration of a 13th-century wharf. To the west of the Tower is the newly created Tower Hill Square, designed by Stanton Williams, with a series of pavilions housing ticketing facilities, a gift shop, and a cafeteria. Oh, yes -- don't forget to look for the ravens. Six of them (plus two spares) are all registered as official Tower residents. According to a legend, the Tower of London will stand as long as those black, ominous birds remain, so to be on the safe side, one of the wings of each raven is clipped. **One-hour guided tours** of the entire compound are given by the Yeoman Warders (also known as "Beefeaters") every half-hour, starting at 9:30am, from the Middle Tower near the main entrance. The last guided walk starts about 3:30pm in summer, 2:30pm in winter -- weather permitting, of course. You can attend the nightly **Ceremony of the Keys**, the ceremonial locking-up of the Tower by the Yeoman Warders. For free tickets, write to the Ceremony of the Keys, Waterloo Block, Tower of London, London EC3N 4AB, and request a specific date, but also list alternate dates. At least 6 weeks' notice is required. Accompany all requests with a stamped, self-addressed envelope (British stamps only) or two International Reply Coupons. With ticket in hand, a Yeoman Warder will admit you at 9:35pm. Frankly, we think it's not worth the trouble you go through to see this rather cheesy ceremony, but we know some who disagree with us. **Tower Tips** -- You can spend the shortest time possible in the Tower's long lines if you buy your ticket at the kiosk at Tower Hill Tube station before emerging above ground. Even so, choose a day other than Sunday -- crowds are at their worst then -- and arrive as early as you can in the morning. © Frommer's

**contact:**

tel: 087/0444-3851

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk>

**location:**

150 London Wall, EC2  
London EC2Y 5HN

**hours:**

Mon-Sat 10am-5:50pm; Sun  
11:30am-5:50pm

### 3 Museum of London

**DESCRIPTION:** In London's Barbican district, near St. Paul's Cathedral and overlooking the city's Roman and medieval walls, this museum traces the history of London from prehistoric times to the 20th century through archaeological finds; paintings and prints; social, industrial, and historic artifacts; and costumes, maps, and models. Exhibits are arranged so that you can begin and end your chronological stroll through 250,000 years at the main entrance to the museum. The museum's pièce de résistance is the Lord Mayor's Coach, a



image by Ewan-M

gilt-and-scarlet fairy-tale coach built in 1757 and weighing in at 3 tons. You can also see the Great Fire of London in living color and sound thanks to an audiovisual presentation; the death mask of Oliver Cromwell; cell doors from Newgate Prison, made famous by Charles Dickens; and most amazing of all, a shop counter showing pre-World War II prices. The World City Gallery examines life in London between 1789 and 1914, the beginning of World War I. Some 2,000 objects are on view. See the "West End Attractions" map. © Frommer's

