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Finally, I would like to thank my husband Alex, whose love and enthusiasm have sustained me through all five editions of this guide. He has patiently endured my regular absences while museum-mania took over my life and has been unfailingly supportive. I could not have written this book without him.

About the author

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Frieze from the Parthenon, 5th century BC
British Dental Association Museum

64 Wimpole Street, W1G 8YS
020 7935 0875
www.bda.org/museum
Oxford Circus LU, Bond Street LU
Tues & Thurs 13.00-16.00 (other times by appointment)
Admission free
Shop
Wheelchair Access

Probably not one to visit en-route to your dentist, this one room museum shows a carefully edited selection of dental artefacts from the BDA’s vast collection. Displays concentrate on dentistry in the 19th century with scary-looking extraction implements, a clockwork drill, early toothbrushes and a red plush hydraulic dentist’s chair from the 1890s – complete with spittoon. Technical developments in dentures, fillings and orthodontics are also charted and the displays also find time to recount the story of the nation’s dental health and the surprisingly new concept of ‘teeth for life’. Visitors can also watch vintage footage of dentists at work and admire ‘Harry’ the dissectible papier maché anatomical model. The small sales point keeps its sense of humour intact with ‘molar’ golf tees at 3 for £1 and postcards of 18th-century dental cartoons.

British Museum

Great Russell Street, WC1B 3DG
020 7323 8181 (Ticket Desk)
020 7323 8299 (general information)
www.britishmuseum.org
Holborn LU, Russell Square LU, Tottenham Court Road LU
Daily 10.00-17.30 (late views of selected galleries Fri until 20.30);
Great Court opening hours Sat-Thurs 9.00-18.00, Fri 9.00-20.30
Admission free (a charge may be made for temporary exhibitions)
Shops, Bookshop
Cafés & Restaurant
Disabled access

The ultimate perch for culture vultures. Established by an act of Parliament in 1753 and occupying a majestic 13 1/2 acre site in Bloomsbury, the BM is for many the quintessential London museum. With some 8 million artefacts and 90-odd galleries contained behind its Greek-temple-on-steroids façade, the BM is far too big a beast to do justice to in this review – or indeed in a single foot-slogging visit. Both should rather be regarded as an appetizer to a multi-course banquet; like most big museums, the BM is better suited to regular visits. The main entrance hall bears the brunt of the BM’s annual influx of about 5.8 million visitors so if you’re planning to visit galleries on the north side of the building (eg. Prints and Drawings, Oriental Collections, Egypt and Africa) you may prefer to try the often less crowded Montague Place entrance, just off Gower Street.

Once inside, where to start? The Great Court is the obvious place. Transformed by a soaring roof of glass and steel, the BM’s once open central courtyard is the largest covered public square in Europe and now houses cafés, shops as well as the information desk. The circle in the heart of this light-filled square is the Reading Room, formerly a haunt for pen pushers as various as Karl Marx, Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolf, but currently used as an exhibition space.

At this early stage of your visit it might be worth your while asking at the Information Desk which galleries are closed – an ongoing programme of development means that some galleries may be closed and only selected galleries are accessible on late night openings.

For first timers, the free introductory ‘Eye Opener’ tours are a painless way to find your feet – each tour lasts about 30-40 minutes and topics include ‘Ancient Rome’, ‘Ancient Egypt’, ‘Art of the Middle East’ and ‘Early Medieval Europe’. If you prefer to explore under your own steam but with the benefit of some professional input, Multimedia guides can be hired for about £5 and these, available in 10 languages, provide detailed commentary on 200 of the museum’s highlights.
Ground Floor
- 26-27 Americas
- 4 Ancient Egypt
- 11-15, 17-23 Ancient Greece and Rome
- 33, 33a, 33b, 67, 95 Asia
- 6-10, 34 Middle East
- 1, 24 Themes
- 2-3 & Reading Room
- Exhibitions and changing displays

Upper Floors
- 61-66 Ancient Egypt
- 69-73 Ancient Greece & Rome
- 92-94 Asia
- 41, 45-51 Europe
- 52-59 Middle East
- 37-39, 68 Themes
- 35, 69a, 90-91 Exhibitions & changing displays

Lower Floor
- 25 Africa
- 77 Ancient Greece and Rome
For those going solo, personal preference will dictate your route but fans of the acclaimed BBC Radio 4 programme ‘A history of the world in 100 objects’ may want to start by tracking down the artefacts described in the series. The location of the 100 objects – from the BM’s oldest object (a 1.8 million year old stone tool) to a modern credit card – have been marked on the museum map and besides being a useful crash course in human history, it’s a great way to get to know the museum. if you’re feeling strong, start with the perennially popular Egyptian Galleries. Plough your way through the crowds of clipboard-carrying kids hell bent on answering the next question on their activity sheets and admire the inscrutable beauty – despite the broken noses – of the colossal Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures on the ground floor (rooms 4 and 6-10), and the world class collection of antiquities from Egypt on the upper floor (galleries 62-66). Pride of place in the ground floor sculpture galleries goes not to a statue but to the Rosetta Stone – an undistinguished-looking slab whose multilingual inscriptions helped crack the ‘code’ of hieroglyphics. In the upper floor galleries the evolution of Egyptian make-up palettes shows that vanity is as old as civilization, but among a host of ancient artefacts and funerary finds, the real crowd pleasers here are the mummies – animal as well as human – and their richly decorated coffins. One of the most popular exhibits in the whole museum is a particularly well preserved corpse from 3,400 BC which is located in room 64 (Early Egypt), curled up and surrounded by essentials for the afterlife – including a make-up palette.

