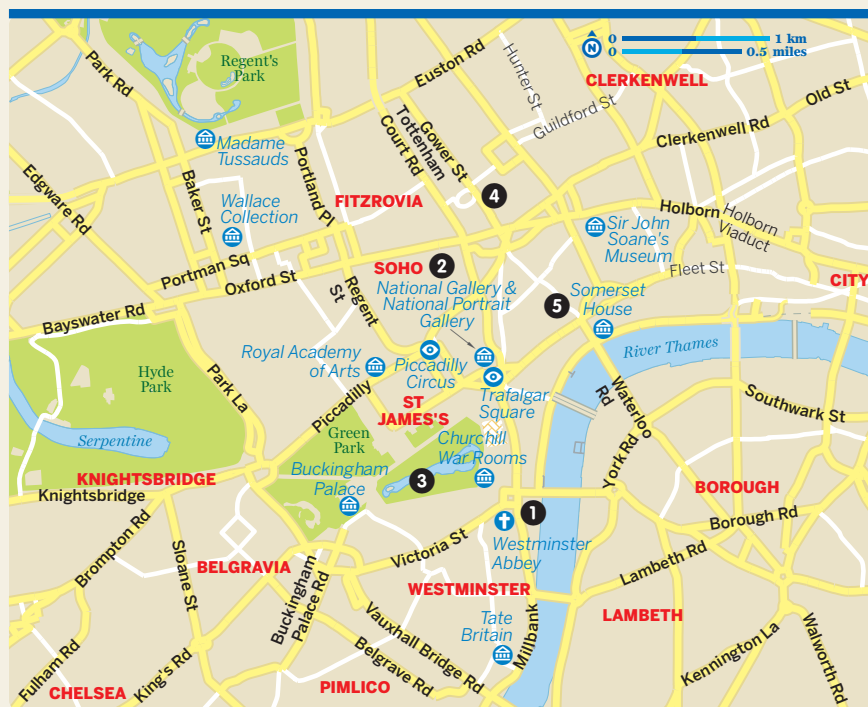


# The West End

WESTMINSTER | BLOOMSBURY | FITZROVIA | ST JAMES'S | SOHO | CHINATOWN | COVENT GARDEN | LEICESTER SQUARE | WHITEHALL | HOLBORN | THE STRAND | MARYLEBONE | MAYFAIR

## Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Visiting the **Houses of Parliament** (p90): few countries allow such unrestricted access to their parliament and it is a unique experience to be able to watch Members of Parliament debate the latest laws. The building itself is stunning too.
- 2 Enjoying fabulous Chinese cuisine in **Soho and Chinatown** (p116).
- 3 Hiring a deckchair in **St James's Park** (p103) and enjoy regal views of London.
- 4 Exploring the history of ancient civilisations at the excellent – and free – **British Museum** (p83).
- 5 Hitting the shops and boutiques of **Covent Garden** (p134) and soak up the atmosphere.



For more detail of this area, see Map p422, Map p432, Map p428, Map p430 and Map p426 ➔

## Explore the West End

It may be a compact area, but the West End packs it in when it comes to sights. You'll need to allow half a day for the big museums (such as the British Museum or the National Gallery) and at least a couple of hours for places like Westminster Abbey and Buckingham Palace. All involve a fair amount of traipsing so plan a pub stop or a meal afterwards.

One of the delights of the West End is its energy and there is no better way to enjoy it than by walking around and taking it all in. Atmospheric places for a breather include Covent Garden, Trafalgar Square and St James's Park.

Westminster and Whitehall are deserted in the evenings, with little in the way of bars and restaurants. The same goes for St James's. Instead head to vibrant Soho for fantastic bars and restaurants, or the streets surrounding Covent Garden.

## Local Life

➔ **Eating out** Soho is unrivalled when it comes to eating out. Andrew Edmunds (p118) and Mildreds (p118) never seem to go out of fashion, while new, hip places such as Spice Market (p120) and Spuntino (p117) open all the time.

➔ **Late-night openings** Be it for catching the latest exhibition or simply enjoying the permanent collections without the weekend crowds, many Londoners make the best of late-night openings at the National Gallery (p93), the National Portrait Gallery (p97) and the British Museum (p83). It's also popular for original first dates!

➔ **Shopping** Love it or loathe it, most Londoners will hit Oxford Street at some stage to do some shopping; it's smack bang in the centre of town and has every franchise under the sun as well as good department stores such as Selfridges (p136) and John Lewis (p138).

## Getting There & Away

➔ **Underground** Every tube line goes through the West End so wherever you're staying in London, you'll have no difficulty getting there. The tube is also good for getting from one end of the West End to the other (Russell Square to Green Park, or Baker St to Embankment).

➔ **Walking** The West End is relatively compact so it'll be cheaper and generally more enjoyable to walk from one place to another rather than take public transport.

➔ **Barclays Bikes** There are docking stations everywhere within the West End and cycling is your best bet for short journeys.

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

London, the West End especially, can be expensive but there are plenty of tricks to make your pennies last. Many of the top museums are free so give them priority over the more commercial attractions. The West End is compact, so walk or take the bus (cheaper than the tube).

### Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Providores & Tapa Room (p122)
- ➔ Yauatcha (p116)
- ➔ Le Boudin Blanc (p123)
- ➔ Mooli's (p117)
- ➔ Vincent Rooms (p113)

For reviews, see p113 ➔

### Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Experimental Cocktail Club (p126)
- ➔ Purl (p129)
- ➔ Gordon's Wine Bar (p129)
- ➔ Newman Arms (p125)
- ➔ Queen's Larder (p125)

For reviews, see p125 ➔

### Best Free Sights

- ➔ British Museum (p83)
- ➔ Houses of Parliament (p90)
- ➔ National Gallery (p93)
- ➔ National Portrait Gallery (p97)
- ➔ Photographers' Gallery (p106)
- ➔ Wallace Collection (p113)

For reviews, see p101 ➔

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