The best places to eat, sleep and play in London this spring and summer

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INTRODUCTION

TripAdvisor, the most trusted source for where to eat, sleep and play in thousands of destinations around the world, has collected the best insider tips from its 50 million monthly visitors to produce a unique series of travel guides. In addition to the best hotels, restaurants and attractions for every type of traveler, you'll get great advice about what to pack, how to get around and where to find the best views. Be sure to check out the guides at www.tripadvisor.com.

Inside

LONDON

One of the world’s top destinations, London is a thriving, exciting city with a diverse cross-section of offerings, from pubs to palaces. You name it, London has it in abundance.

The Romans, after their arrival in Britain in C.E. 43, first put London on the map. Since then, London has been fought over, burned and bombed. It’s become a center of commerce and court intrigue and developed into a city of culture, a place to which artists, writers and musicians flock. Today, London’s a cosmopolitan metropolis, home to more than seven million inhabitants of diverse nationalities and backgrounds, making it the most populous city in the European Union.

While the spring can be fickle, with sun mixing with rain and clouds, summers are generally mild: perfect sightseeing weather. But don’t pack away that umbrella—the sunny skies can be punctuated with thunderstorms. Winters see shorter days and cool temperatures. Keep that rain slicker handy!

PACKING TIPS

1. **Avoid sore feet:** “Bring duct tape and put it on your heels. I don’t care how good your shoes are or how tough your feet are, you’re not used to walking seven to nine hours a day on concrete and cobblestones. Absent that, buy Savion Blister Plasters with Tea Tree Oil at Boots. They’re smooshy and lovely.”—TripAdvisor Member, Allentown, Pa.

2. **Dress well:** While jeans are fine for sightseeing, they’re a no-no for “a smart restaurant” so bring something less casual for the evenings. — TripAdvisor Member, London

3. **Stay comfortable:** “Layers are the key. I wear some tanks under a shirt and always have a sweater to wear under a raincoat. Take a hat and small umbrella. And two pairs of shoes in case one needs to dry out.”—TripAdvisor Member, Cleveland, Ohio
**LONDON’S BEST VIEWS**

The **London Eye**, an elaborate Ferris wheel, sits across the River Thames from Big Ben. Twenty-five people can fit into one of 32 enclosed transparent “pods” and see for up to 25 miles. “Loved it; this was one of the first things I did on my trip to London. It was a great way to get an overview of the city and a first look at some of the sights.”—TripAdvisor Member, Edmonton, Alberta


For unobstructed views of some London must-sees, take a ride on the river. “I took a River Thames cruise from the Tower of London to Westminster Bridge. Along the banks of the Thames are the many landmarks of London. It was relaxing to sit and watch the sights pass by, including Tower Bridge, Tower of London, St. Paul’s, the Globe Theatre, the London Eye, the Parliament Buildings and Big Ben.”—TripAdvisor Member, Vancouver, British Columbia

Thames Cruises, 020 7740 0400, [http://www.citycruises.com](http://www.citycruises.com)

“You absolutely cannot miss a trip to **St. Paul’s Cathedral**. It’s amazing to stand alongside the dome and gaze over London until it fades off into the haze of the horizon. Plus, what a place for pictures.”—TripAdvisor Member, New Jersey

St. Paul’s Cathedral, St. Paul’s Churchyard, 020 7740 0220

**Where to PLAY**

**TOP 10 Attractions**

1. The Courtauld Gallery, Somerset House, Strand, 020 7872 0220
2. British Museum, Great Russell Street, 020 7323 8299
3. National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, 020 7747 2885
4. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, 020 7416 5000
5. Churchill War Rooms, Clive Steps, King Charles Street, 020 7930 6961
7. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, 020 7304 4000
9. St. James Park, Horse Guards Road, The Storeyard, 020 7930 1793
10. Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, 020 7942 2000

**FAMILIES**

“We’ve been to science museums all over the U.S. and Europe and this is one of the best. The **Science Museum** is massive, with sections dedicated to aeronautics, medicine, space, computers, etc.”—TripAdvisor Member, Dublin, Ireland

Science Museum, Exhibition Road, 0870 870 4868

**ROMANCE**

The undulating fields and scenic water gardens make **Regent’s Park** “an oasis of calm in the city: a superbly maintained, huge open space with several small cafes.”—TripAdvisor Member, Lancaster, England

Regent’s Park, 020 7486 7905

A visit to the maze, formal gardens and state apartments of **Hampton Court Palace** in Surrey is “the next best thing to time travel.”—TripAdvisor Member, Phoenix, Ariz.

