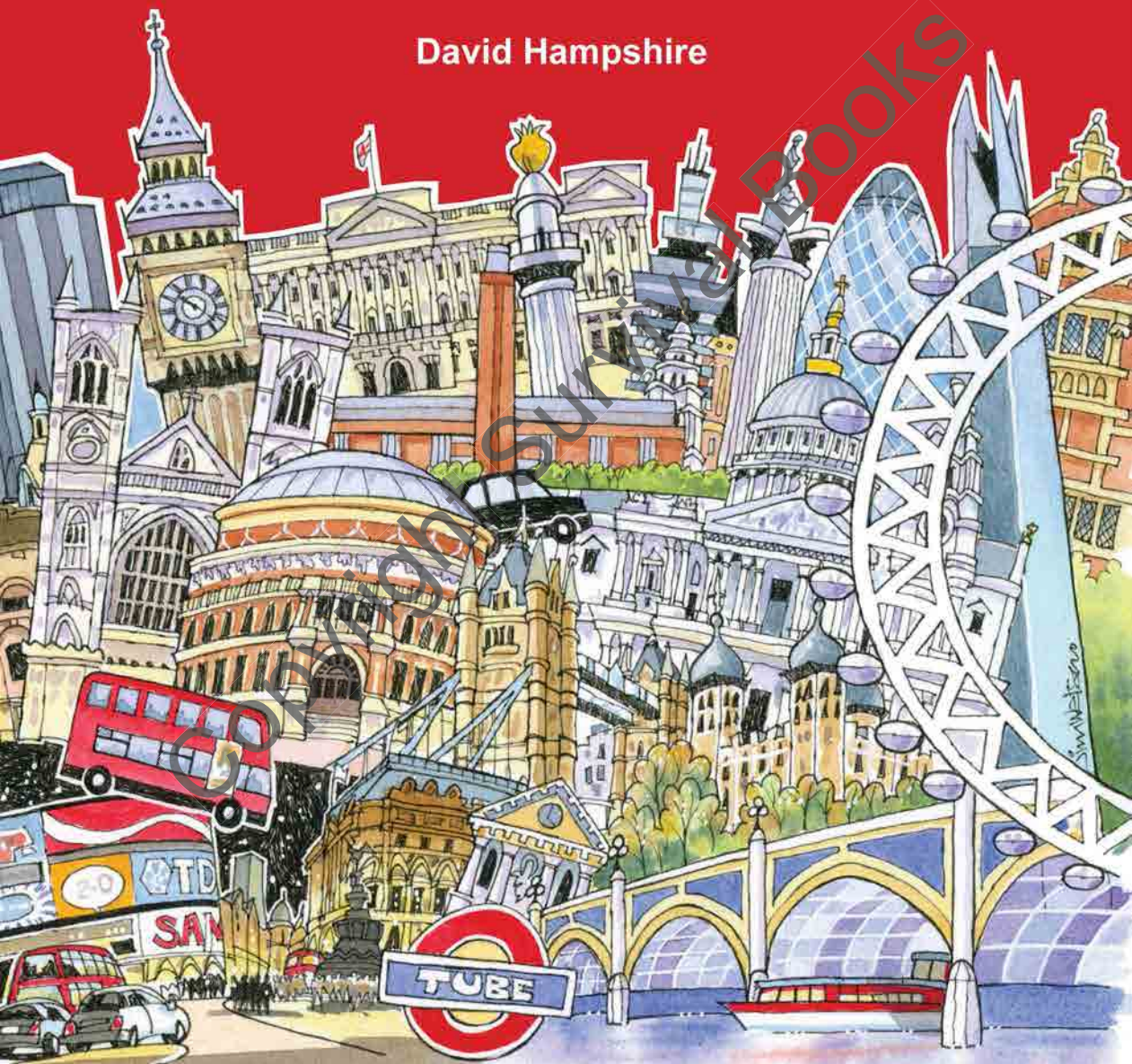


A YEAR IN LONDON

Two Things To Do Every Day Of The Year

David Hampshire



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ROYAL ALBERT HALL



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IMPORTANT

While every care has been taken to ensure that the information in this book is accurate, the dates and timing of events can change at short notice, while some may even be cancelled! Bear in mind that the exact dates for some events had not been confirmed when this book went to press – and some days/dates change each year (shown by  after the address) – therefore it's advisable to confirm by telephone or check the website before travelling.

DISABLED ACCESS

Many buildings – particularly old buildings – don't offer wheelchair access or may allow access to the ground floor only. Wheelchairs are provided at some venues, although users may need assistance. Contact venues if you have specific requirements.

Readers' Guide

The notes below will help you get the most from *A Year in London*:














- ◆ **Contact Details:** These usually include the address, telephone number, website and the nearest tube or rail station, where applicable. You can also travel to most venues by bus and to some by river ferry, although some are best reached by car. Bear in mind, however, that parking can be difficult or impossible in many areas, particularly in central London, and even parking nearby can be a problem. You can enter the postcode to display a map of the location on Google (and other map sites).
- ◆ **Timing:** This book suggests two things to do a day, usually in the same area. We are not suggesting that readers necessarily do both in one day – indeed it may not be feasible to do so – but simply offering a choice. However, as one suggestion is often a café, pub or restaurant, it's often possible to enjoy both activities on the same day.
- ◆ **Bookings:** While the majority of places listed in this book can be visited spontaneously and are open on most days, some require you to make bookings or buy tickets in advance. For example, bookings are usually required for popular restaurants and gastropubs. When it's necessary to book or buy tickets before visiting, it's indicated by a telephone symbol (☎) after the contact details (a telephone symbol with a line through it indicates that booking isn't possible and you just have to turn up).
- ◆ **Cost:** We haven't listed entry fees as these are liable to change at short notice (and can be checked via websites). Places and events offering free entry – which includes many museums and galleries – are indicated by 'free' after the address. Note that a few churches and cathedrals charge non-worshippers an entry fee (indicated).
- ◆ **Restaurants, Pubs & Cafés:** We have provided a price guide for eateries – based on two courses and a drink – as follows:

£ **Inexpensive:** less than £20 per head
££ **Moderate:** between £20 and £40 per head
£££ **Expensive:** from £40 per head (the sky's the limit!)