Galleries 62 and 63 explore Ancient Egyptian attitudes to death and the afterlife, covering a period of about 3,000 years, from the Old Kingdom to the 4th century AD. Among the exhibits are 1,500 year old food offerings and a heartbreakingly tiny coffin accompanied by the skeleton of a child who suffered from brittle bone disease. If ancient civilisations really are your thing, don’t miss the Ancient Middle East galleries (rooms 52-59) which cover Ancient Anatolia, and Early and Later Mesopotamia. Exhibits include finds from Ninevah and Babylon, such as a fragment from a 3,000 year-old cuneiform thesaurus and artefacts excavated from the ‘Great Death Pit’ at Ur.

The museum is also famously well endowed with antiquities and sculpture from ancient Greece and Rome. On the ground floor, room 18 is devoted to sculptures from the Parthenon, aka the Elgin Marbles. Leaving aside the controversial issue of repatriation (there is a leaflet setting out the BM’s position on this), these truly are marvels of craftsmanship and artistry, from the lovingly depicted tunics of the gods in the pediments, to the action packed frieze showing the Panathenaic procession in full swing. Another ancient structure, the Nereid Monument – the first ever example of a temple tomb – is displayed
Wandsworth Museum

- 38 West Hill, SW18 1RZ
- 020 8870 6060
- www.wandsworthmuseum.co.uk
- Wandsworth Town Rail (then 10 min walk);
  East Putney LU (then 10 min walk)
- Tues-Sun 10.00-17.00
- £4 (adults), £3 (concs), free (under 5’s)
- Café
- Wheelchair access

Once a museum has closed, it’s not often that it reopens but Wandsworth Museum is a refreshing exception to the rule. This popular council-run local institution closed in 2007 due to lack of funds but has risen, phoenix like from the ashes, reopening in 2010 thanks to a £2million donation from Wandsworth resident (and hedge fund boss) Michael Hintze.

Now run as a private charity, the museum occupies the former West Hill library/De Morgan Centre site and its newly kitted out permanent gallery reveals the ‘undiscovered country’ of Wandsworth, its landscape and cultural development, as well as its human story. The borough has seemingly long been a magnet for the movers and shakers of this world – from the Celtic chieftan who chucked his best shield into the Thames as a gift to the river god to William Brodrick, the nattily dressed ‘Court Embroiderer to James I’ and poet-novelist Thomas Hardy, who lived in the area in the 1870s. Even the wildlife was upscale around these parts, if the woolly rhino skull and mammoth tooth on display are anything to go by.

Invigorating temporary exhibitions complement the permanent displays while refreshment of a different sort can be located in the Longstaff Café, which itself houses a fully fitted out 1900’s chemist’s shop. The new incarnation of Wandsworth Museum has already made a positive impact – the first museum in the world to be lit entirely by LEDs, it was the recipient of a Green Tourism Award in 2011.

The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum

- Museum Building, The All England Lawn Tennis Club,
  Church Road, SW19 5AE
- 020 8946 2244
- http://aeltc.wimbledon.com
- Wimbledon LU/Rail then bus 493, Southfields LU then 15mins walk or bus 493
- Daily 10.00-17.00 (last entry 16.30) (during the Championships open only to those visiting the tournament)
- £11 (adults), £9.50 (concessions), £6.75 (children)
- Shop
- Café
- Wheelchair access

It’s hard to believe it now, but lawn tennis was once just a glorified garden party game, rejoicing in the preposterous brand name of ‘Sphairistiké’. This museum, based at the famous All England Lawn Tennis Club, follows the development of the sport from its monastic origins to genteel Edwardian pastime to mega-bucks international industry – all thanks to the invention of the lawn mower and the bouncy rubber ball. Naturally the museum also celebrates the unique sporting event that is the Wimbledon Championships and, thanks to a recent relocation and redesign, displays are top-notch with plenty to enjoy, whether you’re a die-hard tennis nut or a casual armchair aficionado.

Tableaux recreate the early days of tennis – from the quaint 1920’s Gentlemen’s Dressing room to a 1930’s racquet makers’ workshop complete with woodshavings – while comprehensive displays of tennis equipment show how the game evolved into today’s hi-speed, hi-tech sport. Interactive consoles allow visitors to test their response time in the face of a 150 mph serve, interview the head groundsman or try their hand at a traditional Wimbledon pastime – pulling the rain covers over the court. Touchscreens show footage of tennis stars past and present in action, providing the opportunity to see just how leisurely the game seemed in the days of René Lacoste, ‘Bunny’ Austen and Fred Perry – the last British player to win the men’s singles. Footage of Wimbledon television coverage over the decades is also nostalgic fun with no shortage of net-leaping, trophy-kissing finals action.

