

A FARHOLM VISITOR'S GUIDE

London



Where to go, how to move, and the city beyond the postcard — gathered the way we'd plan it for you.

A short note from Farholm

London rewards the curious. It is less a single city than a loose federation of villages — each with its own square, market and mood — stitched together by the river and one of the world's great transit networks. You could spend a week on the famous sights alone, or a month and still find a street you've never walked.

This guide is the version we'd hand a client before a first trip: the landmarks worth your time, the neighbourhoods worth getting lost in, the practical things that make a visit feel easy, and the quieter places most itineraries miss. Use it to shape your days — then leave room to wander.

🕒 London at a glance



Money

Pound sterling (£). A card-first city — contactless works almost everywhere; you'll rarely need cash.



Power

Type-G three-pin sockets, 230 V. US/EU devices need an adapter.



Tap water

Free, safe and good. Carry a refillable bottle — most cafés will top it up.



Time & language

GMT (BST, +1, late Mar–late Oct). English. Drives on the left.



In an emergency

Dial 999 (or 112) for police, ambulance or fire. 111 for urgent, non-emergency NHS health advice.



Tipping

Restaurants usually add ~12.5% service; if not, rounding up is plenty. No need to tip at pubs or for counter service.



Entry — you now need a UK ETA

Most visitors — including from the US, EU, Canada and Australia — need a UK Electronic Travel Authorisation before they fly (British and Irish citizens are exempt). Apply online via the UK ETA app or gov.uk: around £20, valid two years, approved in minutes.

Contents



01 How London fits together

The river, the villages, and a map to orient by

02 The neighbourhoods

Where to base yourself and what each quarter is for

03 Can't-miss landmarks

The icons – with how and when to do them well

04 Beyond the postcard

Quieter places most visitors walk straight past

05 Museums & galleries

A world-class, mostly-free collection – plus what's new

06 Green London

The royal parks, heaths and gardens

07 Eating & drinking

Markets, pubs, afternoon tea and how Londoners eat

08 Theatre, music & markets

Nights out and where to browse

09 Getting around

Contactless, the Tube, buses, boats – and the airports

10 Practical essentials

Money, safety, connectivity and the small stuff

11 When to visit

Seasons, weather and the events worth timing

12 Day trips

Castles, spires and countryside within easy reach

13 Three days, well spent

Sample itineraries to adapt to your pace

14 Farholm's personal picks

Hotels, tables and experiences we book and love

Orient yourself by the river



The River Thames runs roughly west to east, and almost everything makes sense in relation to it. Most of the headline sights sit on the **north bank** — Westminster, the West End, the City. The **south bank** is the cultural riverside walk: the London Eye, Tate Modern, the Globe, Borough Market. The centre is compact and very walkable; reach for the Tube to cross longer distances, and the bus or your feet for everything in between.

London is organised into travel **zones** radiating out from the centre (Zone 1). Nearly all your sightseeing will be in Zones 1–2 — useful to know, because fares and daily caps are charged by zone.



London's villages

London isn't one centre but many. Pick the ones that match how you like to spend a day — then let the river and the Tube connect them.



Westminster & St James's

The ceremonial heart: Parliament and Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace and the royal parks. Grand, busy, and best early.

Good for — first-time landmarks, royal pageantry.



The West End – Soho, Covent Garden, Mayfair

London's theatre-and-dining engine. Soho for restaurants and bars, Covent Garden for street performers and shopping, Mayfair for the smart end of town.

Good for — eating out, theatre, people-watching.



The City

The original square mile — Roman walls, the Tower, St Paul's and glass towers side by side. Electric on weekdays, hushed at weekends.

Good for — history, skyline bars, weekend quiet.



South Bank & Bankside

The riverside culture mile: the London Eye, the National Theatre, Tate Modern and Shakespeare's Globe, strung along a walkable promenade.

Good for — a single great riverside walk.



Kensington & Chelsea

Stucco terraces, the great free museums (V&A, Natural History, Science), Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. Refined and green.

Good for — museums, parks, gentle days.



Shoreditch & the East

Brick Lane, Spitalfields and Columbia Road — street art, vintage, markets and a serious food and nightlife scene. Younger, scruffier, creative.