The vast majority of eateries listed in this book fall into the first two categories. Where no price guide is given, e.g. some cafes and pubs, you can assume that the venue is relatively inexpensive.

Note that prices are subjective – one man's moderate is another's very expensive – and London prices are often much higher than in other parts of the UK (and worldwide!). However, many restaurants – even the most expensive and exclusive – offer good value set menus at lunchtime and early evening, e.g. pre-theatre meals. These can be a real bargain, given the general high quality of food on offer.

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Introduction

Welcome to ***A Year in London***, an exhaustive guide to 365 days in the most exciting, inspiring, beguiling, engaging city in the world! London is a vast, sprawling collage of a city that's like no other, with so much to thrill, fascinate, divert and intrigue you. What began as a Roman trading port 2,000 years ago has swallowed up a thousand villages, hamlets and settlements, and now covers an area of more than 600 square miles with a population of over 8 million. London wasn't planned as a grand design but evolved piecemeal over many centuries to become what it is today: a chaotic and haphazard ever-changing metropolis with a wealth of attractions, both ancient and modern.

London is a world leader in many fields, including architecture, art, business, design, fashion, film, gastronomy, music, publishing, shopping, sport, theatre, television and much more. It's also (officially) the world's most cosmopolitan and racially diverse city, which adds immeasurably to its cultural and culinary wealth (in London you can literally eat your way around the world). Its social scene is a lot like the city itself – vibrant, diverse and in a constant state of flux – blending traditional and cutting-edge, world-class and run-of-the-mill, brilliant and bizarre, grimy and glorious. Above all, London is a cool city that doesn't take itself too seriously.

London is also the world's leading tourist destination – attracting over 30 million visitors a year – with more world-class attractions than any other city: fascinating museums and galleries; beautiful parks and gardens; majestic palaces and grand houses; superb restaurants and bars; innovative theatre, cinema and comedy; pioneering music



George Inn, EC1



Notting Hill Carnival



Parliament Hill, Hampstead Heath

and dance; and much more. While ***A Year in London*** doesn't neglect the star attractions, it also takes you off the beaten track to many lesser-known but no less worthy places – the 'secret' hidden corners beloved by long-time Londoners.

Whether your idea of a good time is a stroll around an art gallery or a frenzied dance at a hip nightspot, an evening at the theatre or a night in a pub downing pints of real ale, you'll find it in London. Whether you're nine or 90, a drinker or a thinker, gay or straight, night owl or early bird – you'll never lack things to do in this charismatic capital. From refined to hair-raising, laid-back to frantic, arty to artless, we've included activities that will add a bit of spice to anyone's life.

The variety and number of London's leisure opportunities is boundless – conservative estimates put it at over 1,500 events every week – and ***A Year in London*** can only provide a snapshot of the possibilities. Nevertheless, we've tried to include something for everyone – singles and couples, families and kids, the young and young at heart, and everyone in between. There are two suggestions for every day of the year – contrasting or complementary – adding up to around 750 activities, so there's no shortage of inspiration.

As the great man of letters Samuel Johnson famously said, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford", a sentiment that's even more relevant today than when Johnson voiced it in 1777. In London there's always something new, unexpected or unexplored to capture your imagination and fire your enthusiasm.

So when you're seeking something to prise you off the sofa on a Sunday afternoon or a diversion to keep the kids amused, entertaining an out-of-town friend or trying to impress a special date, you're bound to find something interesting to do in London. **All you need is a sense of adventure, an open mind – and this book!**

Long live London!

David Hampshire

August 2013



peacock, Kew Gardens



Eltham Palace



Weburn Walk, WC1



January

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1 January

Happy New Year!



Start the new year with the spectacular London New Year's Day Parade. From humble beginnings in 1987, the parade has evolved into one of the world's great street spectacles with up to 10,000 performers from across the world. The cast of dancers, acrobats, cheerleaders, musicians and more assembles in the heart of the city for a colourful celebration combining exuberant contemporary performance with pomp and ceremony. The parade starts around 11.45am on Piccadilly (outside the Ritz Hotel), wending its way along Piccadilly Circus, Lower Regent Street, Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, Cockspur Street, Trafalgar Square and Whitehall, finishing in Parliament Street at around 3pm.

London New Year's Day Parade (londonparade.co.uk, free).



Round off a splendid start to the year with a five-star meal at Lima, one of London's most innovative restaurants. Chic and cool, Lima is representative of the recent gastronomic renaissance in Peru, combining Britain's best ingredients with unique organic and wild produce from small Peruvian growers. The result is a treat for the eyes and taste buds. Start with the Pisco cocktail menu, where the *Cuento del Diablo* (Devil's Story) – spicy with a sweet strawberry kick and devil horns – is a knockout! Dishes are meant to be shared, particularly the starters, so don't hold back. A lovely restaurant with a chic ambiance, fantastic food, friendly service and cocktails to die for. Booking essential. ¡Buen provecho!