**contact:**

tel: 020/7323-9223  
<http://www.wagamama.com/>

**location:**

4 Streatam St., WC1  
London WC1A 1JB

**hours:**

Mon-Sat noon-11pm; Sun  
noon-10pm

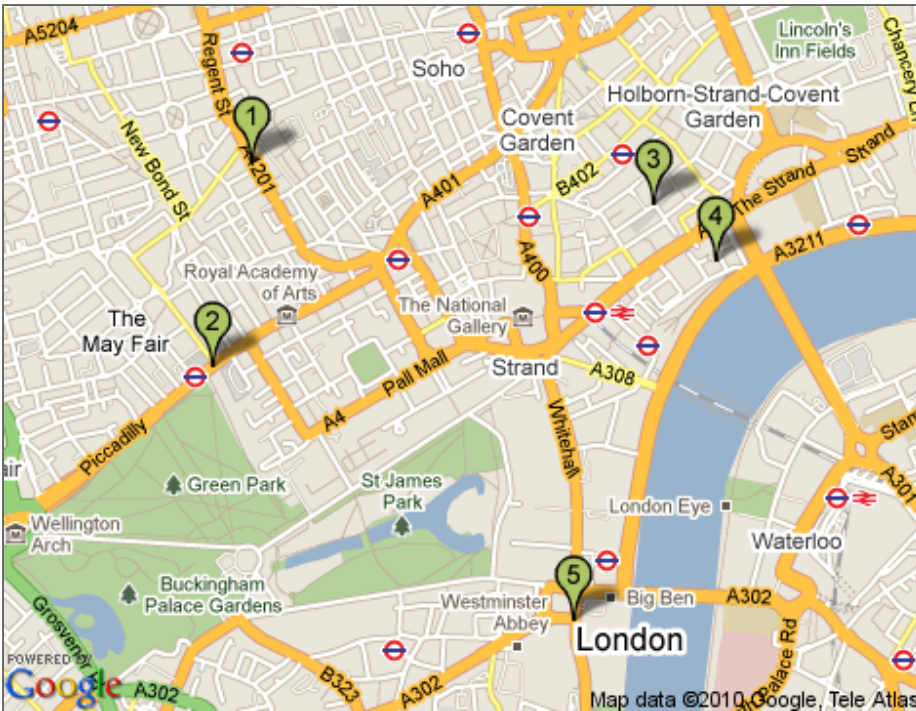
**4 Wagamama**

**DESCRIPTION:** This noodle joint, in a basement just off New Oxford Street, is noisy and overcrowded, and you'll have to wait in line for a table. It calls itself a "nondestination food station" and caters to some 1,200 customers a day. Many dishes are built around ramen noodles with your choice of chicken, beef, or salmon. Try the tasty gyoza, light dumplings filled with vegetables or chicken. Vegetarian dishes are available, but skip the so-called Korean-style dishes. © Frommer's



Photo courtesy of flickr.com

# Day 2 - London



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Use this day to relax and explore the heart of London. Stroll through Piccadilly Circus (a simple walk through is sufficient) and enjoy highlights including Hamleys, Fortnum and Mason, and Covent Garden.

Hamleys:

A mega toy store loaded with original creations and people running displays of the toys. It's an easy and fun stop with kids right in the heart of the city.

Fortnam and Mason:

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**contact:**

tel: 0800/2802-444  
www.hamleys.com

**location:**

188-196 Regent St., W1  
London W1B 5BT

**1 Hamleys**

**DESCRIPTION:** This flagship is the finest toy shop in the world -- more than 35,000 toys and games on seven floors of fun and magic. The huge selection includes soft, cuddly stuffed animals as well as dolls, radio-controlled cars, train sets, model kits, board games, outdoor toys, computer games, and more. © Frommer's



Photo courtesy of Hamleys

**contact:**

tel: 020/7734-8040  
fax: +44 20 7437 3278  
www.fortnumandmason.com

**location:**

181 Piccadilly, W1  
London W1A 1ER

**2 Fortnum & Mason**

**DESCRIPTION:** Catering to well-heeled clients as a full-service department store since 1707, Fortnum & Mason is better than ever. Offerings include one of the most comprehensive delicatessens and food markets in London, as well as stationery, gift items, porcelain and crystal, and lots and lots of clothing for men, women, and children. © Frommer's



Fortnum & Mason

**contact:**

<http://www.coventgardenmarket.co.uk/>

**location:**

Covent Garden  
London WC2E 8RD

**3 Covent Garden Piazza**

**DESCRIPTION:** This area was formerly home to London's fruit and vegetable market, which moved down to the New Covent Garden Market in Bermondsey. Today, it is a collection of stores that sell a variety of goods, from antiques and crafts to pictures and handmade clothing. There's also an open-air cobbled area where miming and juggling acts can occasionally be found. Musicians regularly play in the pretty courtyards around the market stalls. There are also a few places to eat lunch or grab an ice cream. © wcities.com



**contact:**

tel: +44 20 7565 7299  
fax: +44 20 7565 7254  
<http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/>

