



Tour London - Day 1

London, 1 Day

Table of contents:

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 4

London Snapshot 10

Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Get to know London with a flashy bus tour then explore the South Bank for stunning views of London. Take in the Tower of London, Tate Modern, Big Ben & Parliament and ride on the London Eye.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - London

DAY NOTE: To shake off that jet leg and become familiar with one of the world's famous cities...take a tour. Yes, it's touristy but it less than 3 hours visitors can view the highlights of the city and then decide which attractions warrant further exploration. Try a hop on, hop off style double decker bus tour with www.bigbustours.com or www.theoriginaltour.com departing from several locations. Tickets are good for 24 hours and usually come with an optional Thames river cruise. Make sure to get a bus with live commentary over the headphone tour. For the afternoon session head east for The Tower of London, one of most interesting historical spots for the entire family. The 1,000 year old site has been a palace, a prison, an arsenal, and even a zoo! Make sure to tag along with a Yeoman Warder for the 60 minute guided tour and visit the jaw-dropping Crown Jewels. The view towards Tower Bridge is a perfect photo backdrop. Kids will get a kick out of trying to make a Royal Guard laugh or watching the ravens who also help keep watch over the Tower. For lunch try one of the tasty cafes on site or try a cafe picnic to be taken on the lawn. Family activities and trail guides are available from the Information Center. Hint: Book online to avoid the crowds. Still have energy? Every visitor needs to stand along the Thames and take in the iconic landmarks of Big Ben & Parliament. I never tire of this sight, day or night, but there is something special about this dramatically lit spot in the dark. The BA London Eye offers night flights for a bird's eye view as well - book online to avoid the queue. Walk from the London Aquarium down the South Bank to the Tate Modern (open late on Fridays & Saturdays until 10pm) and over the Millennium Bridge to St. Paul's taking in street entertainers, skateboarders and the river itself. On route are plenty of places to eat: Wagamama, pizza at Gabriel's Wharf, and OXO Tower, to name a few. Should daytime hours be of more interest, go early (before 10am) to get the place to yourself.



Houses of Parliament

Seat of Power



London Eye

Rotating aerial view of London



Big Bus Tours

Hop on, hop off city bus tour



Tower of London

Beefeaters and Crown Jewels



Tower Bridge

Most Ornate Bridge in London



Tate Modern

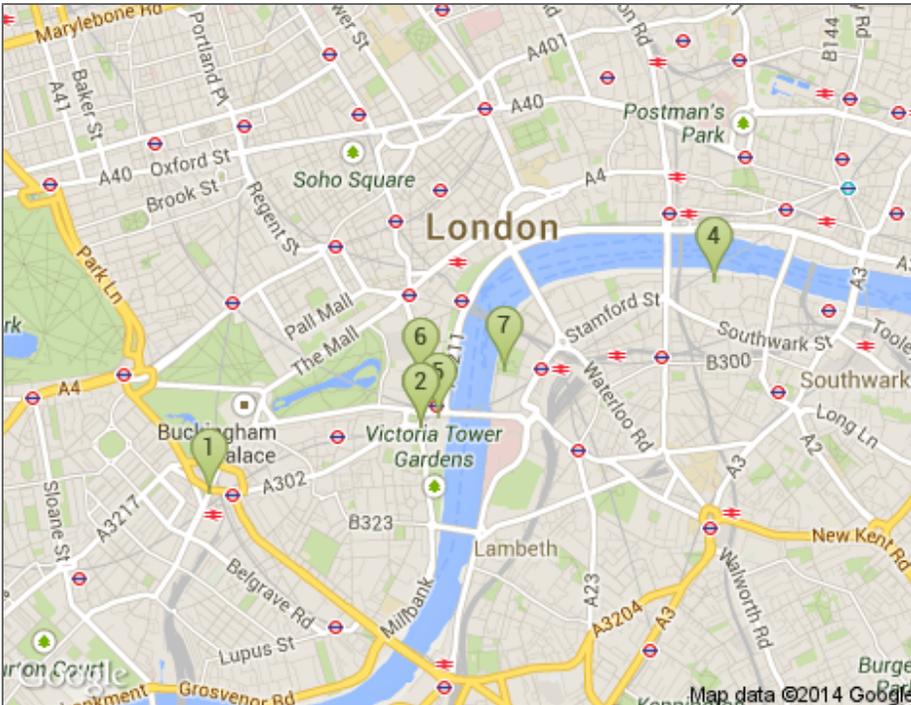
British and international modern art museum