Lima, 31 Rathbone Place, W1T 1JH (020-3003 2640, limalondon.com, Tottenham Court Rd tube, £££, 🍷).



If you can't get a table at Lima, try 10 Greek Street (W1D 4DH), Burger & Lobster (29 Clarges Street, W1J 7EF), MEATliquor (74 Welbeck Street, W1G 0BA), Pitt Cue Co. (1 Newburgh Street, W1F 7RB) or Polpo (41 Beak Street, W1F 9SB). You may have to queue, but none of these acclaimed restaurants (and many others) accept bookings in the evenings.

2 January

Keeping Up with the (Peter) Jones's

Indulge yourself at the new year sales at Peter Jones in Sloane Square, noted for its stylish fashion and homewares. PJs was founded in 1877 in two small shops and was acquired by John Lewis in 1905. The current department store (Grade II* listed) was built between 1932 and 1936 and was the first modern use of the glass curtain wall in Britain.

Peter Jones, Sloane Sq, SW1W 8EL (020-7730 3434, johnlewis.com/our-shops/peter-jones, Sloane Sq tube).

Round off the perfect day with a play at the Royal Court, London's coolest theatre. The Royal Court Theatre occupies a splendid Victorian-era building and is the de facto home of modern English theatre; it staged John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* in 1956, seen as the starting point of modern British drama, and the *Rocky Horror Show* also premiered at the theatre in 1973.

Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Sq, SW1W 8AS (020-7565 5000, royalcourttheatre.com, Sloane Sq tube, 🚶).



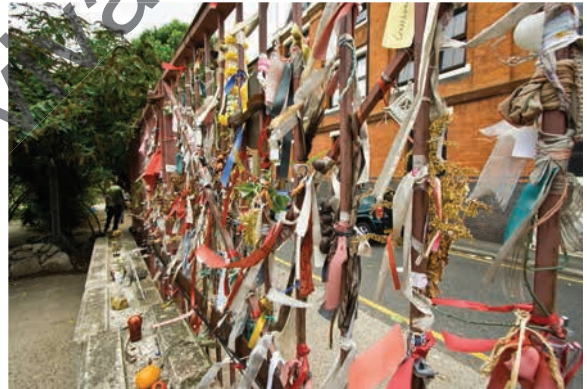
Peter Jones

3 January

Bones & Boots on Bankside

Pay homage to the 'Winchester Geese' in Cross Bones Graveyard, a post-medieval burial ground in Southwark. It's believed to have been an unconsecrated graveyard for 'single women' – a euphemism for prostitutes – known locally as Winchester Geese as they were licensed by the Bishop of Winchester. There's no access to the actual burial ground, but the site has become a shrine for those buried here.

Cross Bones Graveyard, Redcross Way, SE1 1YJ (crossbones.org.uk, Borough tube).



Cross Bones Graveyard

Enjoy a glass of wine at The Boot & Flogger, which looks and sounds like a pub but is actually a wine bar. Although almost 50 years old, the atmosphere is redolent of a much earlier period, its wood panelling and leather armchairs suggesting the bonhomie of a gentlemen's club. The list of fine wines contains some serious Bordeaux and Burgundy vintages.

The Boot & Flogger, 10-20 Redcross Way, SE1 1TA (020-7407 1184, davy.co.uk/bootandflogger, Borough tube, £).

4 January

At the Sharp End

Enter the magical world of glassblowing at the London Glassblowing Studio & Gallery. Established by Peter Layton in 1976, the LGS was among the first hot-glass studios in Europe and remains one of its leading glassmaking workshops, noted for its flair in the use of colour, form and texture. The gallery is an Aladdin's cave of unique works of glass art.

London Glassblowing Studio & Gallery, 62-66 Bermondsey St, SE1 3UD (020-7403 2800, londonglassblowing.co.uk, Borough tube, free).

See London in miniature from Europe's highest building, The Shard, completed in 2012. You can experience the view from The Shard's viewing platform (68th floor, 800ft), but it's best to avoid the astronomical fee and have lunch or dinner at one of the Shard's three restaurants: Aqua Shard, Hutong and Oblix. Not a cheap option, but at least the view's free!

The Shard, 32 London Bridge St, SE1 (020-7478 0540, shard.com/restaurants, London Bridge tube, £££, 🍷).



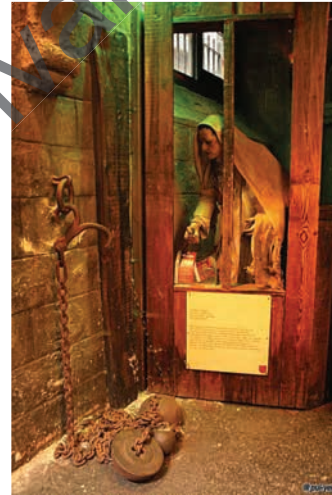
The Shard

5 January

Thumbscrews & Corkscrews

Do some time in the Middle Ages at the Clink Prison Museum, which tells the story of one of England's oldest and most notorious prisons. The Clink (which gave rise to the expression 'being in clink') was the Bishop of Winchester's infamous jail from 1144 to 1780, when it was burned down during anti-Catholic riots.

Clink Prison Museum, 1 Clink St, SE1 9DG (020-7403 0900, clink.co.uk, London Bridge tube).



Raise a glass (or three) and have a tasty meal at Vinopolis, a temple to Bacchus housed in the stunning Victorian railway arches of London Bridge. Vinopolis offers a self-guided wine tour (at your own pace) of the world's most famous wine regions (with tastings along the way) employing the latest technology and interactive features. Round off your visit with a delicious meal in Vinopolis' excellent restaurant, Cantina.