**location:**

Covent Garden Piazza  
London London WC2E 7BB

**4 London Transport Museum**

**DESCRIPTION:** Explore the history of London and its transport since 1800 with the history and origins of buses, trams, trains, taxis, river boats, cycles and walking. Also in the museum are films, posters and working models of modern and older transportation modes. Displays and shows include the role, and varied experiences, of women working for London Transport, and the history of London Transport during World War II. Utilizing actors, interactive displays and even bus simulators, this really is a journey you won't want to miss. Additions to the museum not to be missed are the interactive "Futures" and "Coming Soon Galleries," which showcase our impact on the environment of future London. If you thought you had seen it all, think again. © Frommer's



editor

**contact:**

tel: 020/7323-8299  
fax: +44 20 7323 8616  
www.britishmuseum.org

**location:**

Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3DG

**hours:**

Sat-Wed 10am-5:30pm;  
Thurs-Fri 10am-8:30pm

**5 British Museum**

**DESCRIPTION:** Set in scholarly Bloomsbury, this immense museum grew out of a private collection of manuscripts purchased in 1753 with the proceeds of a lottery. It grew and grew, fed by legacies, discoveries, and purchases, until it became one of the most comprehensive collections of art and artifacts in the world. It's impossible to take in this museum in a day. The museum is divided basically into the national collections of antiquities; prints and drawings; coins, medals, and banknotes; and ethnography. Even on a cursory first visit, be sure to see the Asian collections (the finest assembly of Islamic pottery outside the Islamic world), the Chinese porcelain, the Indian sculpture, and the prehistoric and Romano-British collections. Special treasures you might want to seek out on your first visit include the **Rosetta Stone**, in the Egyptian Room, the discovery of which led to the deciphering of hieroglyphics; the **Parthenon Sculptures**, a series of pediments, metopes, and friezes from the Parthenon in Athens, in the Duveen Gallery; and the legendary **Black Obelisk**, dating from around 860 B.C., in the Nimrud Gallery. Other treasures include the contents of Egyptian royal tombs (including mummies); fabulous arrays of 2,000-year-old jewelry, cosmetics, weapons, furniture, and tools; Babylonian astronomical instruments; and winged lion statues (in the Assyrian Transept) that guarded Ashurnasirpal's palace at Nimrud. The exhibits change throughout the year, so if your heart is set on seeing a specific treasure, call to make sure it's on display. **Insider's Tip:** If you're a first-time visitor, you will, of course, want to concentrate on some of the fabled treasures previewed above. But what we do is duck into the British Museum several times on our visits to London, even if we have only an hour or two, to see the less heralded but equally fascinating exhibits. We recommend wandering rooms 33 and 34, and 91 to 94, to take in the glory of the Orient, covering Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The Chinese collection is particularly strong. Sculpture from India is as fine as anything at the Victoria and Albert. The Mexican Gallery in room 33C traces that country's art from the 2nd millennium B.C. to the 16th century A.D. A gallery for the North American collection is also nearby. Another section of the museum is devoted to the **Sainsbury African Galleries**, one of the finest collections of African art and artifacts in the world, featuring changing displays selected from more than 200,000 objects. Finally, the Money Gallery in room 68, traces the story of (what else?) money. You'll learn that around 2000 B.C. in Mesopotamia, grain was used as currency, and that printed money came into being in the 10th century in China. The museum's inner courtyard is now canopied by a lightweight, transparent roof, transforming the area into a covered square that houses a Centre for Education, exhibition space, bookshops, and restaurants. The center of the Great Court features the Round Reading Room, which is famous as the place where Karl Marx hung out while writing *Das Kapital*. Finally, a **warning:** Watch your wallets when you're standing in crowds, particularly in front