Tennis has always been about looking the part and the on-court fashions shown here range from full-length white cotton dresses to a gold lamé micro-mini worn by our very own Sue Barker, Roger Federer’s natty white blazer kit and a bodyhugging Lycra ‘corset’ dress designed for Venus Williams. One of the highlights of the museum is the ‘Pepper’s Ghost’ illusion of John McEnroe, talking about the heroes of men’s tennis and his Wimbledon years in a recreation of the 1980’s locker room he once
used. The pressures and rewards of today’s ‘Circuit’ are also explored while the science of playing tennis is explained in the 200° Cinema.

Wimbledon’s glittering prizes – the Ladies’ Singles salver and Mens’ Singles cup – are among the closing exhibits, along with a display about the most recent Championships. Tennis themed souvenirs and equipment are the order of the day in the shop and the well-appointed Wingfield café serves light lunches and traditional cream teas.

The Wimbledon Society Museum of Local History

- 22 Ridgway, SW19 4QN
- 020 8296 9914
- www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk
- Wimbledon LU/Rail
- Sat and Sun 14.30-17.00 (at other times by appointment)
- Admission free
- Shop

Famous today for its international tennis tournament (see previous page), Wimbledon has not always been the haunt of white clad tennis pros. Neanderthal hunters once prowled its open spaces and in Victorian times Wimbledon became the venue for popular rifle shooting competitions. There must be something competitive in the air because it was here too in 1798 that the Prime Minister William Pitt fought a pistol duel. These and other aspects of Wimbledon’s 3,000 year long history are recounted at this small local museum, which boasts an extensive archive of paintings, prints, objects, maps and manuscripts.

Wimbledon Windmill Museum

- Windmill Road, Wimbledon Common, SW19
- 020 8947 2825
- www.wimbledonwindmill.museum.org
- Putney LU (then bus); Wimbledon LU/Rail
- Sat 14.00-17.00, Sun and Bank Holidays 11.00-17.00 (April-Oct)
- £1 (adults), 50p (children/concessions)
- Shop
- Café
- Wheelchair access (ground floor only)

What better place to tell the story of windmills and windmilling than in a windmill itself? Working models, original machinery as well as films, bring the narrative to life, revealing the development of windmills from ancient Persia to modern wind farms. There are hands-on activities for young millers but if it’s all too much of a grind, the café’s just next door.

East

Dennis Severs House

- 18 Folgate Street, E1 6BX
- 020 7247 4013
- www.dennissevershouse.co.uk
- Liverpool Street LU
- 18.00-21.00 every Monday evening, by candlelight, booking required; Sun 12.00-16.00 No booking required; Mon (on Mons following the 1st and 3rd Suns) 12.00-14.00, no Booking required
- £12 (Mon evening openings), £8 (Sun openings), £5 (Mon openings)
- No disabled access
Dennis Severs House is a real one-off – neither museum nor historic house it is perhaps best approached as piece of unique installation art. Created by Dennis Severs, an Anglophile Californian who died in 1999, the house is an 18th-century terraced dwelling whose candlelit rooms have been furnished and arranged as a series of atmospheric period ‘still-life dramas’, in which the visitor travels through the picture frame into the painting itself. Mr Severs had strong views about how his creation should be experienced, reminders of which are dotted around the house; visitors are expected to be seen but not heard and a very museum-like approach to looking but not touching is enforced. Talkative, tactile folk may find this constricting but restraint is worthwhile – it’s hard for the magic to come alive if all you can hear is inane chatter. In the old days Mr Severs would summarily eject visitors who transgressed in this way.

The conceit is that the house is still lived in by a family of Huguenot silk weavers, and going around the house the visitor continually enters rooms they have apparently just left. Subtle recorded sound effects and authentic touches such as brimming bedside chamber pots, unmade beds and half-eaten meals help create the Marie Celeste effect but the house remains an engagingly leaky time capsule. Period pedants may disapprove but playful anachronisms abound, including poignant reminders of Mr Severs’ own occupancy – a NY Yankees baseball jacket draped over the back of a chair, a pair of highly polished English gent’s shoes tucked away in a bedroom. The house evokes several time periods, following successive generations of the Jervis family on a picaresque journey from genteel Hanoverian prosperity to the Dickensian hard times evoked by the squalid top floor garret. Taking the idea of painterly drama even further the ‘smoking room’ recreates the debauched interior of Hogarth’s painting A Midnight Modern Conversation – x marks the spot on the floor where the visitor is invited to stand to become part of the painting.

Severs’ motto was ‘You either see it or you don’t’, and for those willing to suspend disbelief the experience he created is captivating – but don’t forget to keep the noise down ...