Vinopolis, 1 Bank End, SE1 9BU (020-7940 8300, vinopolis.co.uk, London Bridge tube, ££, 🍷).

6 January


On the Twelfth Day of Christmas...



Celebrate Twelfth Night or Epiphany in Bankside, the twelfth day of Christmas and traditionally the end of the festive season (the day before the general return to work on Plough Monday). The festival combines ancient seasonal customs – The Green Man, The Mummers, King Bean and Queen Pea, The Kissing Wishing Tree and Wassailing – along with contemporary festivities. It's free to all and takes place whatever the weather.

Twelfth Night (thelionspart.co.uk/twelthnight, free, )

Drop in at The Anchor & Hope, one of London's best-known gastropubs. It's a no-frills venue, with minimal décor, bare wooden tables and bright art on the walls, while the menu is chalked on a board. The food is robust British fare, served in 'hearty portions using the finest fresh ingredients'. If you need to wait there are inventive bargain-priced cocktails.

The Anchor & Hope, 36 The Cut, SE1 8LP (020-7928 9898, Southwark tube, ££, )

7 January

Read all About it!

See the *Magna Carta* and Shakespeare's *First Folio* (and much more) at the British Library's Sir John Ritblat Gallery. Named in honour of its major donor, it contains a permanent display of over 200 of the world's rarest and most precious manuscripts and books, including sacred texts, historically important documents, landmarks of printing, masterpieces of illumination, and much more.

British Library, Sir John Ritblat Gallery, 96 Euston Rd, NW1 2DB (0843-208 1144, bl.uk/whatson/permgall/treasures, King's Cross St Pancras tube, free).



Have a wee dram or a pint of Guinness at Filthy MacNasty's Whiskey Café in the City. This popular venue specialises in whiskey (or whisky) and Guinness, but isn't a clichéd theme bar. As you might expect, there's a wide selection of whisky (Scotch) and whiskey (Irish and American) – but MacNasty's is also noted for its live music, music quizzes and literary readings.

Filthy MacNasty's Whiskey Café, 68 Amwell St, EC1R 1UU (020-8617 3505, filthymacnastys.co.uk, Angel tube, £).

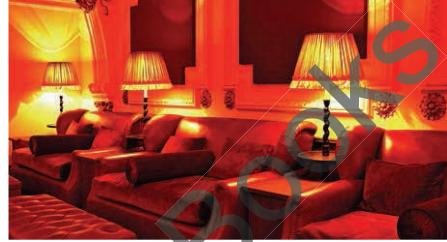
8 January

Power-Packed Portobello

Enjoy a meal or pre-movie snack at the Electric Diner, adjacent to the Electric Cinema, open from 8am to late (midnight Mon-Wed, 1am Thu-Sat, 11pm Sun). It's an on-trend, gleaming/grungy, traditional American-style diner, with a long row of bar stools flanked by booths (banquettes), a no-reservation policy and an American soundtrack from the diner's reel-to-reel tape machine.

The friendly, efficient staff serve a French-American menu – in American-size portions (one serving is more than enough for two) – including the fried house-made bologna sandwich, roasted bone marrow with beef cheek marmalade, cheeseburger, and honey-fried chicken with chilli and sesame seeds, followed by chocolate pie topped by a mountain of cream – all very tasty but not for the faint-hearted (or dieters!). The bar is a handy spot to enjoy well-mixed cocktails, a thoughtful wine list and a choice of some 20 beers.

Electric Diner, 191 Portobello Rd, W11 2ED (020-7908 9696, electricdiner.com, Ladbroke Grove tube, £).



See a movie at the beautiful Electric Cinema (next door to the Electric Diner), London's first purpose-built cinema which opened in 1910. Since then it has been renamed (in the '30s), re-launched (in the '60s) and even had a notorious mass murderer (John Christie) work there in the '40s. In the '90s it was purchased by architect Gebler Tooth, who upgraded the building with new WCs, air-conditioning, a restaurant and an upstairs private members club. Now Grade II* listed, once you step inside you're transported back to the '30s, with comfortable leather armchairs, footstools and side tables offering unparalleled comfort. There are even a number of 2-seater sofas (at the rear) and double beds (!) in the front row, providing a unique cinematic experience; individual cashmere blankets complete the picture. Cinema heaven! The films aren't bad either.

Electric Cinema, 191 Portobello Rd, W11 2ED (020-7908 9696, electriccinema.co.uk, Ladbroke Grove tube, 📞),

9 January

Carnivores' Celebration

Get up early to visit Smithfield Market (Mon-Fri from 3am), carnivorous hub of the capital's food industry and one of the world's largest meat markets. Smithfield is London's oldest market – dating back over 800 years (when it was also a place of execution) – housed in an imposing Victorian building. Don't leave without buying a few tasty morsels for dinner.

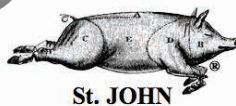
Smithfield Market, 201-232 Charterhouse St, EC1M 6JN (020-7248 3151, smithfieldmarket.com, Barbican tube).



Smithfield Market

There's nowhere better to celebrate man's love of meat than to have a mighty carnivorous meal at the St John Bar and Restaurant Smithfield. Housed in a former Georgian townhouse/smokehouse around the corner from the market, St John's is one of Britain's (and the world's) best restaurants and a London institution. Not cheap, but somewhere for a special treat.

St John Bar & Restaurant Smithfield, 26 St John St, EC1M 4AY (020-7251 0848, stjohnsgroup.uk.com/smithfield, Barbican tube, £££, 🍷).