Good for — markets, bars, contemporary edge.



King's Cross & Camden

A regenerated canal-side quarter — Coal Drops Yard, Granary Square and the British Library — a short walk from Camden's market and music history.

Good for — design, canals, live music.



Notting Hill & Marylebone

Pastel houses and the Portobello antiques market to the west; village-y Marylebone with its high street, the Wallace Collection and Regent's Park.

Good for — strolling, boutiques, calmer corners.



Greenwich & the south

Maritime Greenwich, the Meridian line and Cutty Sark downriver; Brixton and Peckham inland for some of London's best, most diverse food.

Good for — riverside history, food adventures.

FARHOLM TIP

For a first visit, base yourself in or near **Zone 1** — Bloomsbury, Covent Garden, South Bank or South Kensington all put you within walking distance or one short hop of the major sights, and save you time and fares each day.

The icons, done well

You'll know these names already. The trick is timing and booking — here's how to enjoy the big sights without losing a day to queues.

Tower of London & the Crown Jewels

Book ahead · 2–3 hrs

Nearly a thousand years of fortress, palace and prison — and the Crown Jewels. Arrive at opening, and catch a free Yeoman Warder ('Beefeater') tour.

Westminster Abbey

Book ahead · 1.5 hrs

The coronation church and a thousand years of monarchs, poets and scientists in stone. Quieter late afternoon; closed to tourists on Sundays (services only).

Buckingham Palace & the Guard

Free to watch · arrive early

The royal residence. Changing the Guard happens on set mornings — check the day's schedule and stand near the Victoria Memorial, not the railings, for the view.

St Paul's Cathedral

Book ahead · 1.5 hrs

Wren's dome, the Whispering Gallery and 528 steps to a city-wide view. Closed to sightseers on Sundays.

The British Museum

Free · 2–3 hrs

The Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon sculptures, two million years of human history — and free to enter. Vast; choose two galleries rather than all of them.

A great view

Free options · book ahead

Skip the queues at the paid towers: book a free slot at the Sky Garden or Horizon 22 for the same skyline. The London Eye is still the classic, especially at dusk.

FARHOLM TIP

Book timed-entry tickets online **before** you travel for the Tower, the Abbey, St Paul's and any paid viewpoint — the on-the-day queues are the longest part of the visit, and some sell out in peak months.

The London most visitors miss

This is the part we love most — the places that don't make the top-ten lists but quietly make the trip. Many are free.



Sir John Soane's Museum

An architect's house left exactly as he died — a labyrinth of antiquities, mirrors and hidden paintings. Free, small, unforgettable. Holborn.



Sky Garden & Horizon 22

Two free, ticketed viewpoints high above the City — the same skyline the paid towers charge for. Book a slot in advance.



Hampstead Heath

Wild, hilly parkland with the city's best free view from Parliament Hill, swimming ponds, and Kenwood House (free) at the top.



Leadenhall & Postman's Park

A jewel-box Victorian market arcade (a Harry Potter location), and nearby, a tiny, moving memorial garden few visitors find.



Regent's Canal & Little Venice

Walk or take a narrowboat along the towpath from Little Venice through the zoo to Camden — a quiet, green seam through the city.



Maltby Street & Columbia Road

A railway-arch food market under the tracks near Bermondsey; and on Sundays, a riotous, fragrant flower market in the East End.



The Wallace Collection

A free national museum in a Marylebone townhouse — old masters, armour and a serene courtyard restaurant. Rarely crowded.



Eltham Palace & Dennis Severs' House

An Art Deco mansion grafted onto a medieval hall in the south-east; and a candle-lit 'time capsule' Georgian house in Spitalfields.

A world-class collection – much of it free

London's great national museums charge nothing for general admission (special exhibitions are ticketed). Donations are welcome, and very fair given what's inside.