Big Ben

Most famous clock in the world

Day 1 - London



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: To shake off that jet leg and become familiar with one of the world's famous cities...take a tour. Yes, it's touristy but it less than 3 hours visitors can view the highlights of the city and then decide which attractions warrant further exploration. Try a hop on, hop off style double decker bus tour with www.bigbustours.com or www.theoriginaltour.com departing from several locations. Tickets are good for 24 hours and usually come with an optional Thames river cruise. Make sure to get a bus with live commentary over the headphone tour. For the afternoon session head east for The Tower of London, one of most interesting historical spots for the entire family. The 1,000 year old site has been a palace, a prison, an arsenal, and even a zoo! Make sure to tag along with a Yeoman Warder for the 60 minute guided tour and visit the jaw-dropping Crown Jewels. The view towards Tower Bridge is a perfect photo backdrop. Kids will get a kick out of trying to make a Royal Guard laugh or watching the ravens who also help keep watch over the Tower. For lunch try one of the tasty cafes on site or try a cafe picnic to be taken on the lawn. Family activities and trail guides are available from the Information Center. Hint: Book online to avoid the crowds. Still have energy? Every visitor needs to stand along the Thames and take in the iconic landmarks of Big Ben & Parliament. I never tire of this sight, day or night, but there is something special about this dramatically lit spot in the dark. The BA London Eye offers night flights for a bird's eye view as well - book online to avoid the queue. Walk from the London Aquarium down the South Bank to the Tate Modern (open late on Fridays & Saturdays until 10pm) and over the Millennium Bridge to St. Paul's taking in street entertainers, skateboarders and the river itself. On route are plenty of places to eat: Wagamama, pizza at Gabriel's Wharf, and OXO Tower, to name a few. Should daytime hours be of more interest, go early (before 10am) to get the place to yourself.

contact:

tel: +44 20 7233 9533
fax: +44 20 7828 0638
<http://www.bigbustours.com/eng/london/custompage.aspx>

location:

48 Buckingham Palace Road
London London SW1W 0RN

1 Big Bus Tours

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Live commentary is much more informative than the standard headphones

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 Big Bus 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
<http://www.tower-of-london.org.uk>

location:

Off Tower Bridge Approach
London EC3N4AB

hours:

Mar-Oct Tues-Sat
9am-5:30pm, Sun-Mon
10am-5:30pm; Nov-Feb Tues-Sat
9am-4:30pm, Sun-Mon
10am-4:30pm

2 Tower of London

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Take a guided tour with a Yeoman Warder, included in the price of the ticket

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: 020/7403-3761
fax: +44 20 7357 7935
<http://www.towerbridge.org.uk>

location:

Tower Bridge
London SE1 2UP

hours:

Tower Bridge Experience Apr-
Sept daily 10am-6:30pm; off
season daily 9:30am-6pm

3 Tower Bridge

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Check the website for bridge lift times

DESCRIPTION: This is one of the world's most celebrated landmarks, and possibly the most photographed and painted bridge on earth. (Presumably, this is the one the Arizona businessman thought he was getting when he bought the London Bridge.) Despite its medieval appearance, Tower Bridge was built in 1894. An exhibition inside the bridge commemorates its century-old history; it takes you up the north tower to high-level walkways between the two towers with spectacular views of St. Paul's, the Tower of London, and the Houses of Parliament. You're then led down the south tower and into the bridge's original engine room, containing the Victorian boilers and steam engines that used to raise and lower the bridge for ships to pass. Multimedia exhibits in the towers illustrate the history of the bridge. © Frommer's



contact:

tel: 020/7887-8888
<http://www.tate.org.uk>

location:

Bankside
London SE1 9TG

hours:

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

4 Tate Modern

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Never pass without a peak into the Turbine Hall for the rotating large exhibit, it's free too

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



wcities

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: +44 20 7234 5800(Tourist Information)
<http://www.whitechapelbellfoundry.co.uk/bigben.htm>

location:

Parliament Square
London SW1A 0AA

5 Big Ben

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The bell weighs approximately 14 tons!

DESCRIPTION: Think of London and the very first image that springs to mind will be that of the grand clock towering over the Thames river. Big Ben is actually the nickname given to the bell inside the tower. The tower is officially called St. Stephen's Tower. Ben chimes every hour on the hour and the smaller bells ring every 15 minutes. Unfortunately, as much as it beckons, only UK residents are allowed to tour Big Ben and even this has to be arranged well in advance by their MP. The good news however is that next to the famous clock tower, the Houses of Parliament - which are made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons - can be toured by overseas visitors. The building which is home to both "houses" is the (former royal) Palace of Westminster, once home to the British monarchs. Every year in England, November 5th is commemorated with fireworks and bonfires which celebrate the foiled gunpowder plot of Guy Fawkes in 1605. Listen to the chimes of Big Ben
© NileGuide



contact:

tel: +44 20 7219 4272
<http://www.parliament.uk>

location:

Parliament Street
London SW1A 2AN

hours:

House of Commons: M & Tu 2.30p-7.30p; W 9.30a-2p; Th 11.30a-7.30p; F 9.30a-3p;
House of Lords: M-W 2.30p-7.30p; Thu 3p-7.30p; Fri 11a-7.30p

6 Houses of Parliament

DESCRIPTION: For over 900 years this impressive assemblage of Gothic buildings has been the home of British government. Indeed, no other place so potently symbolises democracy in the Western world. The building covers an area of eight acres and consists of 1,100 rooms, 100 staircases, 11 courtyards and over three kilometres of passages. The House of Lords occupies the southern end of the building whilst the House of Commons occupies the northern end. Within the Houses of Parliament there are also Westminster Hall, the Crypt Church, Members' Lobbies, the Commons Library and the Peers Library. Outside, the tower containing Big Ben remains the single most celebrated structure in this very picturesque riverside seat of British government. In order to attend PMQ (Prime Minister's Question Time) in the House of Commons' Strangers' Gallery, UK citizens need to contact their local MP in advance to ensure entry. Alternatively one



wcities

can queue at St Stephen's entrance but this may not prove successful. Admission is free. © wcities.com

contact:
tel: +44 870 500 0600
<http://www.londoneye.com>

location:
Riverside Building, County
Hall, Westminster Bridge
Road
London SE1 9TA

7 London Eye

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Closed the beginning of January each year for 2 weeks of annual maintenance

DESCRIPTION: Many Londoners were none too happy when in the 135 meter high Millennium Wheel (as was first known) was erected in 1999 to commemorate the "turning of the century". Now known simply as the London Eye, locals have softened and have even taken a ride or two in one of the 32 capsules which hold up to 25 people each. Views up to 25 miles can be observed on a clear day and evening rides are available to see an illuminated London. Weddings, private events and children's birthday parties are held within the London Eye's pods. Special packages are designed for every season and holiday, the wheel glows with matching lights for the occasion. Even with pre-booked capsules expect lines; however, entertainment in the area is abundant with street performers, a playground and a carousel. Grab the camera because the best part of the London Eye is the most breathtaking view of Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament across the Thames at ground level. A journey lasts approximately 30 minutes.

© NileGuide



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.

© NileGuide

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.

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.

© NileGuide