The Geffrye Museum

Kingsland Road, E2 8EA

020 7739 9893

020 7739 8543 (recorded information)

www.geffrye-museum.org.uk

Hoxton London Overground; Dalston Kingsland Rail; Liverpool Street LU/BR, then 149 or 242 bus; Old Street LU, then 243 bus or 15 mins walk

Museum open Tues-Sat 10.00-17.00, Sun & Bank Holidays 12.00-17.00; Almshouse (visit by guided tour only) see website for details

Admission to museum free; Admission to almshouse £2.50 (adults)

Shop

Restaurant

Wheelchair access

Set in 18th-century almshouses, the Geffrye is one of London’s most charismatic museums, offering visitors a chance to ‘go through the keyhole’ to explore the changing face of English middle-class interior decoration. From the oak-panelled simplicity of the 17th-century hall to the coolly elegant early Georgian parlour, from the oppressively cluttered Victorian sitting room to the jazzy art deco apartment and funky contemporary warehouse ‘loft’, the museum’s fully furnished period rooms present a walk-through source book of past taste. Preliminary overviews put the rooms in the context of the whole house and show not just how they looked but how people lived in them, revealing for example how 18th-century ‘politeness’ determined not just your decor but also how you behaved, walked and dressed.

In December the period rooms are decorated in appropriately festive fig, while in the summer months the walled herb garden and period garden ‘rooms’ are an added attraction, neatly echoing the aesthetics of their indoor counterparts. If you get the chance, don’t miss a guided tour of Almshouse 14, which features two restored and furnished period rooms showing how alms people lived there in 1780 and 1880 respectively. These small but pleasantly proportioned rooms...
make a telling contrast to the museum’s resolute focus on the lives of the ‘middling sort’ and the simple wooden bed in the 18th-century room is a rare example of the cheaply made chattels of the poor. The good quality brass bedstead of the 1880s room meanwhile reflects the rising status of the folk living at the almshouse, which by this period catered to the ‘genteel poor’ such as governnesses, who were often left homeless when they retired.

The story of the founding of the almshouse is fascinating too – the result of a bequest to the Ironmongers’ Company by Sir Robert Geffrye, a Cornishman who made good in the City and ended up mayor of London. It’s hard to imagine that when the almshouses were built, Shoreditch was famous for its market gardens and salubrious fresh air. By the time the residents were moved out to new quarters in the early 20th century the area had become part of the overcrowded inner city, with furniture being the pre-eminent local industry (hence the museum’s focus on furnishings).

A smart extension to the museum opened in 1998 and incorporates a venue for temporary exhibitions, as well as housing a well-stocked shop, stylish café and a Design Centre for contemporary design and craft. A gem.

Hackney Museum
- Technology & Learning Centre, 1 Reading Lane, E8 1GQ
- 020 8356 3500
- www.hackney.gov.uk
- Hackney Central Rail
- Tues, Wed, Fri 9.30-17.30; Thurs 9.30-20.00, Sat 10.00-17.00
- Admission free
- Shop
- Wheelchair access

This community museum explores the reasons why people have flocked to Hackney over the last 1,000 years. Its permanent displays include a very rare Anglo-Saxon log boat, a Victorian nursery-cum-contemporary flat and oral histories from people living in the area, interspersed with sculptures by local schoolchildren. Regularly changing temporary displays explore aspects of local history and the museum also runs a vibrant programme of events and activities. Installed in the smart modern premises of the Technology and Learning Centre, the museum has attracted rave reviews from the museum press and has proved a real hit with families, older visitors and those notoriously difficult to please folk, teenagers.

Museum of London Docklands
- No. 1 Warehouse, West India Quay, Hertsmere Road, E14 4AL
- 020 7001 9844
- www.museumoflondon.org.uk/docklands
- West India Quay DLR, Canary Wharf LU;
- Bus 227, D3, D6, D7, D8, 115
- Daily 10.00-18.00 (last admission 17.30)
- Admission Free
- Shop
- Café
- Wheelchair access

Woefully underused today, the river Thames permeates almost every aspect of London’s history. This museum tells the story of London’s river, ports and people and their role in shaping the city. An outpost of the Museum of London (p. 58) the setting for this enterprise couldn’t be more appropriate: an early 19th century warehouse at West India Quay, in the heart of Docklands and in the shadow of the glittering skyscrapers that dominate Canary Wharf.

Visits start on the third floor and work down but before you get stuck in, a word of warning. The museum tackles a huge subject and is packed with things to see and enjoy – archaeological finds, historical documents, model ships (such as the remarkably difficult to launch HMS Northumberland) and artworks. You’ll certainly need to pace yourself if you want to do it in one go, but free admission means you can return as often as you like and explore at your leisure.

