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London

The Tourist Entertainment Capital Of The World



Welcome to **London** — one of the world's great cities and a perfect place for fun.

London is a great vacation destination as it offers you a wide array of fabulous places to enjoy yourself and also learn. Discover the city, England and Britain – through history, art and cultural choices.

So, come prepared to experience new things and to party, meet the locals and have a great time!

There's London entertainment for every interest and taste. Here's just a quick sample.

- The **London Eye** – British Airways still gives you a bird's-eye view of this ancient city from over 400 feet in the air. The huge wheel revolves at a half mile an hour. One revolution takes 30 minutes and the wheel can accommodate 800 people at a time, in enclosed glass cabins. At night, the city looks magical.

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- The **West End** – a bustling, thriving theater district with first-run movies, plays, musicals and some retro offerings, also. Lots of chances for before-the-play or after-the-play suppers, too.
- British sports abound in London’s stadiums and other venues. Watch soccer, rugby, cricket, lawn bowls, tennis, rowing regattas, horse-racing and more. Check with your concierge, The Times of London, The Evening Standard or online to see what’s happening during your visit.
- Immerse yourself in Merrie Olde England during a **Medieval Banquet**, near the **Tower of London**, and then head over to the Tower in a pre-arranged admission to see the 700 year old **Ceremony of The Keys!** Fabulous. It’s a night you’ll always remember.
- Visit the **Royal Palaces**. There are at least 7 in London, alone. See how “the other half” lives – in their splendid isolation. The art, all by itself, is worth the trip, and the architecture of the older palaces is hauntingly beautiful.
- There are great opportunities for long walks, through: picturesque, vibrant neighborhoods, huge and amazing museums, lovely classical homes and out into London’s fabulous parks and natural areas (like **Hampstead Heath** and the **River Thames**).

Yes, London’s a city you will enjoy, and you will always think about what you are going to try next, when you return!

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The Changing of The Guard



London visitors want to put as many free choices into their planner as possible! The City has many free sights for tourists. Each of these activities helps to dilute the budget impact of other sites' admission fees. Mix the freebies in at least once a day, so you'll have a satisfying stay in London Town.

The changing of the guard in the front court of **Buckingham Palace** is a well known display of royal pomp. The British love ceremony. One member of Queen's Guards exchanges duty with the previous guard, as music plays. Both guards are dressed in ceremonial, regimental uniforms – often red tunics and bearskin hats. It's all so photogenic!

The soldiers are drawn from one of the five **British Army Foot Guards** regiments: Scots Guards, Irish Guards, Welsh Guards, Grenadier Guards or the Coldstream Guards. In very wet weather, don't expect to see the ceremony at all, and often it is canceled for unknown reasons. The ceremony at the **Horse Guards Arch** is more dependable.

When The Queen is in residence at Buckingham Palace, there are four sentries at the front of the building, and the

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Royal Standard flag flies above. When she is away, there are two guards and no flag.

In summer, on nice days, stand outside Buckingham Palace at 11am, (it's wise to check beforehand, as the ceremony only takes place on certain days – see links below). It is fairly consistent in May through July.

You will need to arrive an hour ahead of time, and consider standing on the roads to the left of the Palace, if you just want a closer view of the guards walking by, without spending hours waiting and watching the actual ceremony.

If you aren't in prime positions, you won't see anything and will just be in a massive throng.

The **Mounted Guards Ceremony** at the Palace is easier to see, and may happen at 4pm.

You'll be observing a long tradition as "Household Troops have guarded the Sovereign and the Royal Palaces since 1660. Until 1689, the Sovereign usually lived at the **Palace of Whitehall** and was guarded by Household Cavalry."

But, in 1689, the court moved to **St James's Palace** (which was usually guarded by the Foot Guards). When Queen Victoria moved to Buckingham Palace in 1837, the Queen's Guard remained at St James, and only a detachment ceremonially "guarding" Buckingham Palace. More of the Palace's sophisticated security is not obvious today; only the guards are there to see.

Other places to see a real changing-of-the-guard ceremony include:

* **Windsor Castle**, when the ceremony takes place at 11.00 am. Most of the year, Guard Mounting at Windsor is on alternate dates, but it is held daily (except Sundays) from April to July.

