

THINGS TO DO IN LONDON

Of course, you mustn't miss the usual tourist sites/sights of

- Westminster Cathedral,
- Tower of London and see the Crown Jewels,
- Buckingham Palace (only August, I think, while the Queen is not in residence)
- And the galleries,

but if you have a little extra time in this amazing city, it is well worth getting off the beaten track to discover what really makes London such a vibrant, eclectic and unforgettable destination.

While you are in London:

- Buy an Oyster Card (for seamless travel within London) when you arrive
- As soon as possible get on a Red Hop on Hop off bus which will give you a good overview of London. The ticket is valid for 24 hours. I initially go all the way around and then choose where I will hop off on the 2nd time around. It is a good idea to catch it first in the afternoon for a non-stop circuit and then start bright and early the next morning for the hop on hop off part.
- Pick up a free TNT magazine outside most tube stations - it has many cheap deals and info on happenings in London.
- Take one or more walking tours - I have gone with very good London Walks <http://www.walks.com/> but there are many.
- Before you leave home, buy cards for self-guided walks for major cities including London (available at good bookshops).
- One weekend when it is empty, walk around the "City of London" (a square mile of London which is the centre of banking and the site of the Great Fire). While there, visit St Andrew Undershaft Church (1532) which escaped the Great Fire and WWII bombing
- Stop at Dickens House Museum. (One of the houses Charles Dickens lived in) I visited this 5 years ago and was transported back in time as it was just so authentic. Many antiques and artifacts to see. Easily accessed by Piccadilly Subway line to Russell Street Station. Situated at 48 Doughty Street.
- Take a boat to Greenwich (Observatory, straddle the Greenwich Mean Time line from which all the world's times are measured, Navy College etc).
- Or take the Docklands Light Railway from Bank Underground station, enjoy superb views of Canary Wharf and the docklands re-development on the way and get off at Island Gardens station. Look across the Thames and take a photo of The Old Naval Hospital and its reflection, then descend by lift to the century-old foot-tunnel that curves down under the river and up to Greenwich, just by the Cutty Sark and Gypsy Moth IV. It's historic, unique and good exercise.
- Take a trip on the London Eye (don't book beforehand but wait until there is a clear day and be prepared to wait in a queue) – brilliant. Buy the slide out guide – well worth the cost.
- Take in a show at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.
- Queue for half price, same day theatre tickets from the special booth in the middle of Leicester Square.
- Be dazzled with a visit to the Bank of England's Silver Vaults - about 80 shops selling antique silver - you don't have to buy anything but it is an amazing sight of all that gleaming silver as you enter.
- Covent Garden is a great place to shop for unique funky things that scream "London". Perfect for knick knacks, groovy handbags, amusing t-shirts and a bustling sense of shopping.
- Take in a buffet roast dinner at the Strand Palace Hotel or dinner at the venerable Simpson's across the street for roasts and old-fashioned atmosphere.
- Drool over the food displays at Harrods Food Hall or Fortnum and Mason, the oldest and most famous food emporiums,
- Enjoy afternoon tea at one of posh hotels –pure theatre itself.
- Or pop into an old-fashioned pub for lunch.
- Take the tube to St John's Wood. Head towards Abbey Road, home of the infamous Abbey Road studios, where you can pay homage to the Fab Four and have taken the obligatory photo of you and three of

your best mates (or stand ins) on the Abbey Road crossing, per the Beatle's famous "Abbey Road" album cover.

- Take a tour of the Albert Hall.
- With my love of canals, I like to go to Little Venice neat Paddington Station, so nicknamed by the poet Robert Browning. With Regent's Canal running through the middle and ornate Italian replica villas peppered on either side, it's not hard to imagine Mr Browning being inspired by such romantic surroundings.
- There, hop on a canal boat, where you will glide past brightly decorated houseboats and the concrete monstrosity that is London Zoo, to reach your final destination of Camden Lock, which is opened and drained to allow your boat to dock. Camden is famous for Camden Markets especially on the weekends
- Spend a lot of time in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, St James's Park – they are beautiful and free.
- Weekend markets - No matter what your retail vice, London has something for everyone. Visit Portobello Road in Notting Hill W1 for antiques, jewellery and bric a brac on a Saturday, then get up early on Sunday for the beautiful Columbia Road, E2 flower markets. Or spend the entire weekend at Camden, N1 for the fun of it.
- I haven't been there for some years, but I loved the 'Museum of Gardening' at 5 Lambeth Palace Road, Lambeth, just south of the river. It is small and is housed in an old church with interesting stained glass windows. It is run by volunteers and has a great little parterre garden out the back. In the garden is the grand grave of Captain William Bligh.
- Then walk a short way to the Florence Nightingale Museum in the nearby St Thomas's hospital at 199 Westminster Bridge Road. When I was there, there was only one other visitor.
- just wander around fascinating London.
- Enjoy.

Marion