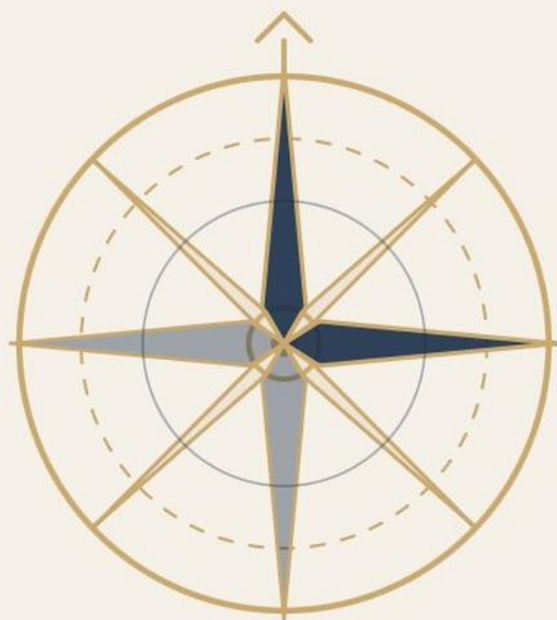




48 HOURS IN

London

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

WELCOME

GoingSolo.Life

Welcome to London.

Forty-eight hours is enough time to fall in love with London — if you know where to go. This guide gives you a precise, hour-by-hour plan built around how the city actually flows: the right neighbourhoods in the right order, the restaurants locals choose over tourists, and the insider moves that separate a good trip from an unforgettable one.

How to Use This Guide

- 1 Read through once before you land**
Get the shape of both days in your mind before you arrive.
- 2 Screenshot the daily pages**
Save them offline — no roaming charges needed on the day.
- 3 Follow Day 1's sequence closely**
The neighbourhoods are ordered to eliminate backtracking.
- 4 Give yourself permission to improvise**
The best London moments are rarely on any itinerary.
- 5 Check restaurant tips the evening before**
London's best spots fill up — a little planning pays off.

Essential Quick Facts

Currency	British Pound (£). Cards accepted almost everywhere in London.
Oyster Card	Pick one up at the airport. It caps your daily Tube fare automatically.
Weather	Pack a light waterproof layer every day. Rain is unpredictable and frequent.
Time Zone	GMT (UTC+0) in winter, BST (UTC+1) in summer. Check before departure.
Emergency	999 for police, fire, or ambulance. 111 for non-emergency medical.
Tipping	10–12% in restaurants. Optional in pubs — order at the bar, not the table.

DAY ONE

The South Bank · St. Paul's · Covent Garden · Soho

Begin on the river. Cross the city by foot and Tube. End the evening in London's most electric neighbourhood.

8:30 Borough Mkt	10:30 Tate Modern	1:00 Lunch	3:00 St. Paul's	6:00 Covent Gdn	8:00 Soho Eve
Morning 8:30 AM — 12:30 PM					

8:30 AM

Borough Market

Begin here, before the lunch crowds arrive. Borough Market is London's oldest food market and its most atmospheric. Collect a coffee from Monmouth, a pastry from Bread Ahead, and spend thirty unhurried minutes wandering. You are not shopping for groceries — you are absorbing the texture of the city before the day begins.

Insider tip: Arrive before 9am. The market grows shoulder-to-shoulder by 11am and the best stalls sell out.

10:00 AM

Tate Modern

Five minutes west along the Thames brings you to Tate Modern, housed in the former Bankside Power Station. Entry to the permanent collection is free. Walk the Turbine Hall first — the scale alone is worth the trip — then choose two or three rooms. Warhol, Rothko, Picasso, and Matisse are all here. Leave after ninety minutes. Museum fatigue is real.

Insider tip: Level 10 has one of the finest free panoramic views in London. Take the lift before you leave.

11:45 AM

Millennium Bridge & St. Paul's

Step outside and walk to the Millennium Bridge. The view across the Thames to St. Paul's Cathedral is among London's most recognisable. Cross the bridge and you arrive at the foot of the Cathedral. Decide whether to go inside (entry fee required, approximately £25) or to simply admire the exterior — both are entirely worthwhile.

Insider tip: The bridge has a gentle sway when crowded. It is completely safe — an engineering feature, not a flaw.