Free to enter

- ▲ **British Museum** – World history, antiquities

- ▲ **National Gallery** – Western painting, Trafalgar Sq

- ▲ **Tate Modern** – Modern & contemporary art

- ▲ **Tate Britain** – British art, 1500–now

- ▲ **V&A** – Art, design & fashion

- ▲ **Natural History Museum** – Dinosaurs, the famous hall

- ▲ **Science Museum** – Tech, space, hands-on

- ▲ **National Portrait Gallery** – Faces of Britain

- ▲ **Imperial War Museum** – 20th-century conflict

- ▲ **The Wallace Collection** – Old masters in a townhouse

Worth paying for

- ▲ **Churchill War Rooms** – The wartime bunker – gripping; book ahead

- ▲ **Tower of London** – Crown Jewels & fortress history

- ▲ **Kew Gardens** – Vast botanic gardens & glasshouses

- ▲ **Shakespeare's Globe** – Theatre tours & standing-ticket plays

New for 2026

The **London Museum** opens in its dramatic new Smithfield home; **V&A East** brings the museum's collections to Stratford (with the David Bowie Centre); the **Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration** opens in Clerkenwell; and Battersea Power Station's **NEON** hosts a major *Ramses the Great* exhibition. Check opening dates close to your trip.

Parks, heaths & gardens

For a city of nine million, London is astonishingly green — nearly half of it is open space. The eight Royal Parks alone are reason to slow down.



Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens

The great central green lung — the Serpentine, the galleries, Kensington Palace and space simply to breathe.



St James's & Green Park

The royal parks between the palaces — pelicans, deckchairs and the best framed view of Buckingham Palace.



Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

Rose gardens, the open-air theatre and London Zoo; climb Primrose Hill at dusk for a postcard skyline.



Hampstead Heath

Wild and hilly, with bathing ponds and the city's finest free view from Parliament Hill.



Greenwich Park

Sweeping lawns up to the Royal Observatory and the Meridian, with Canary Wharf glittering across the river.



Kew & Richmond

Kew's botanic glasshouses (ticketed) and, next door, Richmond Park — 2,500 acres of free-roaming deer.



Battersea Park

A riverside Victorian park with a boating lake, the Peace Pagoda and a sub-tropical garden — and the regenerated Power Station a short walk along the Thames.



Holland Park

Kensington's most romantic green: the serene Kyoto Garden, roaming peacocks, and open-air opera under the stars through the summer.



Victoria Park

East London's best-loved park — lakes, good cafés and a Sunday food market, with the canal towpath leading back towards the City.

FARHOLM TIP

On a fine day, build a walk around a park rather than a sight: Westminster to Buckingham Palace through St James's Park, or South Kensington's museums followed by Hyde Park, makes for a gentler, more memorable day than racing between attractions.

How London eats

London is one of the world's great food cities — partly because it borrows from everywhere. Eat broadly: a market lunch, a curry in the East End, a Sunday roast, and at least one proper afternoon tea.



The markets

Borough for the famous stalls and produce, Maltby Street and Mercato for railway-arch energy, Brick Lane for bagels and curry. Go hungry and graze.



The pub

Order and pay at the bar (no table service), buy in 'rounds' with friends, and don't tip. A Sunday roast in a good gastropub is a rite of passage.



Afternoon tea

From grand hotels (book well ahead, smart dress) to relaxed tea rooms. A lovely, leisurely splurge — usually plenty for two to share.



Eat the city's range

London's signature meal is arguably a curry. Head to Brick Lane or Tooting for South Asian food, Chinatown for dim sum, Peckham and Brixton for African and Caribbean.



Coffee & bakeries

London takes its flat whites seriously. Seek out the independent roasters and the new wave of bakeries for the best mornings — a coffee and a pastry beats most hotel breakfasts.



A drink with a view

End a day high up: the free Sky Garden and Horizon 22, or a rooftop bar in Shoreditch or on the South Bank, trade a round for the best skyline in the city.

FARHOLM TIP

The best restaurants book up days or weeks ahead — reserve the ones you've set your heart on before you arrive. For everything else, lunch is often the same kitchen at a friendlier price, and walk-in counter seats are easier than tables.

Evenings out & browsing

On stage

- ▲ **West End theatre** — book ahead for big shows; for last-minute, the official **TKTS** booth in Leicester Square sells genuine same-day discounts (avoid touts).

- ▲ **Shakespeare's Globe** — standing 'groundling' tickets are a few pounds and a thrill.