London was a successful port from the word go and the museum’s opening display charts the relentless comings and goings on ‘the Thames Highway’. Roman Londinium became Anglo Saxon Lundenwic which in turn gave way to the 3rd century port of Lundenburgh and not even Boudicca or Viking marauders could dent London’s pre-eminence. An audio visual presentation by Time Team’s Tony Robinson sets out the whole sequence of events very clearly and boasts some neat interactives encouraging younger visitors to ‘dig deeper’ and find out what archaeologists really get up to. Archaeology has been crucial in shaping our understanding of London’s long lost early ports and discoveries such as Roman pottery, Anglo Saxon loom weights and a Viking battle axe bring this history to life. Another highlight is a magnificent double sided model of old London Bridge showing the bridge in Medieval and Tudor times respectively. Other displays look at trade expansion and the rise of the merchant class and there’s the first of the reconstructed interiors which are such a feature of the museum, this one being of a ‘legal quay’ from the 1790’s, complete with a human treadmill crane, a counting house and a gibbet.
Galleries

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East 280
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Central

Barbican Art Gallery

- Gallery Floor, Level 3, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, EC2Y 8DS
- 020 7638 8891 (Box Office)
- www.barbican.org.uk
- Barbican LU, Moorgate LU
- Gallery: Daily 11.00-20.00 (except Wed 11.00-18.00)
  1st Thurs until 22.00
- The Curve: Daily 11.00-20.00, Thurs until 22.00
- £12 (adults), £8 (concessions)
- Shop
- Cafés & restaurants
- Disabled access

Set in the heart of the Barbican maze (Europe’s largest multi-art venue), the Barbican Art Gallery hosts an eclectic range of photography, design and contemporary art exhibitions. The Centre’s concourse, known as ‘The Curve’, is the venue for free exhibitions of contemporary art, specially commissioned for the site.

The British Library

- 96 Euston Road, NW1 2DB
- 01937 546546 (Box Office)
- www.bl.uk
- Euston LU/Rail, King's Cross St Pancras LU/Rail
- Mon, Wed-Fri 09.30-18.00; Tues 09.30-20.00; Sat 09.30-17.00;
  Sun and Bank Holidays 11.00-17.00
- Admission free (charge for some exhibitions)
- Shop
- Café & Restaurant
- Wheelchair access

Nestling in the shadow of a revitalised St Pancras, the British Library is a remarkable achievement – the largest UK public building of the 20th century. Housing millions of books, the Sound Archive and a large daily influx of readers, this is now indisputably the UK’s national library. As well as its superb research facilities, the library has several exhibition galleries, and regular tours of the building itself, as well as the recently opened Centre for Conservation.

‘Treasures of the British Library’, the permanent exhibition in ‘The John Ritblat Gallery’, is a bibliographic tour de force. With books and manuscripts spanning some three thousand years, this is the place to pore over historic documents like the Magna Carta, Shakespeare’s First Folio or Captain Scott’s last polar diary. Early maps offer insights into our ancestors’ world view and there is a copious selection of sacred texts such as the Golden Haggadah and the Luttrell Psalter. The Literature section includes some rare manuscripts, Lewis Carroll’s meticulously handwritten copy of Alice in Wonderland and James Joyce’s manuscript of Finnegans Wake among them. A Leonardo da Vinci notebook, written in his signature ‘mirror writing’, is one of the gems in the small Science section while over in Music, Beatles’ pop songs share the limelight with Handel’s Messiah.

Unsurprisingly, given the priceless nature of the exhibits the lighting is low and items are kept safely behind glass. Ingeniously interactive, ‘Turning the Pages’ gets around the restrictions of display – its touchscreen computers let you leaf through four of the library’s most distinguished manuscripts at your leisure. A programme of special exhibitions in the Pearson Gallery and the Folio Society Gallery completes the picture.

For those with ambitions to build a library of their own, the bookshop on the ground floor is well stocked with books, books about books, mugs about books, bags for carrying books, and bookish gifts and games. And if intellectual stimulation just isn’t enough, the library also has an in-house café and restaurant.
Comprising a series of 11 different bequests, the Courtauld is that rare creature: a display of world-class art with the intimate feel of a private gallery. Its collections include those of Austrian aristo Count Seilern and of Samuel Courtauld, textile impresario and the man who gave his name to the Institute of Art. Recently re-displayed to show its works in chronological order, the Courtauld Gallery has the distinct advantage of being the ideal size to while away a morning or afternoon without having to resort to military-style route planning. Free entrance on Mondays 10am until 2pm makes the whole experience even more satisfying.

It doesn’t take long to see why the collection is so renowned. Works by early masters Bernardo Daddi, Borghese di Piero and Nicola di Maestro Antonio d’Ancona are among the gleaming gold ‘n gesso treasures displayed in the ground floor gallery. The medieval enamels, ivory carvings and ceramics that share this gallery are less immediately eye-catching but just as rewarding.

