Welcome to London – capital of Britain, cosmopolitan melting pot, the world in one city. Visitors come to see the famous sights – Buckingham Palace, Tower Bridge and all – but if you’re a local, or you’ve come to Britain specifically for walking, you’ll probably be tempted to skip the big smoke and head straight for the hills. But hold on there! Perhaps surprisingly, London has one of the largest footpath networks of any city in the world, and walking (along with cycling and increased public transport use) is positively encouraged by the city authorities.

We’re not talking trackless wilderness, of course, but exploring London on foot can be one of the best ways to see Britain’s largest city. Pounding the pavement – not to mention miles of parkland, woodland and river-side path – provides a great opportunity to get under London’s skin a little, to see the famous monuments from an unusual angle and to simply explore parts of the city that many visitors never reach.

Beyond London, there are many more opportunities for walking in the surrounding counties of southeastern England – Essex, Hertfordshire, Berkshire, Surrey and Kent – and this chapter outlines one of the finest routes in the region, the Thames Path, leading walkers beside Britain’s best-known river from its semi-rural hinterland to the landmark barrier holding back the ever-rising waters of the North Sea. We also describe the 100%-urban Jubilee Walkway through the heart of the capital, and the Centenary Way – an unexpected Cinderella route through green parks and patches of ancient forest little more than a stone’s throw from the high-rise buildings of the city centre.

**HIGHLIGHTS**
- Strolling along **London’s South Bank** (p58) from Westminster to Tower Bridge
- Discovering tranquil glades in **Epping Forest** (p61), surprisingly near central London
- Watching the rowers in a quintessential English scene at **Henley-on-Thames** (p65)
- Admiring **Hampton Court Palace** (p68), Henry VIII’s splendid Thames-side home
- Drinking in history at one of the many old pubs along the **River Thames** (p64)
INFORMATION
Maps
For route planning and orientation, the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:250,000 Southeast England map covers this large region (with London at the centre) on one sheet. Maps covering individual walks in this chapter are listed in the Planning section of each route description. Homing in on the capital, Lonely Planet’s London City Map includes several maps of different scales, from the whole of Greater London down to detail of the inner centre. For ultra-detail, a street directory such as the iconic London A-Z is always useful.

Books
Walking guidebooks covering London and the Southeast include London: The definitive walking guide by Colin Saunders and Walks in the Country Near London by Christopher Somerville. Also good for ideas is 100 Walks in South East England (published by AA).

For before and after your walk, you’ll need a general guidebook to help you get around, to recommend places to stay and eat, and to provide more information on places of interest. Lonely Planet’s London and Best of London guides also include descriptions of short walking tours. There’s also The Rough Guide to Walks in London and South East England by Judith Bamber and Helena Smith. For a different angle, Eccentric London by Benedict le Vay guides you well beyond the usual sights.

Guided Walks
The weekly listings magazine Time Out includes details of guided walks in and around London in its Around Town section. These range from literary walks through the city streets to pub walks in the parks and leafy suburbs.

Information Sources
For general tourist information, there are tourist offices throughout London and the Southeast – those useful for specific walks described in this chapter are listed in the individual route descriptions. You’re probably better off using one of the countless websites covering the capital and its environs; good places to start include www.visitlondon.com and www.londontown.com.

The Ramblers’ Association (☎ 020-7339 8500; www.ramblers.org.uk), Britain’s largest and most active national walking organisation, is another very useful contact for information on walking in London (as well as the rest of Britain). From its website you can order the excellent Walking in London booklet. Other good walking sites include www.londonfootprints.co.uk.

GATEWAYS
As well as being the start and end point for a couple of the walks in this chapter, London is the gateway to the Southeast region and a major gateway to Britain for many visitors. The city has a wide range of places to stay, from basic hostels to the finest hotels, and if you’re peckish there are about 10,000 restaurants to chose from.

From London you can reach the rest of the country by train or long-distance bus – for details see p458 and p456.

THE JUBILEE WALKWAY
Duration 3–4 hours
Distance 8 miles (13km)
Difficulty easy
Start/Finish Leicester Square, central London
Transport bus, train, tube
Summary A fascinating walk through the streets of ancient and modern London, taking in many popular sights along both sides of the River Thames.

The Jubilee Walkway strides through the heart of London and is a great introduction to walking in the capital. The route was created in 1977 (as the Silver Jubilee Walkway) to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II’s accession to the throne, and remains a legacy enjoyed by Londoners and visitors alike. The Walkway passes some of the best-known sights in the city, including Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, St Paul’s Cathedral, Tower Bridge, Trafalgar Square and the Tower of London. The route also goes along the south bank of the River Thames, providing excellent views of the great buildings on the northern side, while crossing and recrossing the famous Thames bridges gives some of the finest views of the city.