- ▲ **Free music** — lunchtime recitals at St Martin-in-the-Fields and City churches; the Proms each summer at the Royal Albert Hall.

- ▲ **Opera & dance** — the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells, the home of modern dance, both reward a splurge.

- ▲ **Live & late** — Soho jazz, Camden's grassroots venues, and the South Bank's year-round programme.

Markets & browsing

- ▲ **Portobello Road** — antiques on Saturdays, Notting Hill colour any day.

- ▲ **Columbia Road** — Sunday flower market, East End patter.

- ▲ **Broadway & Spitalfields** — Saturday food and design; Old Spitalfields most days.

- ▲ **Coal Drops Yard** — design-led shopping by the King's Cross canal.

- ▲ **Camden Market** — crafts, street food and music history beside the canal.

- ▲ **Greenwich Market** — arts, antiques and food under a covered Georgian roof.

- ▲ **Cecil Court & Daunt Books** — for booklovers; Liberty and Fortnum & Mason for beautiful browsing.

FARHOLM TIP

Many markets are weekend-only and some are best on a single day — Portobello antiques on Saturday, Columbia Road flowers on Sunday. Check days before you plan your route, and arrive early for the pick of the stalls or late for the bargains.

Moving through the city

London's public transport is the easiest way to get around — and you don't need to buy anything in advance. Just tap a contactless card or phone.



Contactless is all you need

Tap your contactless bank card or phone wallet on the yellow readers — same fares as an Oyster card, with no £10 card fee or deposit. Tap in and out on the Tube and rail; tap once on buses.



Caps protect you

The system automatically caps what you pay: in Zones 1–2 that's about £8.90 a day and £44.70 a week (frozen until 2027). Travel all you like once you hit the cap — no need for a day pass.



Tube, Overground & Elizabeth line

The fastest way across town. The Elizabeth line speeds east–west and reaches Heathrow. The map is a diagram, not geography — central stops are often a short walk apart.



Buses, boats & bikes

Red buses are cheap, frequent and great for sightseeing (sit up top, front). Uber Boat by Thames Clippers runs scenic river services; Santander Cycles ('Boris bikes') are dotted everywhere.

One card per person. Don't tap two cards from the same wallet, or you may be charged twice.

Kids ride free. Under-11s travel free with a paying adult (up to four).

Apps to download. Citymapper and TfL Go give live routes, times and step-free guidance.

FARHOLM TIP

Stand on the right on escalators (the left is for walking), let passengers off before you board, and keep bags off seats. Locals navigate the rush-hour crush politely and fast — follow the flow and you'll feel like one.

From the airport into town



Five airports serve London. All have a clear, well-signed public-transport route into the centre — usually faster and far cheaper than a taxi.

Heathrow (LHR)

West

The Elizabeth line is the value choice into central London (~35–45 min, contactless). The Piccadilly line is cheapest and slowest; the Heathrow Express is fastest to Paddington but priciest.

Gatwick (LGW)

South

Gatwick Express to Victoria (~30 min), or Thameslink/Southern services that also stop at other central stations — often cheaper.

Stansted (STN)

North-east

Stansted Express to Liverpool Street (~50 min); budget coaches run too.

Luton (LTN)

North

A quick shuttle to Luton Airport Parkway, then Thameslink to St Pancras (~45 min total).

London City (LCY)

East

The closest — a few minutes on the DLR connects to the Tube and Elizabeth line.

FARHOLM TIP

Black cabs are iconic and their drivers know every street, but for airport runs a pre-booked car or the train usually beats the fare and the traffic. If you do take a taxi, only use licensed black cabs or a booked minicab — never an unbooked car that approaches you.

The small stuff that smooths a trip



Money

London is effectively cashless — card or phone is accepted almost everywhere, including buses. Keep a little cash only for the odd market stall.



Staying connected

An eSIM or roaming plan is easiest; free Wi-Fi is common in cafés, museums and on the Tube platforms. Check your provider's UK rates before you fly.



Staying safe

London is a safe city for visitors. Usual care in crowds: keep phones and bags secure, and be alert to phone-snatching from open hands near busy spots.