The first floor galleries contain some of the finest 18th-century interiors in London, courtesy of Somerset House’s architect, Sir William Chambers. His work provides atmospheric surroundings for a sequence of treasures of European art from the Renaissance onwards. Look out for Cranach’s sublime take on the Adam and Eve story (in which a slow-on-the-uptake-Adam scratches his head in bemusement as Eve hands over the fateful apple) and an outstanding altarpiece depicting the Holy Trinity by Botticelli. Moving on to the Baroque period, the gallery boasts a stunning roll call of works by Rubens. Popularly known for his lardy ladies, what is striking here is the sheer emotional and physical force of works like The Descent from the Cross and The Conversion of St. Paul.

In contrast Landscape by Moonlight reveals Rubens in more tranquil mood whilst his affectionate portrait of The Family of Jan Breughel the Elder shows the artist in yet another light. The graciously proportioned rooms of Somerset House also prove the perfect foil for 18th-century portraits by the likes of Gainsborough and Goya as well as a series of light as cappuccino froth sketches by Venetian painter Tiepolo and a display of elegant 18th-century silverware by Augustin Courtauld.

For many, the Courtauld’s collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works will be the highlight of their visit and it’s difficult not to reduce this to a litany of famous names and iconic works: Van Gogh’s Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear, Manet’s enigmatic Bar at the Folies-Bergères and Gauguin’s melancholic, mystical masterpiece Nevermore are a few of the highlights. The Courtauld is also home to the largest collection of Cézanne’s work in Britain, a group which includes The Card Players, Montagne Sainte-Victoire and the sublime Lac d’Annecy. Landscapes in a more purely impressionistic vein can also be found by Monet, Pissarro and Sisley, as well as by their Barbizon school precursors Corot and Daubigny and their fauvist and pointillist successors Signac and Seurat.

The second floor galleries are given over to the 20th Century with important long term loans from various private collections and works by modern masters such as Alexej von Jawlensky and Raoul Dufy, Derain and Vlaminck. Britain’s answer to Post Impressionism and Modernism can be found on this floor – in changing displays that feature works by Ben Nicholson, Ivon Hitchens and ‘Bloomsberries’ like Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. Room 15 on this floor provides the venue for a programme of small scale, temporary exhibitions, often accompanied by a complementary display of prints and drawings.

For those in search of refreshment after their exertions, the Courtauld has a café looking out upon the fine courtyard of Somerset House. At the building’s entrance is the gift shop which offers a selection of books and gifts relating to the collection and the exhibition of the moment.
The Guildhall Art Gallery is home to the Corporation of London’s collection of paintings and sculpture, begun in the 17th century and still growing today. Its posh City premises, designed by Richard Gilbert Scott, were officially opened to the public in 1999 by the Queen and host changing displays of the permanent collection, as well as a programme of temporary exhibitions. In 1987 it was discovered that the building was sited on top of London’s Roman amphitheatre, the extent of which is marked out in the paved area outside the Guildhall; remains of the arena can be admired in situ in a basement gallery.

Portraits of Royalty and Lord Mayors of London include that of Alderman John Boydell whose magnificent full-length portrait by William Beechey respectfully reflects the sitter’s civic clout. A dashing portrait of old sea dog Horatio Nelson is among the 18th-century paintings presented to the Corporation by the good alderman, while the highlight of the Copley room is a vast painting of the Siege of Gibraltar by American artist John Singleton Copley. The remarkable story of the restoration of this huge canvas and its gargantuan frame is told in a nearby display.

Returning to home ground, the Gallery’s eclectic collection of London paintings captures the city in all its guises and at different points in its history, from the Great Fire of London after Waggoner to W L Wyllie’s The Opening of Tower Bridge. London’s famous pageantry is recorded for posterity in William Logsail’s atmospheric depiction of the Lord Mayor’s Procession in 1888 while, nearly a century later, Sharon Beavan distills the city’s down to earth, mercantile energy in her 1984 depiction of Smithfield Market.

The collection also contains a knock-out selection of Victorian paintings and sculpture. Newly displayed in 19th-century style as you enter the Gallery, these include gloriously over the top evocations of the ancient world by artists such as Alma-Tadema and Lord Leighton as well as famous Pre-Raphaelite paintings like Holman Hunt’s The Eve of Saint Agnes. J J Tissot’s acutely observations of 19th-century society and Tuke’s evocative trio of swimmers, Ruby, Gold and Malachite are other treasures worth seeking out here, along with a powerfully expressionistic full-size oil sketch of Salisbury Cathedral by John Constable.

Splendid as the galleries are, they can only hold a small proportion of the whole collection but it is possible to view the entire collection on COLLAGE, the Corporation’s data base which contains thousands of images of works of art in the collection and which may be accessed either using the gallery’s own terminals or on the internet (http://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk).

