

# West End

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

## Neighbourhood Top Five

**1 Westminster Abbey** (p76) Stepping on to 'the nation's stage' – the church of coronations, royal burials and weddings.

**2 Soho** (p100) Enjoying a fabulous night out on the dance floor or at the bar in what is still the city's all singin', all dancin' centre of nightlife.

**3 St James's Park** (p98) Hiring a deckchair in the city's most manicured green space and enjoying regal views of London.

**4 British Museum** (p79) Exploring the history of ancient civilisations going back seven millennia at this excellent (and enormous) museum.

**5 Covent Garden** (p102) Hitting shops and boutiques like Ted Baker in this vibrant neighbourhood before stopping to watch the street performers.



For more detail of this area see Maps p438, p440, p444, p446, and p448 ➔

## Explore West End

It may be a compact area, but the West End packs in a lot when it comes to sights. You'll need to allow up to a half-day for each of the big museums (the British Museum, p79; and the National Gallery, p87), and at least a couple of hours for places like Westminster Abbey (p76) and Buckingham Palace (p83), when it opens in summer.

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 Sq, St James's Park (p98), Marylebone and Soho (p100) – even by day.

Westminster and Whitehall are quiet in the evenings, with little in the way of bars and restaurants to tempt you. It's a similar story in St James's. Instead, head for 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 (p115) and **Gay Hussar** (☎020-7437 0973; www.gayhussar.co.uk; 2 Greek St, W1; mains £13.50-19; ☎12.15-2.30pm & 5.30-10.45pm Mon-Sat; ☎Tottenham Court Rd) never seem to go out of fashion, while hip new places such as Polpo (p113), Cricket Soho (p114) and Palomar (p114) open all the time.

➔ **Late-night openings** Be it 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 (p87), the National Portrait Gallery (p91) and the British Museum (p79), and the less-frequent ones at the Tate Britain (p90) and Sir John Soane's Museum (p94).

➔ **Shopping** Love it or loathe it, most Londoners will hit crowded Oxford St at some stage to shop; it's smack bang in the centre of town and has every franchise under the sun, as well as such good department stores as Selfridges (p133) and John Lewis (p133).

## Getting There & Away

➔ **Underground** Almost every tube line goes through the West End, so wherever you're staying in London, you'll have no difficulty getting here. The tube is also good for getting from one end of the West End to the other.

➔ **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.

➔ **Bicycle** Cycling is your best bet for short journeys, and there are Santander Cycles docking stations everywhere within the West End.

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

The West End is paradise for budget travellers as many of London's most important and best-known museums are here (British Museum, National Gallery, Tate Britain) as well as many of its lesser known ones (Sir John Soane's Museum, Wallace Collection) and all of them offer free entry. Here you'll also find two of the city's verdant royal parks, including the smallest (Green Park) and the prettiest (St James's Park). The West End is compact, so walk whenever possible.

### Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Balthazar (p117)
- ➔ Palomar (p114)
- ➔ Quilon (p109)
- ➔ Smoking Goat (p114)
- ➔ Bar Shu (p114)

For reviews, see p108. ➔

### Best Places to Drink

- ➔ American Bar (p126)
- ➔ Dukes London (p121)
- ➔ Lamb & Flag (p124)
- ➔ Swift (p122)
- ➔ Queen's Larder (p122)

For reviews, see p121. ➔

### Best Entertainment

- ➔ Donmar Warehouse (p128)
- ➔ Royal Opera House (p126)
- ➔ Prince Charles Cinema (p127)
- ➔ Wigmore Hall (p126)
- ➔ Ronnie Scott's (p127)

For reviews, see p126. ➔