Power & devices

Type-G sockets, 230 V. Bring a UK adapter; most modern chargers handle the voltage, but check older appliances.



Water & loos

Tap water is free and excellent — carry a bottle. Public toilets are scarce; department stores, large stations and museums are your friends.



Hours & Sundays

Many shops close around 6pm and keep shorter Sunday hours. Pubs often stop serving food mid-afternoon. Plan big sights for weekday mornings.



Health & chemists

Pharmacies (Boots, Superdrug) handle minor ailments and advice. For non-emergencies call NHS 111; in an emergency, 999 or any hospital A&E. Travel insurance is worth carrying.



Left luggage

Most major stations and airports have left-luggage desks, and apps like Stasher and Radical Storage book a shop or hotel to hold your bags between check-out and your train.



Step-free & access

Not every Tube station has lifts — plan ahead with TfL's step-free map and the 'avoid stairs' setting in Citymapper. Buses are all low-floor and a reliable accessible option.

FARHOLM TIP

Save a few essentials offline before you go: your hotel address, the emergency number (999), Citymapper, and any timed-entry tickets. A power bank earns its keep on a long sightseeing day.

Timing your trip

London is a year-round city, but late spring and early autumn hit the sweet spot — kinder weather, lighter crowds and better prices. Whenever you come, pack layers and a small umbrella; the weather changes its mind often.



Spring (Mar–May)

Blossom and gardens, mild and bright; the Chelsea Flower Show in May. Our favourite window.



Summer (Jun–Aug)

Long days, parks in full swing, the Proms and Wimbledon; busiest and dearest. Notting Hill Carnival closes August.



Autumn (Sep–Nov)

Crisp, golden, and quieter after the school holidays — superb value and atmosphere. Another sweet spot.



Winter (Dec–Feb)

Christmas lights, markets and ice rinks; cold and dark early, but magical and low-season (bar the festive peak).



Worth timing for — Chelsea Flower Show (May), Wimbledon (Jun–Jul), the Proms (summer), Notting Hill Carnival (Aug), Christmas lights (Nov–Dec).



Best of the day — major sights at opening or late afternoon; markets early; viewpoints at golden hour.



For value — avoid school holidays and the festive fortnight; midweek stays and shoulder seasons cost noticeably less.

Easy escapes from the city

Some of Britain's finest castles, universities and countryside are an hour or so from a London terminus. Buy train tickets in advance for the best fares, and travel after the morning peak to save money.

Destination	Time	Getting there	What it's for
Greenwich	25 min	DLR / river boat	Maritime history, the Meridian, hilltop views (half-day, still in London)
Windsor	Under 1 hr	Train — Paddington/Waterloo	Windsor Castle and a handsome riverside town
Oxford	~1 hr	Train — Paddington/Marylebone	Dreaming spires, historic colleges and museums
Cambridge	~50 min	Train — King's Cross	Riverside colleges and punting on the Cam
Bath	~1.5 hrs	Train — Paddington	Roman baths and honey-stone Georgian crescents
The Cotswolds	1.5–2 hrs	Train — Paddington (Moreton-in-Marsh)	Storybook villages and gentle country walks
Stonehenge	~1.5 hrs + bus	Train — Waterloo to Salisbury	The prehistoric circle; pair with Salisbury Cathedral
Brighton	~1 hr	Train — Victoria/London Bridge	Seaside, the Lanes and the exotic Royal Pavilion
Hampton Court	~35 min	Train — Waterloo	Henry VIII's riverside palace and famous maze (half-day)
Harry Potter Studios	~20 min + shuttle	Train — Euston to Watford Jn	The Warner Bros. film sets — book well ahead

FARHOLM TIP

Windsor, Oxford and the Cotswolds combine beautifully into a single guided day if you'd rather not piece together trains. Tell us how you like to travel and we'll arrange the version — independent or chauffeured — that suits you.

Sample itineraries

A framework, not a schedule — built to be loosened. Each day stays in one part of the city to keep the walking pleasant and the Tube to a minimum.