Afternoon 12:30 PM — 5:30 PM**12:30 PM****Lunch in Bankside**

Walk away from the river into the Bankside backstreets. The best benchmark for quality: find a restaurant packed with people in office clothing at half past twelve. Flat Iron Square and the streets near Borough High Street offer excellent value at £12–18 per person. Avoid anywhere with a laminated menu within sight of a landmark.

Insider tip: Padella on Borough High Street serves outstanding fresh pasta. Arrive by 12:15 or after 1:30pm.

2:00 PM**The South Bank Walk**

Return to the river and walk east toward Tower Bridge. This stretch — past the National Theatre, the BFI Southbank, and the Oxo Tower — is one of London's great free experiences. Pause whenever something catches your attention. End at Tower Bridge for photographs, then cross into the City of London if energy allows.

Insider tip: The buskers near Waterloo Bridge are among the best street performers in Europe. Plan extra time.

4:00 PM**Rest & Recover**

Build ninety minutes into the afternoon. Find a café, sit down, and take the weight off your feet. London is a walking city — Day 1 covers eight to twelve miles depending on your pace. A proper rest now means you genuinely enjoy the evening rather than simply endure it.

Insider tip: This is not optional. Skipping the afternoon rest is the most common Day 1 mistake.

Evening 6:00 PM — Late**6:00 PM****Covent Garden**

Take the Tube to Covent Garden as the evening atmosphere builds. The piazza fills with performers, the surrounding streets come alive with diners, and the pubs spill onto the cobblestones. Wander Neal's Yard — a hidden courtyard of painted buildings — before settling in for dinner. This is tourist London at its most enjoyable. Embrace it.

Insider tip: Rules Restaurant on Maiden Lane is London's oldest, established in 1798. A genuine occasion if budget allows.

8:00 PM**Soho Evening**

Soho is ten minutes north of Covent Garden and offers the densest collection of restaurants and bars in London. Frith Street, Dean Street, and Wardour Street are all worth walking. Bar Termini for cocktails, The Toucan for Guinness, Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club for live music — London's finest unscripted evening is waiting in these few square blocks.

Insider tip: Ronnie Scott's is worth booking ahead — one of the world's great jazz venues since 1959.

DAY TWO

Notting Hill · Hyde Park · South Kensington · Shoreditch

The London that locals call home: a village market, a royal park, a world-class museum, and an evening in the East End.

9:00 Portobello	11:00 Hyde Park	1:00 Lunch	2:30 V&A Museum	6:00 Shoreditch	8:00 Farewell
Morning 9:00 AM — 1:00 PM					

9:00 AM

Portobello Road Market

Saturday is the principal market day, but Portobello Road has antique dealers open most mornings. Begin at the Notting Hill Gate end and walk north — the fruit stalls gradually give way to antiques, vintage clothing, and street food as you move toward Ladbroke Grove. Even on a quiet weekday, the street itself — the pastel houses, the bookshops, the cafés — is worth the journey.

Insider tip: The Electric Cinema on Portobello Road (est. 1910) is the UK's oldest working cinema. Worth a look.

10:30 AM

Notting Hill Streets

Spend forty-five minutes on Ledbury Road, Westbourne Grove, and Pembridge Road — the real Notting Hill, populated by independent boutiques, gallery cafés, and flower stalls spilling onto the pavement. The famous blue door from the film is at 280 Westbourne Park Road, if the photograph matters to you.

Insider tip: Ottolenghi on Ledbury Road is the original location. A coffee and a slice of their cake is mandatory.

11:30 AM

Hyde Park

Walk fifteen minutes south or take a bus to Hyde Park, entering at Notting Hill Gate. Walk east toward the Serpentine Gallery (free, strong contemporary programme) or sit by the Serpentine itself. The Italian Gardens near Lancaster Gate are quieter and often overlooked. On a clear day, Hyde Park is one of the finest urban green spaces on Earth.

Insider tip: The Diana Memorial Fountain is near the south end of the park, well signposted from the main path.

Afternoon 1:00 PM — 6:00 PM**1:00 PM****Lunch in South Kensington**

Head toward South Kensington. Old Brompton Road and the side streets near the museums offer excellent options at every price point. Keep lunch lighter than last night — you are fuelling up for the V&A, and a heavy meal in the middle of the day is the surest route to museum fatigue.

Insider tip: The V&A has a beautiful café inside — consider a coffee there after you enter, before exploring.