St. JOHN

10 January

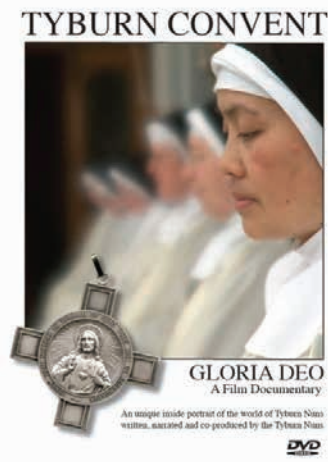
Nuns, Martyrs & Michelin Stars

Take a tour of Tyburn Convent, founded in 1901 and dedicated to the memory of the martyrs executed at nearby Tyburn Tree gallows (and elsewhere) for their Catholic faith. Around 105 Roman Catholics were hanged at Tyburn during the Reformation (1535-1661). It's a cloistered community of around 25 Benedictine contemplatives who never leave their enclosed walls.

Tyburn Convent, Hyde Park Place, W2 2LJ (020-7723 7262, tyburnconvent.org.uk, Marble Arch tube, free),

Enjoy lunch or dinner – and a glass of champagne – at the Texture Restaurant & Champagne Bar, which is both conventional and inventive at the same time, and won a Michelin star in 2010. Texture's cuisine is modern European with Icelandic influences, including Icelandic Cod, Icelandic Lamb from Skagafjörður, and Icelandic herbs and skyr (yogurt).


Texture Restaurant & Champagne Bar, 34 Portman St, W1H 7BY (020-7224 0028, texture-restaurant.co.uk, Marble Arch tube, £££, 🍷).




11 January

Whatever Floats Your Boat

Cast off at the London Boat Show, one of Europe's largest exhibitions of boats and water craft. It features some 500 exhibitors showcasing everything from 1.4m sailing dinghies to 37m tri-deck motor yachts, while displays include indoor canoeing, sailing, tall ships, historic vessels and a marina (in the Royal Victoria Dock) containing some of the largest boats in production.

London Boat Show, ExCeL Exhibition Centre, 1 Western Gateway, Royal Victoria Dock, E16 1XL (londonboatshow.com, Custom House DLR, )

Have a delicious Chinese meal at Yi-Ban, one of Docklands' best restaurants. The vast, sleek dining room – with a bar and terrace – overlooks the London Regatta Centre and London City Airport. Yi-Ban has a traditional vast Chinese menu, including classic dishes and dim sum, with particular emphasis on fish and seafood.

Yi-Ban, London Regatta Centre, Dockside Rd, Custom House, E16 2QT (020-7473 6699, yi-ban.com, Custom House DLR, )



London Boat Show

12 January

Put Your Best Foot Forward

See how the pros do it at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, the UK's leading dance house showcasing the most dynamic and innovative dance. Sadler's Wells is dedicated to producing, commissioning and presenting the best of international and UK dance, and crossing the boundaries between different art forms. Get your heart racing – without working up a sweat!

Sadler's Wells Theatre, Rosebery Ave, EC1R 4TN (020-7863 8198, sadlerswells.com, Angel tube, )



Dance the night away at Fabric, a 'super club' with a 2,500 capacity housed in a 25,000ft² ex-cold meat store (opposite Smithfield Market) in Clerkenwell. The club has five sound systems and Europe's first bass-loaded 'bodysonic' dance floor, where sections are attached to 400 bass transducers that emit bass frequencies allowing you to feel the music in your body. With unisex toilets!

Fabric, 77A Charterhouse St, EC1M 6HJ (020-7336 8898, fabriclondon.com, Farringdon tube, )



13 January

Spectacular St Pancras



Admire the architecture and sculptures at St Pancras International Station, London's most majestic railway terminus. The famous roof contains some 2.5 acres of glass, equal to almost two football pitches or 38 tennis courts! The station underwent a major redevelopment in the last decade, when the stunning Midland Grand Hotel (1873-1935) was reincarnated as the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel. It's home to two of London's most beloved statues: *The Meeting Place*, a 9m tall bronze by Paul Day, and the *Beetjeman* statue by Martin Jennings which pays tribute to the poet Sir John Beetjeman (1906-1984) who was responsible for saving the station from demolition in the '60s; there's also a station pub, The Beetjeman Arms, named in his honour.

St Pancras International Station, Euston Rd, N1C 4QP (020-7843 7688, stpancras.com, King's Cross St Pancras tube).



The Meeting Place, Paul Day



See weird and wonderful work by wacky artists at the Horse Hospital, London's premier venue for underground and avant-garde media. As the name suggests, the building was once a home for sick and injured horses; many references to its former life remain including a horse ramp, tethering rings, cast iron pillars and the cobbled floor. Nowadays it's a progressive arts venue for artists practising outside the mainstream, whether it's painting, film, fashion, literature, music or performance art.

Horse Hospital, Colonnade, Bloomsbury, WC1N 1JD (020-7833 3644, thehorsehospital.com, Russell Sq tube).

Enjoy a glass of champagne or lunch at Searcys St Pancras Grand Brasserie & Champagne Bar (searcyschampagnebars.co.uk, ££), the longest in Europe at 96m, a haven from the hustle and bustle of the station concourse.

14 January

Mime & Dine

Celebrate the art of storytelling while keeping schtum at the London International Mime Festival, which spans two weeks of the freshest and most inventive physical theatre, dance, circus, puppetry and live art at top arts venues across London. If you thought mime was all about white-faced clowns plagued by invisible glass and strong winds, the Mime Festival will make you think again. Encompasses a breathtaking range of work.

London International Mime Festival (mimelondon.com, 📞, 📍).