Hayward Gallery
South Bank Centre, SE1 8XX
0844 875 0073 (ticket Office)
www.ticketing.southankcentre.co.uk
Embankment LU, Waterloo LU/Rail
Daily 10.00-18.00 (Thurs & Fri until 22.00)
Admission charge
Shop
Café
Disabled access
Squatting snugly in the concrete cultural complex that is the South Bank Centre, the Hayward is not the most alluring exhibition space in town despite its love-it-or-loathe-it Brutalist bulk having acquired a glass fronted entrance foyer in recent years. Nevertheless, it puts on a quality show – recent ones have featured Tracey Emin and Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist. For regular visitors, full membership of the Southbank Centre’s Membership costs £45 and offers a range of perks, including free Hayward Gallery entry.
Commercial Galleries
Commercial Art Galleries

As befits one of the world's pre-eminent art capitals, London is positively brimming over with commercial galleries. In fact there are literally scores of these 'art shops', catering for all tastes and pockets but, given the vagaries of commerce, this introduction doesn’t attempt to provide exhaustive listings. Rather, its selection aims to give some idea of the range of galleries in London and to act as a springboard for independent exploration.

Art lovers planning to do some serious gallery-going should look out for Galleries, a monthly magazine with gossipy art world editorial, reviews and a reasonably comprehensive listings of current shows. In a similar vein, the more specialised bi-monthly listings leaflet New Exhibitions of Contemporary Art gives the lowdown on where to sample the latest trends. Both publications come complete with maps and are available free of charge at participating galleries.

Once Cork Street was shorthand for the place to see the best in contemporary art but, although 'the street' is still home to some prestigious and long-established galleries, top-quality, cutting edge art emporia can now be found all over London. In the east of London, Hackney has reinvented itself as the city's artist quarter and is chock-a-block with galleries and studios, many of which are part of the 'Hidden Art' network (ring 020 7729 3800, or visit www.hiddenart.com for more details). Hoxton too has got in on the act while over at Bankside, Tate Modern has helped to transform Southwark into a new focal point for contemporary and modern art. Although Bond Street and St James's remain the heartland of the most exclusive Old Masters and modern art dealers, really dedicated gallery-goers now have to venture well beyond the cosseted confines of W1 to keep up to date. But the extra travelling is well worth the effort – London's gallery scene is diverse and vibrant.

For those short on time or energy, art fairs are a great way of cutting down the legwork. A variety of these shindigs are held throughout the year in the capital, conveniently uniting often far flung galleries under one roof. Some – like The London Original Print Fair – are more specialist than others but all are perfect for those intent on seeing (or indeed, buying) a lot of art in one hit. A listing of some of the most well known is included below.

Of course there's no denying that with their minimalist, white-walled interiors, telephone-number price tags and well-bred staff, some galleries can appear intimidating. Look beyond the classy accoutrements though and the bottom line is that galleries are essentially shops selling a commodity – and remember that no retailer ever made money by turning people away. There's no need to brazen it out, galleries are just as much a magnet for scruffy art students as they are for Gucci-clad collectors. (Incidentally, if you’re not ‘just looking’ but in the market for a little something to put over the mantelpiece, do bear in mind that most galleries, no matter how plush, carry stock at a wide range of prices, and that it’s always worth asking a dealer for their ‘best price’). Look out for galleries that are part of the Arts Council backed ‘Own Art’ scheme – aimed at helping artists, galleries as well as consumers – this is a great package that offers up to £2,000 worth of interest free credit to customers at participating galleries (www.artscouncil.org.uk/ownart).

In the context of this guide though, what’s equally pertinent is that commercial galleries can often be the place to see museum-quality art work. Many galleries put on a new exhibition every 4-6 weeks (a much faster turnaround than bureaucracy-bound museums), with particularly important shows being accompanied by glossy, sometimes scholarly catalogues, and attracting serious media coverage. As exhibitions at public art galleries increasingly come with a hefty entrance fee, perhaps it’s not so far-fetched to see commercial galleries as fulfilling an egalitarian, even educational, role – after all, they’re open to the public, are free of charge and generally less crowded than congested blockbuster shows at museums. Perhaps culture and capitalism aren’t such strange bedfellows after all.
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47) Waddington Custot p.252
48) Wapping Project p.252
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50) White Cube (St James’s) p.253
51) White Cube (Bermudsey) p.252
52) Whitford Fine Art p.253
Commercial Gallery Listing:

Abbott and Holder
✉ 30 Museum Street, WC1A 1LH
☎ 020 7637 3981
✉ www.abbottandholder.co.uk
⏰ Mon-Sat 09.30-18.00 (Thurs until 19.00)
A browser’s (and buyer’s) paradise. Abbott and Holder was founded in 1936 and deals in reasonably priced English watercolours, drawings and oils from the 18th-20th centuries. Ranged over three floors, the displays nearly always include a temporary exhibition on the first floor.

Agnew’s
✉ 35 Albemarle Street, W1S 4JD
☎ 020 7290 9250
✉ www.agnewsgallery.com
⏰ Mon-Fri 10.00-17.30, Sat by appointment only
The gallery is known for its stock of Old Masters, but it also deals in English paintings, drawings and watercolours as well as 20th century and contemporary British work.

Annely Juda Fine Art
✉ 23 Dering Street, W1S 1AW
☎ 020 7629 7578
✉ www.annelyjudafineart.co.uk
⏰ Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00, Sat 11.00-17.00
Top-notch contemporary and modern art.