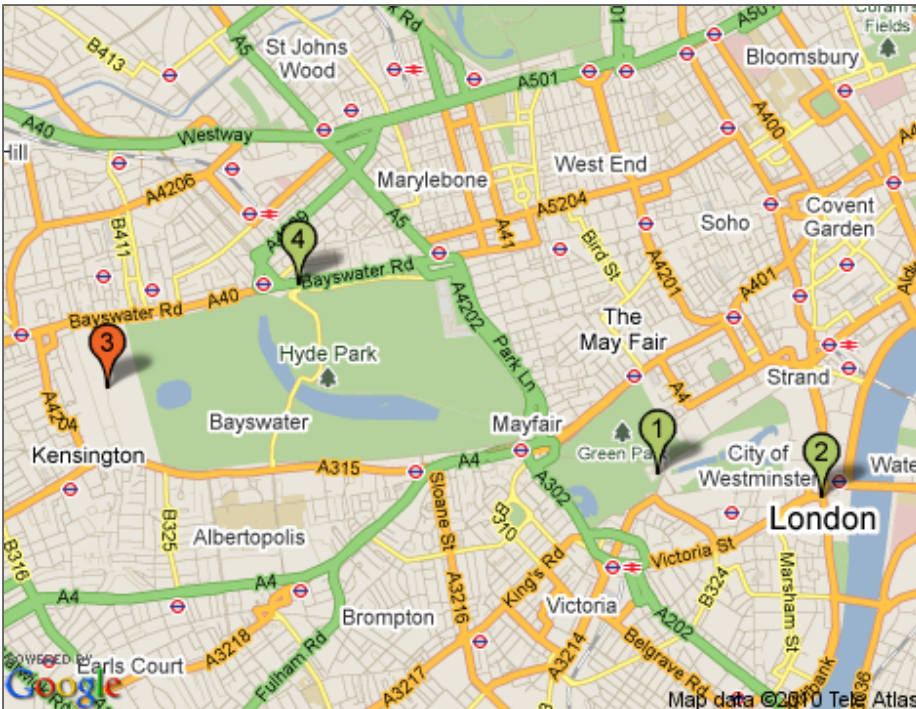


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of the Rosetta Stone. The museum is free and tends to attract a few grab-happy drifters. © Frommer's

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# Day 3 - London



## QUICK NOTE

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London Parks:

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### contact:

tel: +44 20 783 9137  
<http://www.changing-the-guard.com/>

### location:

Wellington Barracks  
London London SW1A 1AA

### hours:

11:30a

## 1 Changing of the Guard

**DESCRIPTION:** The changing of the guard is common in most European capitals, but nowhere is it more famous than in London. The new guard leaves Wellington Barracks a few minutes before the change and marches down Birdcage Walk to Buckingham Palace. The actual ceremony (which lasts around 40 minutes) takes place within the gates of the palace, so get there early to secure a good vantage spot. In addition, the St. James’s Palace detachment of the Queen’s guard marches to Buckingham Palace at 11:15a and back to St.



photo of the Parade of Changing of the Guard

James's at 12:10p. Free admission. See website for dates scheduled. © wcities.com

**contact:**  
tel: 020/7766-7322  
www.royalcollection.org.uk

**location:**  
London

**hours:**  
Mar 25-July 26 and Sept 26-  
Oct 31 Mon-Thurs and Sat-  
Sun 11am-4pm, July 27-Sept  
25 daily 10am-5pm

## 2 Royal Mews

**DESCRIPTION:** This is where you can get a close look at Her Majesty's State Coach, built in 1761 to the designs of Sir William Chambers and decorated with paintings by Cipriani. Traditionally drawn by eight gray horses, it was used by sovereigns when they traveled to open Parliament and on other state occasions; Queen Elizabeth traveled in it to her 1953 coronation and in 1977 for her Silver Jubilee Procession. You can also pay a visit to the Queen's carriage horses, which are housed here. See the "Westminster & Victoria Attractions" map. © Frommer's



Photo courtesy of Royal Mews

**contact:**  
tel: 020/7376-0239

**location:**  
London

**hours:**  
Daily 3-5pm

## 3 The Orangery

**DESCRIPTION:** In its way, the Orangery is the most amazing place for afternoon tea in the world. Set 46m (150 ft.) north of Kensington Palace, it occupies a long narrow garden pavilion built in 1704 by Queen Anne. In homage to her original intentions, rows of potted orange trees bask in sunlight from soaring windows, and tea is served amid Corinthian columns, ruddy-colored bricks, and a pair of Grinling Gibbons woodcarvings. There are even some urns and statuary that the royal family imported from Windsor Castle. The menu includes soups and sandwiches, with a salad and a portion of upscale potato chips known as kettle chips. The array of different teas is served with high style, accompanied by fresh scones with clotted cream and jam, and Belgian chocolate cake. © Frommer's