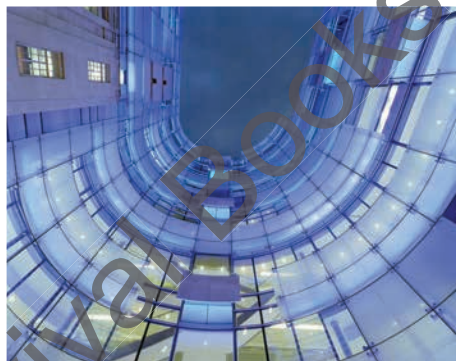


Enjoy an elegant dinner at Bob Bob Ricard, which serves eclectic English-Russian cuisine to its cosseted clientele in one of London's most glamorous all-booth dining rooms (a deluxe diner). While invariably good, the food gets mixed reviews, but the sumptuous, decadent décor (in turquoise, pink and gold!) is a riot and the banquettes have a champagne button – how cool is that?

Bob Bob Ricard, 1 Upper James St, W1F 9DF (020-3145 1000, bobbobricard.com, Piccadilly Circus tube, £££, 📞).

15 January

Behind the Scenes at the Beeb



BBC Broadcasting House

Take a tour of BBC Broadcasting House, the Beeb's Art Deco HQ since 1932. The tours (daily, 1½ hrs) are informative, interesting and fun, with tour guides bringing to life the work of the BBC's new, state-of-the-art, multimedia broadcasting centre. Experience a camera's eye view via a big screen of some of the live studios, such as the Six O'clock News and Radio 1.

BBC Broadcasting House, Portland Place, W1A 1AA (bbc.co.uk/showsandtours/tours/bh_london.shtml, Oxford Circus tube, 📞).

Embark on a sensory dining journey at Archipelago, amid the glow of golden Buddhas, dwarf palm trees and giant peacock feathers (Indiana Jones would be at home here). If you fancy yourself as an intrepid diner you should enjoy Archipelago, where hallmark dishes include (ethically-sourced) crocodile, wildebeest, kangaroo, ostrich and zebra, among other exotic creatures (there are also 'normal' and vegetarian dishes).

Archipelago, 110 Whitfield St, W1T 5ED (020-7383 3346, archipelago-restaurant.co.uk, Warren St tube, ££, 📞).

16 January

Horniman of Plenty

Spend the day in darkest Forest Hill at the eclectic Horniman Museum & Aquarium, founded by Victorian tea trader Frederick John Horniman (1835-1906) to house his collection of cultural artefacts, ethnography, natural history and musical instruments – a total of over 350,000 objects! The museum opened in 1901 and occupies a lovely, purpose-built Arts & Crafts/Art Nouveau style building. For many the highlight is the striking, recently renovated, aquarium.

Horniman Museum & Aquarium, 100 London Rd, SE23 3PQ (020-8699 1872, horniman.ac.uk, Forest Hill rail, free except aquarium).



Have lunch or tea at the Horniman Museum's Gallery café overlooking the 16 acres of award-winning, beautifully maintained gardens, which include a conservatory, bandstand, animal enclosure, nature trail and ornamental garden. The café offers a range of tasty hot and cold snacks and refreshments, and you can picnic in the gardens or in a dedicated area on the bandstand terrace.

17 January

Eye of the Beholder

See cutting-edge art at the London Art Fair, one of the city's most vibrant and longest-running art shows, and a showcase for the country's young, up-and-coming artists. The fair caters for all, whether you're 'just looking' or a serious collector, with exhibits from over 100 of London's (and Britain's) best galleries representing over 1,000 artists. Interesting for both amateur collectors and professionals.

London Art Fair, Business Design Centre, 52 Upper St, N1 0QH (020-7359 3535, londonartfair.co.uk, Angel tube, 🚶, 🚗).



Enjoy a play at Upstairs at the Gatehouse, a combination of historic pub and award-winning fringe theatre, producing a varied programme of comedy, drama and musicals. The theatre has a knack of finding future smashes, such as musicals based upon Take That (*Never Forget*) and *Big Brother the Musical*. The Gatehouse also stages the Camden Fringe in July-August.

Upstairs at the Gatehouse, 1 North Rd, N6 4BD (020-8340 3488, upstairsatthegatehouse.com, Highgate tube, £, 🚶).

18 January

Golly GOSH!

Be amazed by St Christopher's Chapel at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), a stunningly decorative building (1875) and the most sumptuous hospital chapel in the country, dedicated to St Christopher, the Patron Saint of children. When the old GOSH was replaced in the '90s the small chapel was 'simply' moved by sliding it along a purpose-built runway.

St Christopher's Chapel, Great Ormond Street Hospital, Great Ormond St, WC1N 3JH (020-7405 9200, gosh.nhs.uk/about-us/our-history/gallery, Russell Sq tube, free).



St Christopher's Chapel

Feed your senses and your stomach at Sketch, a restaurant with a difference, where it's difficult to know where the art ends and the food begins. One of the city's wackiest OTT restaurants, Sketch houses three restaurants with varying prices: The Lecture Room & Library (Michelin-starred, £££), The Gallery (££) and The Glade (£), which are fun, unique and downright weird. Be sure to visit the amazing loos!

Sketch, 9 Conduit St, W1S 2XG (020-7659 4500, sketch.uk.com, Oxford Circus tube, 🚶).

19 January

A Formula for Fun



Go karting in Bermondsey with TeamSport, where the track's hair-raising bends and elevated flyovers will push your driving skills to the limit. And what's more it's eco-friendly, as the track is equipped with Electric Eco Karts which are lighter, have faster acceleration, better handling and of course, being electric, zero emissions. Maybe the F1 boys will follow suit? Awesome fun day out.