2:30 PM**Victoria & Albert Museum**

The V&A is the world's greatest museum of art and design, and entry to the permanent collection is free. Five thousand years of human creativity across fashion, furniture, ceramics, jewellery, photography, and architecture. Do not attempt to see all 145 galleries. Choose a theme: the Fashion Gallery, the Cast Courts, or the Medieval & Renaissance rooms are each outstanding. Allow ninety minutes.

Insider tip: The V&A café occupies the original 1860s refreshment rooms — one of the most beautiful eating spaces in London.

4:30 PM**Cross to Shoreditch**

Take the Tube east to Old Street or Shoreditch High Street. London's creative quarter is concentrated in a ten-minute walk: street art on every hoarding, vintage shops on Brick Lane, independent galleries on Redchurch Street. Arrive with no fixed plan and walk. Boxpark and the surrounding streets reward unhurried exploration.

Insider tip: Leake Street Arches near Waterloo has the finest legal street art in London — a worthwhile detour on any day.

Evening 7:00 PM — Late**7:00 PM****Dinner in Shoreditch**

Shoreditch has the most interesting restaurant concentration in London. Brat on Redchurch Street (Basque wood-fire cooking, Michelin-starred), Smoking Goat (Thai barbecue, consistently excellent), or Lyle's at Shoreditch High Street (seasonal British, another Michelin star). At every price point, the quality here eclipses the tourist zones entirely.

Insider tip: Book ahead for all three — Resy often releases last-minute tables around 4pm on the day.

9:00 PM**A Proper London Farewell**

The bars of Shoreditch and Hoxton Square are the right setting for your last night. The Owl and the Pussycat on Redchurch Street for a warm pub atmosphere. The Nightjar near Old Street for serious cocktails in a basement speakeasy — book a table in advance. Or simply walk Brick Lane as the evening unfolds, which is itself one of London's finest free entertainments.

Insider tip: The Nightjar is consistently rated one of the world's best cocktail bars. Reserve ahead — it is worth planning around.

The No-Tourist-Trap Food Guide

Organised by meal type. Prices per person, excluding drinks. None of these have photos on the menu.

BREAKFAST & COFFEE

Monmouth Coffee

£4–6

Borough Market. Arguably the finest coffee in London.

Bread Ahead Bakery

£3–7

Borough Market. The doughnuts alone justify the queue.

Ottolenghi, Notting Hill

£6–12

Ledbury Road. Outstanding pastries, beautiful room.

Attendant Coffee

£4–7

Fitzrovia. Specialty coffee in a converted Victorian public toilet.

LUNCH

Padella

£12–18

Borough. Fresh pasta, short queue, exceptional quality.

Bao, Soho

£10–16

Taiwanese bao. Small, perfect, always worth the wait.

Dishoom

£15–25

Multiple locations. Bombay café classics. Order the bacon naan.

Flat Iron

£12–20

Multiple locations. Excellent steak at very fair prices. No reservations.

DINNER

Brat, Shoreditch

£50–70

Basque wood-fire cooking. Michelin-starred. Book ahead.

Smoking Goat

£25–40

Thai barbecue, Shoreditch. Noisy, brilliant, full of regulars.

Rules, Covent Garden

£50–80

London's oldest restaurant, 1798. Traditional British game.

Kiln, Soho

£25–38

Thai clay pot. Counter seating, no bookings, worth any wait.

PUBS OF NOTE

The Lamb, Bloomsbury

Victorian interior with original snob screens. A genuine local.

The Dove, Hammersmith

Thames-side pub. One of London's most beautiful settings.

The Toucan, Soho

Tiny Irish pub. The best Guinness in Soho. Always full.

The Mayflower, Bermondsey

Claims to be London's oldest riverside pub. A classic pint.

The Tube, Buses & Getting Around

The Oyster Card

Purchase an Oyster card at any Tube station or airport. Load £20–30 to start. The card automatically caps your daily spend — no matter how many journeys you make, you will never exceed the daily cap (approximately £7.70 for Zone 1–2 travel). Contactless bank cards and Apple Pay work identically and also auto-cap.

Lines You Will Actually Use

Metropolitan / Circle / District

Runs through central London. Use for South Kensington (V&A), Westminster, and Tower Hill.

Victoria Line

Fast north-south spine. Excellent for Oxford Circus, Victoria, and Brixton.

Central Line

East-west but crowded. Avoid during rush hour (8–9:30am and 5–7pm on weekdays).