* At **Horse Guards Arch, in London**, the Changing of the Guard takes place daily at 11.00 am (10.00 am on

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Sundays) for about 30 minutes. The ceremony is often held on Horse Guards Parade, by the arch of Horse Guards Building.

* And, as a special treat that you will have to plan way ahead for — the **Tower of London**, at 9:50 pm. What's happening then? You can see the ancient order of Beefeaters, who are the Yeoman of the Guard, in their Tudor uniforms performing a 700 year nightly tradition.

By special arrangement, see the warders walk with candles to close the Tower as part of the **Ceremony of the Keys**. Most people find this ceremony fascinating; only 30 people are allowed to attend. There are 21 very specific duties which the Beefeaters are tasked to perform. Finally, after more than 700 years, there is a female Beefeater yeoman.

* There are very ceremonial changing-of-the-guard ceremonies reserved just for state dignitaries. Away from the palace's public exterior, at events like the official **State Opening of Parliament** and State visits, a ceremonial bodyguard attends the Sovereign. Four different ancient organizations have official duties then. They include: Her Majesty's Body Guard of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms, the Yeomen of the Guard, the Yeomen Warders and, in Scotland, the Royal Company of Archers.

Each of these corps is has centuries of service, and have impressive histories of valor and colorful traditions associated with them. This regal pomp and circumstance is part of why London is so unique. Join the throng. You can witness a piece of living-history!

Learn more: **Changing of the Guard Ceremony at Buckingham Palace:**

[British Army – Changing of the Guard – schedule updates](#)

[Changing of the Guard – Basic Schedule overview, Buckingham Palace](#)

and learn more about the British Monarchy at:

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British Monarchy – Official Site

and about many official royal sites and events at:

Official Royal Collections and Celebrations

Have fun!

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The London Eye ... Eye Over London



Imagine being on the tallest ferris-wheel in the world — 435 feet in the air, high over London — in 1 of 32 revolving glass gondolas. That's what you'll enjoy when you've bought a ticket on the **London Eye!**

British Airways sponsors a bird's-eye view for you of this ancient city. The huge wheel revolves at a speed of a half mile an hour. One revolution takes 30 minutes and the wheel accommodates 800 people at a time, in enclosed glass cabins. At night, the city really looks magical.

And, don't be discouraged if you arrive without tickets; the long lines usually move along quite well.

If you take a map with you (or their Vistas 360 pamphlet), it will be more meaningful, once you get oriented. Then, you will be able to look for and enjoy some of your favorite sites and sections of London Town.

Indeed, it took hundreds of people, in 5 countries, more than 7 years to make this revolutionary design a reality.

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And, on a clear day, you can see all the way to Windsor Castle, 25 miles away!

If the windows are clean and if you stay away from the sunny side, you should get great photos.

Looks can be deceiving. Even though it seems light and airy, there's plenty of substance. The steel used is the about the same as what more than 1,200 London taxi-cabs would weigh. The spindle and the hub weigh more than **Big Ben**, the clock-tower at **Parliament!**

If you have disabled guests, be sure to read the information on the official website at:
[London Eye – Basics](#)

But because this venue is so new, it's one of the major sites where there is full-access.

The site has varying closing times during the year, so be sure to check the link above. You'll be able to get your pre-booked tickets printed out on-site at dispensing machines, too, but you must remember which credit-card you used for your original order and have it with you!

The safety and security section of the official websites recounts what you are allowed to bring on board. There is NO storage facility at the Eye, so anything forbidden must be checked-in at the safe luggage storage area of **Waterloo Station** (a 5 minute walk). Plan to come early so this mad dash can be made, if needed.

There are baby-changing facilities inside the County Hall. No food or drink is allowed on board – even using baby bottles (so feed your child while waiting to board).

With proper prior planning, everyone can enjoy their "flight" on the Eye. It's the closest each of us is likely to travel on the wing! And, it's definitely more engaging than flying over London in a helicopter or plane.

And, by the way, if you want to see an extraordinary artist, who can accurately draw the City with only a moment's glance, check out [Stephen Wiltshire](#) You'll be

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able to have a wonderful aerial souvenir from London when purchasing from Stephen and you will be supporting a true artist, rather than just buying mass-produced items.

Have fun joining the hawks! It's the ride of a life-time.