TeamSport, Tower Bridge Business Park, 100 Clements Rd, SE16 4DG (0844-998 0000, team-sport.co.uk/london-tower-bridge, Bermondsey tube, 🚶).

Chill out with a pint of ale at the historic Mayflower pub in Rotherhithe, close to where the Pilgrim Fathers set sail in 1620. The charming 18th-century pub has an upstairs dining room, although the main draw is the view of the Thames from its rear deck. Visit after 6pm on a 'Blackout Sunday', when it's lit only by candlelight.

The Mayflower, 117 Rotherhithe St, SE16 4NF (020-7237 4088, themayflowerrotherhithe.com, Rotherhithe rail, £).

20 January

Divine Dulwich

See the Old Masters at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, one of London's 'secret' galleries. Designed by Sir John Soane and opened in 1817, the Dulwich Picture Gallery was England's first purpose-built public art gallery and has been called 'the world's most beautiful art gallery' – an elegant piece of abstract classicism, made from brick with Portland stone detailing.

The collection itself was mainly bequeathed by Frenchman Noël Desenfans (1745-1807) and his Swiss partner Sir Francis Bourgeois (1753-1811), who together formed one of the most successful art dealerships of Georgian London. The dealers were commissioned by Stanislaus Augustus, King of Poland to create a Royal Collection-cum-National Gallery, but Poland was partitioned by its more powerful neighbours, leading (in 1795) to the King being forced to abdicate – and the dealers were left with a royal collection on their hands!

Have lunch or afternoon tea at the Dulwich Picture Gallery Café, acclaimed by Square Meal as 'one of the top ten places in London for afternoon tea'.

The collection was eventually left to Dulwich College to be put on permanent public display in a specially-built gallery, which is enclosed by peaceful gardens, mainly lawns, with a number of old and unusual trees. The collection is a small-but-beautifully-formed gem, largely comprising well-chosen European old masters, mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries, including works by Canaletto, Constable,



Gainsborough, Hogarth, Murillo, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Rubens and Van Dyck.

Dulwich Picture Gallery, Gallery Rd, Dulwich, SE21 7AD (020-8693 5254, dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk, West/North Dulwich rail, free).

If you visit the gallery on a Tuesday, take the opportunity to see the beautiful Christ's Chapel of God's Gift (open 1.30-3.30pm), consecrated in 1616 by George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury. It can be accessed from the Dulwich Picture Gallery's cloister. You can also attend a service on Sunday mornings.

Christ's Chapel of God's Gift at Dulwich (thedulwichestate.com/beneficiaries/christs-chapel-of-gods-gift-at-dulwich).

21 January

The Norsemen Cometh

Enjoy lunch or tea at the Nordic Bakery, a delightful, cool Finnish café and peaceful haven close to the West End. Offerings include the house favourite cinnamon buns (and many other varieties), plus delicious dark rye sandwiches filled with prawns, gravadlax, pickled herring and hard-boiled egg, and other tasty northern European treats. Coffee is good and strong. *Hyvää ruokahalua!* (bon appétit).

Nordic Bakery, 14A Golden Sq, W1F 9JG (020-3230 1077, nordicbakery.com, Piccadilly Circus tube, £).



Indulge yourself with an evening at the Nordic Bar, an understated Scandinavian basement bar near the Telecom Tower in Fitzrovia. It isn't particularly smart or trendy, but it's friendly, welcoming and fun, with a wide choice of drinks, as may be expected from our famously alcohol-loving Scandi friends. Nordic's speciality is cocktails based on Scandinavian mixes and ingredients, including fruit and berries. *Skol!*

Nordic Bar, 25 Newman St, W1T 1PN (020-7631 3174, nordicbar.com, Tottenham Court Rd tube, £).

22 January

A Whole New Ball Game

Experience the excitement of a Six Nations rugby match at Twickenham Stadium, the home of England rugby seating an impressive 82,000 spectators, and the largest dedicated rugby union venue in the world. You'll need to check match days and book tickets in advance (see website). Twickers is also a popular venue for megastar rock concerts.

Twickenham Stadium, 200 Whitton Rd, Twickenham TW2 7BA (0871-222 2120, rfu.com/twickenhamstadium, Twickenham rail, 🚗 🚶).

Have a pint at The White Cross, a historic, 18th-century Young's pub on the river near Richmond Bridge; it has some unusual features, such as a fireplace tucked under a window. The large terrace is glorious on sunny days but just as atmospheric in winter, especially at high tide when the river can reach almost to the door (bring your wellies!).

The White Cross, Riverside, off Water Ln, TW9 1TH (020-8940 6844, thewhitecrossrichmond.com, Richmond tube, £).



23 January

Splendours of Southwark



Soak up the atmosphere at Southwark Cathedral, a beautiful and historic cathedral and London's first Gothic church. Often overlooked in a much-visited part of London (the buzzy south bank of the Thames), it's been a place of worship for over 1,000 years and is the mother church of the Anglican diocese of Southwark. The cathedral is a popular venue for concerts and organ recitals (see website).

Southwark Cathedral, London Bridge, London SE1 9DA (020-7367 6700, cathedral.southwark.anglican.org, London Bridge tube, free).

Feast like Pavarotti at Zucca, a shiny, modern Italian restaurant employing first-class ingredients with the maximum of flavour – cooked with passion and perfection. Wonderful starters include sea bass carpaccio, salt cod and roasted tomato bruschetta and ox tongue, while the superb silky pasta is to die for – as good as you'll find anywhere in London. *Buon appetito!*

Zucca, 184 Bermondsey St, SE1 3TQ (020-7378 6809, zuccalondon.com, London Bridge tube, ££, ☎).