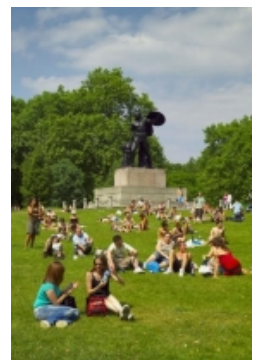
Photo courtesy of The Orangery

**contact:**  
tel: +44 (0)20 7298 2100  
http://www.royalparks.gov.uk/

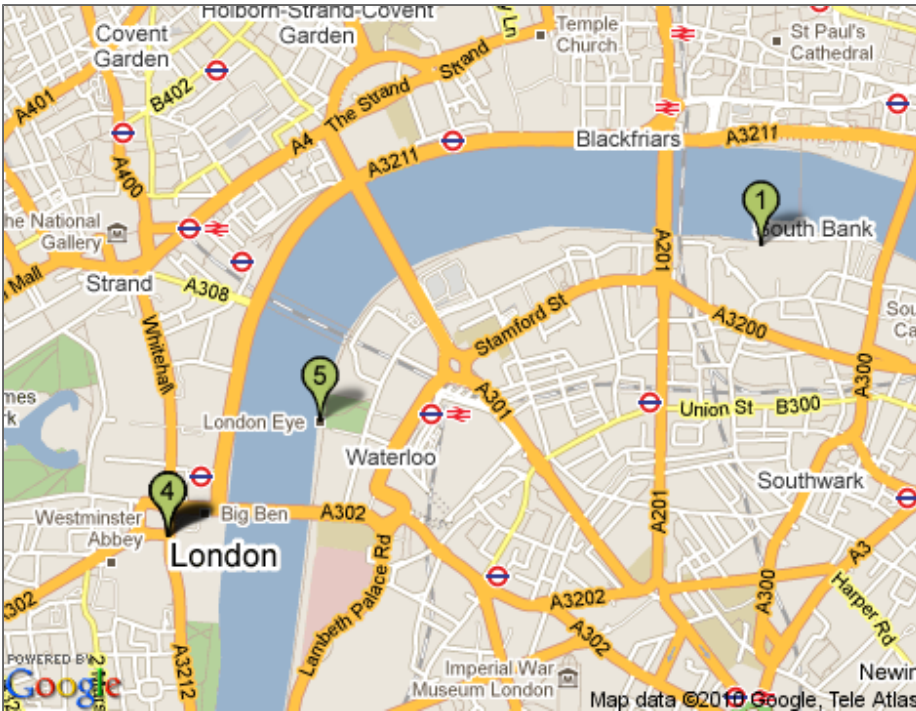
**location:**  
West Carriage Drive  
London London W2 2UH

## 4 Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

**DESCRIPTION:** An oasis of tranquility in central London, Hyde Park, together with Kensington Gardens to the west, is the largest of the three royal parks. On the north-east side is Speaker's Corner, a traditional haven of free speech. It is also famous for the Serpentine boating lake, complete with a designated swimming area, and the Serpentine Gallery. Lesser known is the Dogs' Cemetery at the northern end of the park. The graves commemorate more than 200 pooches who enjoyed the park in their day. © wcities.com



# Day 4 - London



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Perfect options for rainy days, London has an amazing collection of museums. Pre-screen them online to see which ones interest your group the most.

Tate Modern:

This fun and innovative museum is an easy stop along the Thames riverfront walk. When you enter the building, the Turbine Halls are striking (the building is a converted power station). This open space is a blast for kids. Amazing artwork and giant sculptures are casually displayed all over the museum. The low key atmosphere and interesting exhibits appeal to children of all ages. They even have an excellent online art site: <http://kids.tate.org.uk/>.

Imperial War Museum:

The Imperial War Museum has huge tanks and a terrific exhibit on the “Children’s Experience of the War.”