Hampton Court Palace, Surrey, 020 3166 6000

“...the next best thing to time travel.”

Plan for lots of time at the **Natural History Museum**. “From the actual building itself (look at the pillars to see birds and lizards carved into the stone) to the multitude of fantastic exhibits, you could spend a week there and still not see everything!”—TripAdvisor Member, Cardiff, U.K.

Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, 020 7942 5011

**St. James’s Park** is “a lovely place to have a stroll any time of the year. With its British trees, statues and lake, it’s definitely London’s best park and a great place for views of Westminster and Buckingham Palace. A classic British setting.”—TripAdvisor Member, Bristol, U.K.

St. James’s Park, Horse Guards Road, The Storeyard, 020 7930 1793

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Where to **PLAY**

**BUDGET**

One of the nice things about London is how many of the museums are free! Not that you’d mind paying to visit the **Victoria and Albert Museum**, one of the largest museums of applied arts in the world. “If you like art, in all its forms, this is your museum.”—TripAdvisor Member, Valencia, Spain

**Victoria and Albert Museum**, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, 020 7942 2000

**Tate Modern** art gallery, also free, is housed in an old power plant. The art work is “much more cutting edge than the Museum of Modern Art in New York.”—TripAdvisor Member, Amherst, Mass.

**Tate Modern**, Bankside, Southwark, 020 7887 8888

“**Hampstead Heath** is a revelation—like a bit of the countryside brought to the city. Get your comfy shoes out for a nature stroll. What a hidden jewel!”—TripAdvisor Member, Spartanburg, S.C.

**Hampstead Heath**, Hampstead, 020 7332 3322

**ADVENTURE**

“**Hyde Park** provides a fantastic backdrop for all your sporting needs. Informal pick-up games of rugby, cricket and football can be found all along the park, so show up and make some new friends. Tourists and locals flock to the Park to cycle, jog or blade along the Paths during the nice weather. You can also play tennis or try your hand at the putting course.”—TripAdvisor Member, Hyde Park, 020 7298 2100

“**Urban Golf Soho** has come to London thanks to a state-of-the-art facility in Soho, where you can play over 50 of the most famous courses with the latest in golf simulators.”—TripAdvisor Member, Urban Golf Soho, 33 Great Pulteney St., 020 7248 8600

**EDUCATIONAL/HISTORICAL**

The **British Museum** houses the world’s greatest collection of international antiquities. “You should plan to see only a small portion of the collections during your visit—plan ahead and you’ll have a great time.”—TripAdvisor Member, Baltimore, Md.

**British Museum**, Great Russell Street, 020 7323 8299

**Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre** is a replica of the original Globe where many of the Bard’s plays were first staged. For “nice authentic Elizabethan atmosphere” and a cheaper alternative to a West End show, “you must view a production here!”—TripAdvisor Member, Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, 21 New Globe Walk, Southwark, 020 7902 1400

“Original London Walks is an excellent way to see London! The tours showed us parts of London we wouldn’t have discovered on our own. All of the guides were great and were very knowledgeable.”—TripAdvisor Member, Original London Walks, 020 7624 3978

**RELFAXATION**

At **Chancery Court**, “we enjoyed a sensuous hot stone massage and our suite’s private steam facilities. We had fresh fruit, cold bottled water, robes, towels and slippers in abundance. The hot stone massage was perfect for what I wanted to achieve—total relaxation!”—TripAdvisor Member, Spa at Chancery Court, 252 High Holborn, 020 7829 7058

**Westminster Abbey** “is a magnificent monument, full of history and meaning. The Central Nave is splendidous with the laudable recovery of the High Altar. The shrine, chapels, tombs, organs, quire and cloisters enrich this royal symbol of London.”—TripAdvisor Member, Westminster Abbey, Broad Sanctuary, 020 7222 5158