Elizabeth Line

Newer, spacious, fast. Essential from Heathrow and Paddington.

Overground

Surface rail connecting zones. Necessary for Shoreditch and Hoxton.

Northern Line

North-south with two branches. Use for Borough, London Bridge, Waterloo, and Camden.

Transport Tips

Avoid rush hour

8–9:30am and 5–7pm weekdays. The Tube is genuinely unpleasant during these windows. Sit in a café, take a bus, or walk — the city is better on foot anyway.

Use Google Maps in Transit mode

London's TfL data feeds are accurate to the minute. It is the most reliable navigation tool available.

The No. 11 bus is a free sightseeing tour

Liverpool Street to Chelsea via the Strand, Trafalgar Square, and Whitehall. Sit upstairs at the front.

Santander Cycles (Boris Bikes)

£2 access fee, free for the first 30 minutes per journey. Available from docking stations across central London.

Night Tube

Runs Friday and Saturday nights on five lines. Check TfL for current schedule.

The Rainy Day Plan

It will rain. Probably more than once. Here are the finest London experiences that improve in grey weather.

British Museum

The greatest free museum on Earth. Half a day minimum — the Rosetta Stone, the Elgin Marbles, the Egyptian collection. Could fill your entire Day 1 without regret.

National Portrait Gallery

Reopened in 2023 after a major renovation. Chronicles British history through portraiture from Tudor times to the present. Free entry, excellent café.

Tate Britain

Distinct from Tate Modern — this covers British art from 1500 onwards. The Turner collection alone justifies the visit. Free entry and notably quieter.

Daunt Books, Marylebone

The most beautiful bookshop in London. An Edwardian interior with a long, galleried room at the back. Spend thirty minutes browsing, then buy something.

Wallace Collection

Free entry. A spectacular collection of Old Masters, armour, and decorative arts in a Manchester Square mansion. One of London's best-kept secrets.

Afternoon Tea

The Wolseley on Piccadilly or Fortnum & Mason offer accessible versions of a classic London experience. Book 24 hours ahead. Budget £35–55 per person.

Queue-Beating Strategies

Book online the evening before —

Shakespeare's Globe, St. Paul's, the Shard — all have timed entry. Online booking eliminates the same-day queue entirely for no additional cost.

Arrive at opening —

Major London attractions are quietest in the first forty-five minutes. The 10am crowd arrives around 10:45am. Be there when the doors open.

Visit Tuesday through Thursday —

Monday and Friday carry higher footfall than mid-week. Weekend crowds peak on Saturday afternoons. Planning around this costs nothing.

Skip the London Eye —

A 30-minute queue for a 30-minute ride. The view from Primrose Hill is superior, free, and has no queue whatsoever.

Know Your Neighbourhoods

Southwark & Borough

THE SOUTH BANK

Best for Day 1 mornings. Borough Market, Tate Modern, the riverside walk, and Tower Bridge. The ideal opening chapter to any London visit.

The City

HISTORY & FINANCE

The Square Mile. St. Paul's, Monument, the Guildhall. Quieter at weekends when the office population disappears. Ancient streets, extraordinary history.

Soho & Covent Garden

FOOD, BARS & THEATRE

London's most concentrated restaurant and entertainment district. Always lively. Best experienced in the evening when the streets fill properly.

Notting Hill

VILLAGE & MARKET

Portobello Road, painted houses, independent boutiques. Feels more like a village than a capital city. Best on weekend mornings before the crowds arrive.

Shoreditch

CREATIVE EAST END

Street art, vintage shops, serious restaurants, and late-night bars. The most interesting neighbourhood in London at this particular moment in time.

South Kensington

MUSEUM QUARTER

The V&A, Natural History Museum, and Science Museum within five minutes of each other. All free. A full day here alone would not be wasted.

Marylebone

QUIET & REFINED

Georgian streets, Daunt Books, the Wallace Collection, and outstanding independent restaurants. The most consistently underrated neighbourhood in London.

Camden

MARKET & MUSIC

Markets, street food, and live music venues clustered around the canal. More visited than it once was, but still worth an afternoon.

The Southampton Connection

Using London as your pre- or post-cruise gateway

Southampton — the UK's principal cruise port — is 80 minutes from central London by direct train. This makes London the natural base for any cruise departing or arriving in the UK, and your 48 hours here can serve as the ideal bookend to an itinerary.