Austin/Desmond
✉ Pied Bull Yard, 68-69 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, WC1B 3BN
☎ 020 7242 4443
✉ www.austindesmond.com
⏰ Mon-Fri 10.30-17.30, Sat 11-14.30
Modern British paintings, ceramics and sculptures.

Bankside Gallery
✉ 48 Hopton Street, SE1 9JH
☎ 020 7928 7521
✉ www.banksidegallery.com
⏰ Daily 11.00-18.00 during exhibitions
☞ Shop
Bankside Gallery is the gallery of two distinguished artists’ organisations: the Royal Watercolour Society, and the Royal Society of Painter-

Printmakers, and its changing programme of exhibitions showcases the best in contemporary watercolour and original print. Founded in 1804 the RWS is the oldest watercolour society in the world, while the painter-printmakers set up their society in 1880; the latter hold their annual members’ exhibition in May. Almost all works, both framed and unframed, are available for sale.

Beaux Arts London
✉ 22 Cork Street, W1S 3NA
☎ 020 7437 5799
✉ www.beauxartslondon.co.uk
⏰ Mon-Fri 10-17.30, Sat 10-13.30
Best-known for showing Modern British names like Frink and Hepworth, this gallery increasingly shows young, upcoming British artists.

Browse & Darby
✉ 19 Cork Street, W1S 3LP
☎ 020 7734 7984
✉ www.browseanddarby.co.uk
⏰ Mon-Fri 10.00-17.30, Sat 11.00-14.00
Late 19th-century and early 20th-century English and French art, as well as contemporary paintings and sculpture.

Sadie Coles HQ
✉ 69 South Audley Street, W1K 2QZ
☎ 020 7493 8611
✉ www.sadiecoles.com
⏰ Tue-Sat 10.00-18.00
And
✉ 4 New Burlington Place, W1S 2HS
⏰ Tues-Sat 11.00-18.00
This gallery shows work by emerging and established contemporary artists from around the world.

Colnaghi
✉ 15 Old Bond Street, W1S 4AX
☎ 020 7491 7408
✉ www.colnaghi.co.uk
⏰ Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00
Old Master paintings and drawings. Founded in 1760, the gallery is one of the oldest and most distinguished in Europe and its Bond Street gallery is hung in suitably museum-like fashion.
Exhibition & Heritage Venues

Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre

- 11 Blackheath Village, SE3 9LA
- 020 8318 9105
- administrator@age-exchange.org.uk
- www.age-exchange.org.uk
- Blackheath Rail
- Open: Mon-Fri 10.00-17.00, Sat 10.00-16.00
- Admission free (charge for groups)
- Café

This voluntary organisation arranges inter-generation activities and projects, based around the reminiscences of older people. The organisation also runs a small museum and shop.

Asia House

- 63 New Cavendish Street, W1G 7LP
- 020 7307 5454
- enquires@asiahouse.co.uk
- Oxford Circus LU, Regents Park LU, Portland Street LU
- Open: Mon-Fri 09.00-19.00, Sat 10.00-18.00 (during exhibitions only); Gallery open Mon-Sat 10.00-18.00
- Admission free
- Café

Based in an elegant neo-Classical 18th-century townhouse, Asia House is a pan-Asian organisation promoting appreciation and understanding of Asian countries, their arts, religions and economies. Its state of the art gallery is used for exhibitions of historical and contemporary visual arts, crafts and photography.

BFI Southbank

- Belvedere Road, SE1 8XT
- 02 7928 3232
- www.bfi.org.uk
- Waterloo Rail/LU, Charing Cross Rail/LU, Embankment LU
- Gallery free
- Shop
- Café

Film buffs love to ‘bag’ unusual movies in the much the same way that climbers ‘bag’ mountains – and this is one of the key places in London to do just that. A heady programme of classic and contemporary films, special film seasons, festivals and events make this a must for film fans. There’s also a purpose built gallery for free entry ‘moving image art’ exhibitions as well as a Mediatheque offering on-demand access to hours of digital film.

Brunei Gallery

- School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, WC1H 0XG
- 020 7898 4915 / 020 7898 4046 (recorded information)
- www.soas.ac.uk/gallery
- Russell Square LU
- Open: Tues-Sat 10.30-17.00
- Admission free
- Bookshop
- Café

A gallery dedicated to showing works from Asia and Africa, historic and contemporary. The Japanese-inspired roof garden is also open to the public (same opening hours as the gallery). Dedicated to forgiveness, the garden opened in 2001 and offers a place for quiet contemplation as well as being a venue for theatrical and musical events, and tea ceremonies.

Canada House Gallery

- Trafalgar Square, SW1Y 5BJ
- 020 7258 6421
- Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00
- Charing Cross Rail/LU, Leicester Square LU
- Admission free
- Disabled access

Canada House hosts regular exhibitions of Canadian art with an emphasis on the contemporary.
b-london is bringing the depth and detail of Metro’s London guides to your iphone. With detailed reviews, interactive maps, contact details & much more. Now available from the App store!