24 January

Ladies' Day

Have a splurge at Fenwicks, one of London's first department stores that's been a beacon of effortless style since 1891. Today it's fashion heaven in the city's most fashionable street, with five floors of fabulous designer frocks and timeless stylish accessories. There's also a gleaming beauty department and spa services to cater to your every whim. Fenwicks is chic, unflustered and beautifully groomed – just like its clientele.

Fenwicks, 63 New Bond St, W1A 3BS (020-7629 9161, fenwick.co.uk/bond-street, Oxford Circus tube).

Fenwick
· BOND STREET ·

Indulge your passion for accessories at Liberty & Co, housed in a mock-Tudor masterpiece constructed (1924) from old warships. Synonymous with luxury and outstanding design since 1875, Liberty is one of London's most famous retailers, specialising in fashion, accessories, cosmetics, gifts, homewares and furniture. If you're peckish, treat yourself to a sumptuous afternoon tea in the airy restaurant on the second floor.

Liberty & Co, Great Marlborough St, W1B 5AH (020-7734 1234, liberty.co.uk, Oxford Circus tube).



25 January

For Auld Lang Syne

Explore the Fleming Collection, the finest collection of Scottish art in private hands and the only dedicated museum granting public access to Scottish art year round. Assembled by bankers Robert Fleming & Co, the collection contains over 750 oils and watercolours dating as far back as 1770, including works by Raeburn, Ramsay and Wilkie.

Fleming Collection, 13 Berkeley St, W1J 8DU (020-7042 5730, flemingcollection.co.uk, Green Park tube, free).

Attend a Burns' Night Supper to celebrate the life and poetry of the poet Robert (Rabbie) Burns, Scotland's most famous son. What better way to mark the occasion than with a traditional Scottish feast at Boisdale Belgravia, featuring cock-a-leekie soup, haggis with neeps and tatties, followed by cranachan, sprinkled liberally with poetry and pipers – and a few wee drams. Kilts are optional.

Boisdale Belgravia, 15 Eccleston St, SW1W 9LX (020-7730 6922, boisdale.co.uk/belgravia, Victoria tube, ££, ☎).



The Turn of the Tide, John Duncan

26 January

Tales of the Unexpected

Escape the hustle and bustle of Covent Garden and have your fortune told at the Mysteries Shop, an Aladdin's Cave of all things spiritual and other-worldly. Mysteries is a world-famous new age resource and the perfect one-stop shop for body, mind and soul enthusiasts. There's a choice of psychic readers, including tarot cards, aura readings, palm readings and Reiki, plus various classes.

Mysteries Shop, 9-11 Monmouth St, WC2H 9EQ (020-7240 3688, mysteries.co.uk, Covent Garden tube, ☐)



Enjoy a traditional French brasserie lunch or dinner at Les Deux Salons in London's Theatreland. The Michelin-starred team of Will Smith and Anthony Demetre ensure that it isn't just style which packs them in, but the excellent, affordable food (the *prix-fixe* menu is a bargain) and efficient service, without any of the pretensions associated with some French restaurants. *Bon appétit!*

Les Deux Salons, 40-42 William IV St, WC2N 4DD (020-7420 2050, lesdeuxsalons.co.uk, Charing Cross tube, ££, ☎).

27 January

Movie Magic on the BIG Screen



BFI IMAX cinema

Experience a film at the amazing BFI IMAX cinema, located in a futuristic seven-storey, glass-enclosed cylinder. With its vast 26m x 20m screen – the largest in the UK – and 12,000w digital, surround-sound system and stunning IMAX technology, BFI IMAX is the most technically impressive cinema in the country. Great fun for kids and adults alike.

BFI IMAX, 1 Charlie Chaplin Walk, South Bank, SE1 8XR (0330-333 7878, bfi.org.uk/imax, Southwark tube, ☎).

Have a drink or meal at the BFI Benugo Bar & Kitchen, widely regarded as one of the area's most atmospheric venues. The restaurant serves modern British food but the main attraction for drinkers is the large, buzzy bar area, called Loungeside, where the comfortable mismatched chairs and sofas invite you to kick off your shoes and relax.

BFI Benugo Bar & Kitchen, BFI Southbank Centre, Belvedere Rd, SE1 8XT (020-7401 9000, benugobarandkitchen.com, Waterloo tube, ☎).

28 January

Beautiful Bloomsbury

Stroll along Sicilian Avenue in Holborn, so-named because of its authentic old-world southern Italian feel, one of London's most charming and peaceful streets, with colonnades at each end. Sicilian Avenue was completed in 1910 and was designed as a pedestrianised shopping street with pavement cafés and restaurants, which include a number of gems including the Orchard vegetarian café, Patisserie Valerie, the Spaghetti House restaurant and the Holborn Whippet pub.

Sicilian Ave, Holborn, WC1A (Holborn tube).



Sicilian Ave

Visit nearby St George's Bloomsbury, a church of startling originality and a monument to the genius of Sir Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736). Consecrated in 1731, St George's was reopened to the public in 2006 following a five-year restoration. It's the architect's most idiosyncratic work, combining Baroque splendour with classical references, topped by the most eccentric spire in London. There's an exhibition, 'Hawksmoor and Bloomsbury', housed in the undercroft.

St George's Bloomsbury, 6-7 Little Russell St, WC1A 2HR (020-7242 1979, stgeorgesbloomsbury.org.uk, Holborn tube, free).