Natural History Museum:

Housed in a beautiful Victorian building, this museum has plenty of exhibits that will keep the young naturalist happy for hours, with excellent children’s guides and resources. At the information desk you can buy discover guides

Younger children will enjoy the activities about the way we’re made in the Human Biology Gallery, the nearby large mammals dominated by the Blue Whale suspended from the ceiling, and the hands-on activities in the Creepy Crawlies Gallery. Older children and teenagers should head for the Red Zone through the Earth Hall into a noisy, bubbling world of volcanoes and the earth being created. In the basement, you can check out the Investigate hands-on science centre for 7-14 year olds, where you can explore the world in more depth using the computers and microscopes.

Science Museum:

When you walk into the spacious entrance of the Science museum, the first impressions are of space, light and color. This museum has loads of hands-on activities to suit all ages, from toddlers to teens. Beside the information desk are touch screens to help plan your visit. On every floor you can find hands on activity areas designed for different age groups and in between plenty of larger exhibits like cars, boats, planes and even a space capsule.

For toddlers, there's The Garden in the basement for fun with water play, climbing and exploring areas, and on the ground Floor, the Pattern Pod is an enclosed area for 5-8 year olds to explore all aspects of pattern and touch. Both have buggy parking areas, cafes and picnic areas nearby, and there are 'Explainers' in Orange T-shirts to help you. Launchpad is ideal for 8-14 year olds with two large areas full of hands-on activities to explore how things work and I saw groups of teenagers enjoying the galleries demonstrating how energy affects our lives.

London Eye:

This giant Ferris wheel offers amazing view for everyone on board. You may want to save this to the end of your trip, so that the children recognize what they are seeing.

**contact:**

tel: 020/7887-8888

<http://www.tate.org.uk>

**location:**

53 Bankside

London SE1 9TG

**hours:**

Sun-Thurs 10am-6pm; Fri-Sat  
10am-10pm

**1 Tate Modern**

**DESCRIPTION:** In the transformed Bankside Power Station in Southwark, this museum draws some 2 million visitors a year to see the greatest collection of international 20th-century art in Britain. How would we rate the collection? At the same level of the Pompidou in Paris, with a slight edge over New York's Guggenheim. Tate Modern is viewer-friendly, with eye-level hangings. All the big painting stars are here -- a whole galaxy ranging from Dalí to Duchamp, from Giacometti to Matisse and Mondrian, from Picasso and Pollock to Rothko and Warhol. The Modern is also a gallery of 21st-century art, displaying new and exciting works. The Tate Modern makes extensive use of glass for both its exterior and interior, offering panoramic views. Galleries are arranged over three levels and provide a variety of spaces for display. Instead of exhibiting art chronologically and by school, the Tate Modern, in a radical break from tradition, takes a thematic approach. This allows displays to cut across movements. You can cross the Millennium Bridge, a pedestrian-only walk from the steps of St. Paul's, over the Thames to the gallery. Or else you can take the **Tate to Tate** boat (tel. **020/7887-8888**), which takes art lovers on an 18-minute journey across the Thames from the Tate Britain to the Tate Modern, with a stop at the London Eye. A day pass for the ferry costs £4.30 (\$8.60); £11 (\$22) for a family pass. Leaving from Millbank Pier, this catamaran is decorated by the trademark colorful dots of that enfant terrible artist, Damien Hirst. © Frommer's