DAY 1

Classic first-timer

Westminster, the parks and the West End

Morning	Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, then St James's Park to Buckingham Palace for the Guard.
Afternoon	Walk up to Trafalgar Square and the (free) National Gallery; tea in Covent Garden.
Evening	Dinner in Soho and a West End show — last-minute seats from the TKTS booth.

DAY 2

Historic City & the river

St Paul's to the Tower, and the South Bank

Morning	St Paul's Cathedral and the dome climb; cross the Millennium Bridge to Tate Modern (free).
Afternoon	Borough Market for lunch, then the Tower of London and Tower Bridge.
Evening	East to Shoreditch for dinner, street art and a buzzy bar scene.

DAY 3

Museums, parks & local life

South Kensington, Notting Hill and the Heath

Morning	Pick one great museum — the V&A, Natural History or Science Museum (all free).
Afternoon	Hyde Park, then west to Notting Hill and Portobello Road.
Evening	Up to Hampstead for a Heath sunset from Parliament Hill and a historic pub.

Places we book, and go back to

These aren't algorithm picks. They're addresses we hold for clients and return to ourselves — a good place to start, and exactly the kind of thing we'd tailor to you.

Where we'd stay



Park Hyatt London River Thames

The brand's first UK hotel (opened 2024) on the regenerated south-bank riverside — a serene spa with skyline views, with Battersea Park and the Power Station on the doorstep.

Nine Elms · riverside



Conrad London St. James

Polished and superbly placed for the landmarks — steps from St James's Park, Westminster Abbey and Buckingham Palace. Our pick for a first, sight-led trip.

Westminster



London Hilton on Park Lane

A Mayfair classic overlooking Hyde Park, with the long-running Galvin at Windows restaurant and its skyline bar up on the 28th floor.

Mayfair

Where we'd eat

Dishoom SEVERAL BRANCHES

Bombay-style all-day café — the bacon naan and black daal have a cult following. Lively; go off-peak or expect a queue.

Palm Court Brasserie COVENT GARDEN

A handsome 1920s-style Parisian brasserie — moules, steak frites, duck confit. Made for a pre-theatre dinner.

Circolo Popolare FITZROVIA

Big Mamma's gloriously over-the-top Italian beneath a wall of bottles. A real occasion — book well ahead.

Imad's Syrian Kitchen KINGLY COURT, CARNABY

Heartfelt, generous Syrian sharing plates from a Damascus chef. Michelin-listed and genuinely great value.

Fallow ST JAMES'S

Sustainable, nose-to-tail modern British from two ex-Heston chefs. Inventive, B-Corp, and deservedly busy.

Bocca di Lupo SOHO

Jacob Kennedy's regional Italian small plates; sit at the marble counter. (Gelupo gelato is just across the road.)

And what we'd have you do

A handful of experiences we point people to again and again — from the city's newest view to its oldest fortress.



Lift 109

A glass lift up a Battersea Power Station chimney to a 360° view at 109 metres, with a slick exhibition below.

Battersea · book a slot



Tower of London

The Crown Jewels and a thousand years of history — the Yeoman Warder tour is the best free guide in the city.

The City · book ahead



Borough Market

London's most famous food market — graze the stalls, then settle in nearby. Liveliest Friday and Saturday.

London Bridge



Greenwich Park

Climb to the Royal Observatory for the Meridian line and the classic riverside skyline view across to Canary Wharf.

Greenwich



Portobello Road Market

Notting Hill's mile of antiques, vintage and colour. Saturday is the full market in its glory.

Notting Hill · Saturdays



Parliament Tour

Step inside the Houses of Parliament — the Commons, the Lords and medieval Westminster Hall.

Westminster · book ahead

FARHOLM TIP

Several of these — the Tower, Lift 109 and a Parliament tour among them — need timed tickets booked ahead, and the best tables go quickly. Tell us your dates and we'll hold the right ones before they're gone, and weave them into days that actually flow.

LET'S PLAN YOURS

This is the public map. The private one is the trip we'd build around you.



Everything here is a starting point. The real value is in the details — the right neighbourhood for how you travel, tables and tickets held before they sell out, a day trip arranged so it feels effortless, and someone to call if a plan needs to change.

When you're ready to turn this into a trip, we're here.

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