Getting to Southampton

By Train (Recommended)

South Western Railway runs direct services from London Waterloo to Southampton Central every 30 minutes. Journey time: approximately 80 minutes. Book in advance on the SWR app for the best fares — typically £25–45 each way depending on how early you book.

By National Express Coach

Services from Victoria Coach Station to Southampton. Journey time: approximately 2 hours. Cheaper than train but slower — better suited to non-embarkation days.

By Taxi or Private Transfer

Approximately £120–180 depending on time of day and vehicle size. Worth considering for groups or if travelling with heavy luggage on embarkation morning.

Timing Your London Stay

Pre-Cruise (Recommended)

Arrive in London two days before embarkation. Use this guide for Day 1 and Day 2. On embarkation morning, take the 7:30am or 8:00am train from Waterloo — you will arrive in Southampton with comfortable time before check-in opens at most cruise terminals.

Post-Cruise

If your cruise returns to Southampton in the morning, a 10am or 11am train puts you in London by midday — leaving a full afternoon and evening before an overnight flight or onward journey. Store luggage at Waterloo Station (left luggage facility) and go straight to the South Bank.

Overnight in Southampton

For very early departures or late arrivals, one night in Southampton makes sense. The Grand Harbour Hotel is five minutes from the cruise terminals on foot.

Half a Day in Southampton

SeaCity Museum

Dedicated to the RMS Titanic and Southampton's maritime history. Outstanding exhibition, emotionally powerful, and very reasonably priced. Allow 2 hours.

Southampton Old Walls

Medieval city walls encircle the old town — more intact than most English cities. The Bargate (medieval gatehouse) is the centrepiece. Free to walk.

Ocean Village & the Waterfront

Walk to the marina and you can often see cruise ships at the terminals. The Harbour Parade area has decent waterfront restaurants.

Lunch at Platform Tavern

A Victorian pub in the old town, near the walls. Good honest food, local character, and nothing like the restaurants near the cruise terminal.

What Nobody Tells You About London

The pub rule nobody explains

You order at the bar — always. Do not sit down and wait for table service in a traditional pub. Walk to the bar, order, pay, and take your drinks back to a table. Table service exists in some gastropubs, but if no one approaches you after five minutes, you are in a self-service establishment.

Standing on escalators

Stand on the RIGHT side of Tube escalators. The left side is for people walking. Violating this during rush hour is a genuine social offence in London. The recorded announcements reminding people of this are mostly ignored by tourists.

Everything closes earlier than you expect

Most London shops close between 7 and 8pm. Restaurants stop taking orders by 10pm outside of Soho. Pubs in residential areas close at 11pm on weekdays. Plan your evening around this reality rather than discover it at the wrong moment.

London is larger than any map suggests

What appears to be a short distance on the Tube map is sometimes a 25-minute walk. The map is diagrammatic, not geographically accurate. Always check the actual distance on Google Maps before deciding to walk.

Tipping is relaxed and optional

Ten to twelve percent is standard in restaurants. Many bills include a 'discretionary service charge' — you are within your rights to remove it if service was poor. No obligation whatsoever to tip in pubs.

The weather changes within the hour

Do not dress in the morning for the forecast and leave your waterproof at the hotel. Pack a light, packable rain layer every single day. This is the one piece of advice that will most reliably improve your trip.

Free wifi is essentially universal

TfL wifi operates on most Tube stations. Every café, museum, and major shop provides free wifi. Your mobile data plan will see very little action in central London.

The West End and Soho are different places

Tourists treat them as the same area. West End typically refers to the theatre district around Shaftesbury Avenue and Covent Garden. Soho — a few streets north and west — has a completely different character: independent, slightly edgier, and considerably better for food.

London awaits.

You have the plan. You have the restaurants, the route,
the insider moves, and the cruise connection.
All that remains is to go.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ Screenshot Day 1 and Day 2 schedules for offline use
 - ☐ Reserve any restaurants requiring advance bookings
 - ☐ Download Google Maps London offline (Settings → Offline Maps)
 - ☐ Load Oyster card or confirm contactless payment is enabled
 - ☐ Pre-book any ticketed attractions for timed entry
 - ☐ Check train times to Southampton if cruising onwards
 - ☐ Pack your waterproof layer. Every single day.
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Your interactive map is one scan away.
All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.

goingsolo.life/maps/london