**contact:**

tel: 020/7416-5321  
fax: +44 20 7416 5374  
www.iwm.org.uk

**location:**

Lambeth Road  
London SE1 6HZ

**hours:**

Daily 10am-6pm

## 2 Imperial War Museum

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the few major sights south of the Thames, this museum occupies 1 city block the size of an army barracks, greeting you with 38cm (15-in.) guns from the battleships Resolution and Ramillies. The large domed building, constructed in 1815, was the former Bethlehem Royal Hospital for the insane, known as "Bedlam." A wide range of weapons and equipment is on display, along with models, decorations, uniforms, posters, photographs, and paintings. You can see a Mark V tank, a Battle of Britain Spitfire, and a German one-man submarine, as well as a rifle carried by Lawrence of Arabia. In the Documents Room, you can view the self-styled "political testament" that Hitler dictated in the chancellery bunker in the closing days of World War II, witnessed by henchmen Joseph Goebbels and Martin Bormann, as well as the famous "peace in our time" agreement that Neville Chamberlain brought back from Munich in 1938. It's a world of espionage and clandestine warfare in the major permanent exhibit known as the "Secret War Exhibition," where you can discover the truth behind the image of James Bond -- and find out why the real secret war is even stranger and more fascinating than fiction. Displays include many items never before seen in public: coded messages, forged documents, secret wirelasses, and equipment used by spies from World War I to the present day. Supported by a £12.6-million (\$25-million) grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a permanent Holocaust exhibition now occupies two floors. Through original artifacts, documents, film, and photographs, some lent to the museum by former concentration camps in Germany and Poland, the display poignantly relates the story of Nazi Germany and the persecution of the Jews. In addition, the exhibit brings attention to the persecution of other groups under Hitler's regime, including Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, people with disabilities, and homosexuals. Among the items on display are a funeral cart used in the Warsaw Ghetto, a section of railcar from Belgium, a sign from the extermination camp at Belzec, and the letters of an 8-year-old French Jewish boy who hid in an orphanage before being sent to Auschwitz. Another exhibition, called "Crimes Against Humanity," explores the theme of genocide. See the "Westminster & Victoria" map. © Frommer's



**contact:**

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

**location:**

Cromwell Road  
London SW7 5BD

**hours:**

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

## 3 Natural History Museum

**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. See the "Knightsbridge to Kensington Attractions" map. © Frommer's

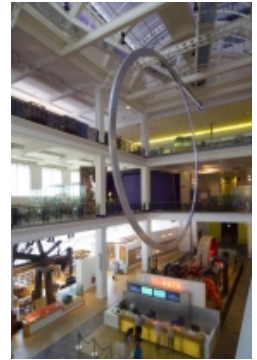
**contact:**  
tel: 0870/870-4868  
www.sciencemuseum.org.uk

**location:**  
Exhibition Road  
London Greater London SW7  
2DD

**hours:**  
Daily 10am-6pm

## 4 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:**  
<http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/London/London-Eye/d737-2988LONDONEYE>

**location:**  
London Eye  
London England-London

## 5 London Eye

**DESCRIPTION:** No visit to London is complete without a trip on the London Eye! Book now and you have a choice of several options: make a skip the line booking, take a champagne flight, or follow your ride on the London Eye with a Thames River sightseeing cruise. The London Eye is Europe's tallest observation wheel, soaring 443 feet (135 meters) into the sky and with views stretching 25 miles (40 kilometers) in every direction. Since opening at the turn of the century, the London Eye has been used as a backdrop in countless films and is loved by Britons and visitors alike. More than 3.5 million people a year have ridden the London Eye (an average of 10,000 a day).

**Choose from the following options:**  
**Standard Flight:**



viator

Approximately 30-minute flight in a shared capsule on the London Eye.

**Skip the Line Flight:**

Skip the line for a perfect London Eye experience! With skip the line entry for your standard flight in a shared capsule, you get to skip the majority of the queue. Don't waste time waiting in lines on vacation! Adults receive a souvenir guidebook, while children (over five) are given an in-flight pack containing a mini guide and binoculars in a London Eye duffel bag.

**Champagne Flight:**

Ideal for small groups and couples, includes skip the line entrance, priority boarding, standard flight in a shared capsule and a souvenir guidebook. During the flight you will be served a glass of Laurent-Perrier champagne or non-alcoholic alternative. Children are given an in-flight kids pack containing a mini guide and binoculars.

**London Eye River Cruise Experience:**

After your standard flight, catch the London Eye River Cruise Experience for a 40-minute circular cruise with live commentary and a souvenir guide map. © Viator

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# London Snapshot

## Local Info

Often quoted yet eloquently perfect, Dr. Samuel Johnson once said, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford". Whether in town for a weekend or a few months, London and its diversity is sure to amuse, entertain and enlighten. London is a city of numerous neighborhoods or villages, each with its own flavor and attractions. London has defied fires, plagues, wars and more to become a truly modern metropolis.

Beyond the streets of Westminster where iconic Big Ben shines over the Houses of Parliament and the River Thames lies a city begging to be explored. Most of the major tourist attractions can be accessed by foot although traveling via Tube, red double decker bus or black cab equally adds to the atmosphere.

