

Resources

— Inside knowledge

So far you've been inspired by the shops and the sights, the galleries and the gastropubs. But how best to get there? Herewith a guide to using London's labyrinthine transport system, a source of both pride and panic among many Londoners.

This is also the place to discover the slang, the soundtrack, the calendar and the come-rain-or-shine activities to make the most of your stay in the capital, whether you're here for a good time or a long time (or preferably, both).

Transport

Get around town

London has one of the most extensive transport networks in the world. Here's a rundown.

- 01 **Underground:** Here's how to get to grips with a London icon: 1. An Oyster card will save you time and money (ask station staff for more details); 2. Move down inside the carriage after boarding: it keeps passive-aggressive commuters happy; 3. Don't push the open-door button: it's redundant.
tfl.gov.uk
- 02 **Bus:** London buses have been given a makeover with the reintroduction of the classic Routemaster design (see our essay on page 74). Use contactless payment for your journey; it's £1.50 per trip with Oyster or your bank card.
tfl.gov.uk
- 03 **Bike:** Inspired by the public-bike schemes of our continental neighbours, London's bike-friendliness has vastly improved. "Boris Bike" rental costs £2 for 24-hour access then £2 per 30-minute period, with the first 30 minutes free.
tfl.gov.uk
- 04 **Boat:** Taking a Thames ferry will get you from A to B via a mix of landmarks that make hardened Londoners swell with pride. One way is £7.15.
tfl.gov.uk
- 05 **On foot:** London's Underground map can be deceptive: not all stops are mapped to scale. Above ground can be infinitely better than under.
- 06 **Private car and chauffeur:** For those who prefer a fuss-free experience, book an Addison Lee executive car.
addisonlee.com
- 07 **Flights:** If you're not flying commercial there are business airports close by, including Farnborough and Biggin Hill.
tagfarnborough.com; bigginhillairport.com

Vocabulary

Local lingo

British self-deprecation is an art form; play down rather than big up your grandesse. Cockney slang may be an anachronism but the following distilled terminology might just help a little.

- 01 **Blighty:** Great Britain
- 02 **Boozer:** pub
- 03 **Boris Bikes:** London's bicycle-rental scheme
- 04 **Fiver:** five pounds
- 05 **Loo:** toilet
- 06 **Offie:** shop selling alcohol
- 07 **Oyster:** travel card
- 08 **Pants:** underwear
- 09 **Quid:** pound
- 10 **Ta:** thanks

Soundtrack to the city

Five top tunes

From scene-defining clarion calls to lyrical paeans to the capital's charms, download our generation-spanning London playlist.

- 01 **The Kinks, 'Victoria':** Beyond their beautiful "Waterloo Sunset", the Kinks' "Victoria" – all bluesy riffs and doe-eyed nostalgia for London's heyday – still packs a punch.
- 02 **Pet Shop Boys, 'West End Girls':** The electro-pop pioneers' capital-inspired 1980s classic continues to fill dancefloors.
- 03 **Eddy Grant, 'Electric Avenue':** Although inspired by Brixton's riots, this joyous reggae-tinged hit speaks volumes of the area's pulse.
- 04 **Amy Winehouse, 'Back to Black':** Camden's most celebrated songstress's champagne moment, given melancholic resonance by her early demise.
- 05 **The Clash, 'London Calling':** The Joe Strummer-led punk band's allegiance to London is confirmed by the chorus's refrain: "I live by the river."

Best events

What to see

- 01 **London Collections: Men, various venues:** A biannual showcase of the trade's most striking menswear.
January & June, londoncollections.co.uk
- 02 **Boat race, Putney to Mortlake:** Oxford University's rowing team takes on Cambridge's in this river-based Battle of Britain.
April, theboatraces.org
- 03 **London Marathon, citywide:** The gruelling 26.2-mile loop of the city closes the streets and draws a jubilant crowd.
April, virginmoneylondonmarathon.com
- 04 **Wimbledon Championships:** The world's premium lawn-tennis competition; Pimm's and strawberries optional.
June-July, wimbledon.org
- 05 **Lovebox Festival, Hackney:** A weekend-long celebration of urban music and art.
July, loveboxfestival.com
- 06 **The Proms, Royal Albert Hall:** The summertime period when London is serenaded with the world's finest classical music.
July-September, bbc.co.uk/proms
- 07 **London Design Festival, various venues:** The city's cutting-edge showcase of contemporary and classic design.
September, londondesignfestival.com
- 08 **Open House London, citywide:** London's most fascinating buildings open their doors to the public.
September, openhouselondon.org.uk
- 09 **Frieze London, Regent's Park:** The world's leading contemporary-art fair touches down in the capital.
October, friezelondon.com
- 10 **London Film Festival, various venues:** Expect thrills, spills and gritty realism at the UK's premier film showcase.
October, bfi.org.uk/lff

Rainy day

Weather-proof activities

Londoners are no strangers to a spot of drizzle but bad weather doesn't spell bad news thanks to the numerous museums and indoor attractions on offer.

- 01 **British Museum:** Eight million objects, four wings, more than 250 years of history and zero admission fee. One of the world's most visited sites (and rightly so), the British Museum's commanding, comprehensive exhibits traverse the history of the nation and warrant multiple trips to even begin to get to grips with its scale. Just don't mention the Elgin marbles.
britishmuseum.org
- 02 **Curzon Victoria's film archive:** The new HQ for London cinema's most enduring chain, Curzon's Victoria outpost not only features an atmospheric bar and café but a mezzanine level also plays host to a cultural centre where visitors can recline in the leather armchairs and access an extensive archive of films for free, making it the perfect place to while away time between rain showers.
curzoncinemas.com
- 03 **Pub with a log fire:** Nothing beats a British boozier (just ask any expat Brit in Sydney what tops their miss-list) and never more so than in winter. Remove the scarf, hat, gloves and coat, grab a fireside stool and make yourself at home at one of the capital's finest hosteleries: *The Charles Lamb, Angel thecharleslambpub.com*
The Holly Bush, Hampstead hollybushhampstead.co.uk
The Palmerston, East Dulwich thepalmerston.co.uk

(For more pub ideas see Food and drink from page 28)

Sunny day

The great outdoors

On those occasions that the sun does come out, London comes alive. Here are three favourite outdoor excursions.

- 01 **The Southbank:** Under the shadow of the towering Shard is London Bridge Station and a spot to start a riverside walk past some of London's cultural flagbearers. Grab a coffee from Borough Market before heading west. Weave through wharves and warehouses until you hit the river, taking in the Tate Modern, Millennium Bridge, Royal Festival Hall, British Film Institute and Hayward Gallery near Waterloo Station. Then cross the bridge to Embankment and head to the atmospheric Gordon's Wine Bar for a cheeseboard.
- 02 **Alfresco swim:** The British weather does occasionally heat up and in London there are some excellent spots to swim in the open air. There are a number of beautifully preserved lidos – London Fields, Brockwell and Parliament Hill being just three – plus the tree-lined swimming ponds at Hampstead Heath, also frequented by ducks.
- 03 **River trip to Greenwich:** Stretching from Putney in the west to Woolwich in the east, the clipper ferries that traverse the Thames stop up and down the length of the river. Expect spectacular views as the city's chequered history unfolds. Gilded bridges, gleaming skyscrapers and repurposed warehouses stand out en route to historic Greenwich. Here the preserved and restored *Cutty Sark* – one of the original tea clippers – awaits your arrival ahead of a leisurely exploration of Greenwich's Market, Royal Observatory and – an essential – the Meantime Brewery.