Out of town, **the Highgate Cemetery**, where Karl Marx is buried, is “beautiful, mysterious, yet surprisingly not spooky.”—TripAdvisor Member, Highgate Cemetery, Swain’s Lane, Highgate, 020 8340 1834

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WHERE to eat

FAMILIES
Many of the chains are child friendly, but try something different from the usual fast food. **Wagamama** is a local chain of noodle houses perfect for larger groups. “You can place an initial order and then if people are still hungry, order a few more dishes.”—TripAdvisor Member, Rhode Island

**Wagamama, Royal Festival Hall, South Bank, 020 7021 0877.** Additional locations throughout London.

“**Giraffe** served a huge and delicious pancake breakfast with a very kid-friendly atmosphere and good service. We liked it so much, we came back for dinner. We sat outside by the Thames and watched the boats and river scene.”—TripAdvisor Member, New York City, N.Y.

**Giraffe Restaurant, Riverside Level 1, Behind the Royal Festival Hall, 020 7928 2004 (Various locations throughout city)**

“**Soho Joe** is a very casual place with a good atmosphere. The staff were very friendly and the pizzas were very good. Our son recalled his time there as one of the best of our trip.”—TripAdvisor Member, Adelaide, Australia

**Soho Joe, 22 - 25 Dean St., 075 3413 4398**

ROMANCE
“My wife and I enjoyed a lovely evening at **Texture**. The food had a sense of fun and character and you could quickly derive what the chef had intended for each dish.”—TripAdvisor Member, Liverpool, U.K.

**Texture, 34 Portman Street, 020 7224 0028**

“**Clos Maggiore** is “an incredibly romantic restaurant in the heart of London. The conservatory is a great setting; the food is wonderful and the wine list is possibly the most extensive in London.”—TripAdvisor Member

**Clos Maggiore, 33 King St., Covent Garden, 020 7379 9696**

“**The Ritz**’s dinner dance” (which happens on Friday and Saturday nights) get a “ten out of ten.”—TripAdvisor Member, Dublin, Ireland

**The Ritz, 150 Piccadilly, 020 7493 8181**

BUDGET
“If I had known beforehand that you could go to Tesco across the street and by a four-pack of Boddingtons for three pounds and drink it inside the **Golden Hind**, it would have made a great dining experience that much greater. The best chippy in London.”—TripAdvisor Member, Olympia, Wash.

**Golden Hind, 73 Marylebone Lane, 020 7486 3644**

**Hummus Bros.** is the “credit crunch winner of Wardour Street! The food was delectable, and the service was on par with the best restaurants in London. Complimentary mint teas kept us there for another half hour, chatting.”—TripAdvisor Member, United Kingdom

**Hummus Bros., 88 Wardour St., 020 7734 1311**

“**Franco Manca** is a great little spot that usually has a massive queue. The pizza here is out of this world. To be honest, the thing that makes the pizza so great is the base. It’s almost fizzy. Hard to explain but amazing. Cheap as chips, too.”—TripAdvisor Member, Dublin, Ireland

**Franco Manca, 4 Market Row, Brixton, 020 7738 3021**

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Don’t get clamped: “Pay attention to parking signs. Otherwise your car could be clamped or towed away.” Both incur heavy fines. —TripAdvisor Member, London

Navigate like a local: Pick up a bus map from the visitor’s center or a tube station. “The map is a generous fold-out kind with buses and tubes marked on it—most useful!”—TripAdvisor Member

“A **Travelcard** provides unlimited travel for the combination of zones purchased. If you want to save a bit of money, you can buy an off-peak pass which only works after 9:30 AM.”—TripAdvisor Member, London
WHERE to eat

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS

At Mildred’s, a well-known Soho vegetarian café, the food is “good and inexpensive” (but they don’t take reservations). —TripAdvisor Member, London.