Royal enthusiasts will bee-line for Buckingham Palace and catch a glimpse of the Changing of the Guard or walk the aisle Princess Diana did on her wedding day at St. Paul's Cathedral. Exploring Kensington Palace and the Tower of London provide an experience into the life of former English monarchs.

London boasts over 300 museums with many offering free admission. From the must see Egyptian mummies and Rosetta Stone at the British Museum to the Rembrandt's and Monet's in the National Gallery, famous works and artifacts come alive from our history lessons. Marvel at masterpieces at the quiet British Library then navigate the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. And even if dinosaurs and Darwin are not of interest, at least skip by the Natural History Museum and check out one of the most impressive buildings in London.

No matter the weather, Londoners adore and fill their green spaces such as centrally located Hyde Park and Regent's Park. Just outside of the city limits, yet easily reached, lies the Royal Botanical Gardens of Kew, one of the world's most captivating gardens. When it is damp or the grey skies become too much, then stop for a pint in a pub or a cup of tea in... well, anywhere!

And let us not forget that London is also a shopper's paradise. Roaming the food halls of Harrod's or bartering for bargains in many of the city's markets is part of London's charm. Quintessentially British and perfect for snatching up luxurious fashion and unique souvenirs are found in shops along the streets of Regent & Oxford such as Liberty and Selfridges or in Covent Garden area.

So, put on those walking shoes, grab an umbrella and prepare to be dazzled by the city of London.

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## Fun Facts

1. Interesting Fact: Big Ben is actually the nickname of the Great Bell located inside the St. Stephen's Clock Tower not the tower or clock itself as commonly thought.
2. Curious Fact: The world's smallest police station is located in the southwest corner of Trafalgar Square, carved out of the base of a lamp post circa 1930. Today the station has sadly been converted into a cleaning storage cupboard.
3. Fun Fact: London was originally named Londinium and began as a small colony just about where London Bridge sits around 43AD.
4. Cool Fact: London's Tube stations sheltered Londoners from the Blitz during

WWII, one night a record 177,500 were counted sleeping in the underground transport system.

5. Odd Fact: The Monument was erected to commemorate The Great Fire of 1666 and is 202 feet tall, the same distance to the start of the fire on Pudding Lane.
6. Random Fact: Tower Bridge is often mistakenly called London Bridge and it the only draw bridge over the River Thames.
7. Bizarre Fact: From the 15th to the 19th centuries when the Thames River was much wider and slower, it often froze over in winter and Frost Fairs were held on the ice.
8. Freaky Fact: A sign on the traffic island marks the Tyburn Tree at the intersection of Marble Arch and Edgeware Road where between 40,000 and 60,000 people were executed from 1196 to 1783.
9. Weird Fact: Covent Garden should be called Convent Garden named after the Westminster Convent garden, it was misspelled.
10. Quirky Fact: Only two of the 260 Tube stations use all five vowels in their name: Mansion House and South Ealing.
11. Funky Fact: Legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix and composer George Fredric Handel were neighbors, only 200 years apart. They lived in adjacent houses at 23 and 25 Brook Street now a combined unit which houses the Handel House Museum
12. Wacky Fact: Her Majesty the Queen is forbidden from enter the House of Commons in Parliament as she is not a member.

©

## London Snapshot continued

### Weather

Statistics	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temperature C												
Average High	8	9	12	14	18	21	23	23	20	16	11	8
Average Mean	6	7	9	11	14	17	17	19	16	13	9	6
Average Low	5	5	6	8	10	13	15	16	13	11	8	5
Temperature F												
Average High	47	49	53	58	64	70	73	74	67	60	53	47
Average Mean	44	45	48	52	57	63	66	67	61	55	49	44
Average Low	41	41	43	46	50	56	59	60	56	51	46	42
Rainy Days	15	13	11	12	12	11	12	11	13	13	15	15
Rain Fall (cm)	5.1	4.0	3.2	4.6	3.9	4.6	3.3	4.4	5.0	7.1	5.8	5.7
Rain Fall (in)	2.0	1.6	1.2	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.3	1.7	2.0	2.8	2.3	2.2

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