Mildred’s, 45 Lexington St., 020 7494 1634

“222 Veggie Vegan was amazing! The flavors were so exciting, the coleslaw was fabulous and don’t get me started on the dessert. I had the pancakes and had to wonder if the ice cream was really vegan as it was so creamy.” —TripAdvisor Member, London, England

222 Veggie Vegan, North End Road, 020 7381 2322

“Vanilla Black is without a doubt the best vegetarian restaurant I have ever dined at. The menu consists of very creative combinations of flavors that one would not ordinarily think to match, that complement each other to make something truly special.” —TripAdvisor Member, London, England

Vanilla Black, 17 - 18 Tooks Court, 020 7242 2622

HIDDEN GEMS

Tucked away in Earl’s Court, “in the alley behind Hogarth Road is the quaint Little French Restaurant, with lovely food at very low prices (three-course meal for £9.95).” —TripAdvisor Member, Sweden

The Little French Restaurant, 18 Hogarth Place, 020 7370 0366

Established in 1798, Rules is the oldest restaurant in London. “Absolutely delicious, traditional English cooking. Why don’t more restaurants specialize in this cuisine?” —TripAdvisor Member, Winchester, U.K.

Rules Restaurant, 35 Maiden Lane, 020 7379 0258

“Archipelago is definitely not for the faint hearted! We had the crocodile ravioli for starters and for mains, the zebra & kangaroo. Both dishes were well balanced and well presented. Dessert was the highlight, though: we braved the chocolate scorpion!” —TripAdvisor Member, Oxford, U.K.

Archipelago, 110 Whitfield Street, 020 7383 3346

SPECIAL EVENTS

England’s famed bard will enjoy his 447th birthday this year. The Globe Theatre will be hosting Shakespeare’s Birthday in his honor. Events will include the ever-popular Sonnet Walks through Tudor London, and Open Day, when the Globe will allow the public to explore the theater for free. (April 17 - 18)


Celebrate the anniversary of the death of England’s patron saint on St. George’s Day, when Trafalgar Square comes to life with free performances. This year will feature performances by London’s best buskers and a celebration of the music hall style, featuring West End artists and students from the Royal Academy of Music. (April 21)


Indie bands from all over the world head to the Camden Crawl to play concerts in over forty venues. Join the party as legendary bands like Gang of Four and up-and-coming acts like New Young Pony Club take over the streets for one hot weekend. (May 4 - 6)

Camden Crawl, Camden, 0870 264 3333, http://www.thecamdencrawl.com

The Drag Olympics’ motto is “Life’s a drag, but we love it.” With loads of fun, games, hula-hoops and limbo poles, this annual party pays tribute to the hard life of the drag queen. It’s not easy to find size 14 spike heels or apply false eyelashes, after all. The contests are open to all! (May)


Focusing on cooperation and diversity, the Coin Street Festival includes such festivities as a Turkish Grand Bazaar, a Dutch market, Eastern European music performances, children’s workshops, street theater and much, much more. Best of all, it’s free! (Weekends from June - July)

Coin Street Festival, South Bank Centre, 020 7021 1600, http://www.coinstreet.org

Pay your respects to the Queen on her birthday and witness the pomp and ceremony of Trooping the Colour, when the Household Cavalry parades on horseback through Horse Guards Parade to the music of the Massed Bands. Leading the troops is the Queen herself. (June 11)

Trooping the Colour, Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall, http://www.royal.gov.uk

You can stay in shape while supporting people in need by participating in the 3.5-mile Crisis Square Mile Run. Anyone over 18 may join this fund-raising event; the proceeds go toward supporting Crisis, a London charity for the homeless. (June 13 - 14)

Crisis Square Mile Run, Starts at Paternoster Square, 020 7426 3825, http://www.crisis.org.uk

With many of the streets closed off to motor vehicles, Mayor of London’s Skyride provides the perfect opportunity for a Sunday bike ride. Cyclists can enter the ride from any of a number of hubs along the route and then join the crowd of riders toward St. James’s Park, where they’ll refuel on free sandwiches and entertainment. (September 20)

Mayor of London’s Skyride, Various Locations, 020 7983 4100

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FAMILIES

“The Apex is a great hotel in a great location. My daughter and I toured the Tower of London, Tower Bridge and walked along the Thames to the London Eye all from the hotel.” —TripAdvisor Member, Portland, Ore.

The Apex City of London, 1 Seething Lane, 020 7702 2020

“Our family of five very much enjoyed our stay in the Griffin House. It had everything we needed plus a beautiful garden. Our hosts were generous and kind and our kids loved their friendly and gentle dog.” —TripAdvisor Member, Toronto, Ontario

Griffin House Holiday Apartments, 22 Stockwell Green, 020 7096 3332

base2stay Kensington is the Travelers Choice 2011 Winner for family accommodations. “I can’t rave enough about how wonderful this was!” —TripAdvisor Member, Williamsburg, Va.

base2stay Kensington, 25 Courtfield Gardens, 020 7244 2255

ROMANCE

“When we returned to our room at The Egerton, candles were lit, there were chocolates on our bed and slippers and robes waiting. Pure bliss! We felt like we had gotten away from it all, yet London was at our doorstep.” —TripAdvisor Member, United Kingdom

Egerton House Hotel, 17-19 Egerton Terrace, 020 7589 2412

“The Milestone is a beautiful hotel that has anticipated all the needs of its guests. We didn’t have to ask for anything extra or have anything changed because it was truly perfect!” —TripAdvisor Member, Los Angeles, Calif.

The Milestone Hotel, 1 Kensington Court, Kensington, 020 7917 1000

The Soho Hotel is “newly renovated and has a whimsical style. You feel like you’re staying in your chic designer friend’s home. The staff was friendly—not at all snobby. In fact, the hotel exuded a kind of affable approachability, the design not being too modern or stuffy. Location is very good, walking distance to most tourist destinations and shopping.” —TripAdvisor Member, Rome, Italy

The Soho Hotel, 4 Richmond Mews, 020 7559 3000

BUDGET

With a quiet location, owners who go above and beyond to make your stay pleasant and phenomenal English breakfasts, the Bay Tree House B&B “is literally home away from home. God save the Queen and the Bay Tree House!” —TripAdvisor Member, Monterrey, Mexico

Bay Tree House B&B, 59 Brookdale, New Southgate, 020 8351 2836

“Hotels in London don’t come a lot cheaper than Her Majesty, and if they do, they’re tiny and often lacking in basic amenities. Thus, I was shocked at the cleanliness and size of the rooms here. The owner strives hard to make sure that what you get is spotless and comfortable. I’m not sure there’s a better bargain in town, honestly.” —TripAdvisor Member, Norwich, U.K.

Her Majesty Hotel, 49 Shepherds Bush Green, 020 8746 2191

“There is no better place to stay in London, in my opinion, than B and B In Barnes. And it’s very cheap, so you needn’t spend a fortune.” —TripAdvisor Member, Westphalia, Germany

B and B In Barnes, 12 Leconfield Ave., Barnes, 020 8392 0605

LUXURY

The Covent Garden Hotel is “a wonderful little hotel located on a quiet street in a very convenient location. You forget you are in central London. We elected for the Bloomsbury Rooms and were NOT disappointed.” —TripAdvisor Member, Washington, D.C.

Covent Garden Hotel, 10 Monmouth St., 020 7806 1000

At the Chesterfield Mayfair, “the staff were attentive, polite and extremely helpful. It is a typically old-world hotel, situated on a quiet street. We found the location to be ideal for shopping, theaters, galleries and just about everything else, too!” —TripAdvisor Member, Amalfi, Italy

The Chesterfield Mayfair, 35 Charles St., 020 7491 2622

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Her Majesty Hotel, 49 Shepherds Bush Green, 020 8746 2191
Where to STAY

HIDDEN GEMS

"When you go to London, you want to experience its atmosphere - stylish & innovative, old & modern, avant garde & inspiring. 40 Winks is just that, and to spend your days there is an incredible experience. If you want to change the world, look for an inspiring and different atmosphere and want to meet other people then, it is the right place!"—TripAdvisor Member, Biot, France

40 Winks, 109 Mile End Road, Stepney Green, 020 7790 0259

Hotel 41 is a "gorgeous boutique hotel. The staff was attentive and friendly, and the room was beautiful, if slightly small. The location is perfect for sight seeing—so close to Buckingham Palace that you can see it. Definitely recommend staying here for a treat."—TripAdvisor Member, Munich, Germany

Hotel 41, 41 Buckingham Palace Road, 020 7300 0041

“The Levin is a great hotel for shopping, business or a romantic weekend. Hyde Park is just a few minutes away, and the hotel will pack a picnic basket for you. The overall feel is very cozy. Recommended over some of the larger and anonymous options in the vicinity.”—TripAdvisor Member, Boston, Mass.

The Levin Hotel, 28 Basil St., 020 7589 6286

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