







Walking Tour: City of London




4.3km, 3 hours




Follow the walking route provided in the  [Map](#)




Stop 	Name 	Information 
A	St. Paul's Cathedral	<p>For centuries, this iconic structure has symbolised London's enduring spirit of survival and rejuvenation, captivating visitors both inside and outside its grand walls. Sir Christopher Wren embarked on the design of the present-day cathedral in 1666, immediately following the destruction of the prior mediaeval building, founded in 1087, during the Great Fire. This historical context is evident in the inscription "resurgam" ("I shall rise again") on the pediment of the south entrance. Saint Paul's Cathedral once more became a symbol of the city's resilience during the Blitz, as local volunteers bravely fought to extinguish a fire on the dome (though despite their efforts, a significant portion of the building's eastern end and its high altar were lost). It has frequently served as the backdrop for momentous state events, including Winston Churchill's funeral and the wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana.</p> <p>Construction commenced in 1675 and took 35 years to complete. Interestingly, this was Wren's third architectural proposal: the initial design was rejected for being too modern, while the second was deemed too modern and too influenced by Italian (Catholic) architecture. The "Great Model" of this second design, a 20-foot representation, can be seen in the crypt. In a compromise with the Anglican clergy, Wren included a traditional English spire but ultimately installed a neoclassical triple-layered dome, the second-largest cathedral dome globally after Saint Peter's in Rome.</p> <p>The cathedral's interior showcases a remarkable example of English Baroque design. Ascend 257 steps up the meticulously engineered Geometric Staircase, a stone spiral marvel, to reach the Whispering Gallery, named so because a whisper against one wall can be heard clearly on the wall 112 feet away. Another 119</p>




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		<p>steps lead to the Stone Gallery, encircling the dome's exterior and offering panoramic views of London. For those with a head for heights, an additional 152 steps lead to the small Golden Gallery, an observation deck at the dome's zenith. At 278 feet above the cathedral floor, it presents even more breathtaking vistas.</p> <p>Descending to ground level, in the south choir aisle, rests the grave of John Donne, the poet who served as dean of Saint Paul's from 1621 until his passing in 1631. His marble effigy stands as the cathedral's oldest surviving memorial and one of the few to endure the Great Fire. The intricately carved figures on the nearby choir stall are the creations of master carver Grinling Gibbons, who also adorned Wren's great organ. Behind the high altar lies the American Memorial Chapel, dedicated to the 28,000 American GIs stationed in the UK during the Second World War. Notable figures interred in the crypt include the Duke of Wellington, Admiral Lord Nelson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Henry Moore, and Wren himself. Aptly, the Latin epitaph above Wren's tomb reads, "Reader, if you seek his monument, look around you."</p>
B	Cheapside	<p>This thoroughfare served as the primary east-west street in 16th-century London when the city had a population of approximately 200,000 inhabitants. The expansive street was home to The City's marketplace, and this is reflected in the names of the streets that radiate from it, such as Poultry, Honey Lane, Milk Street, and Bread Street.</p> <p>In the 19th century, Cheapside remained a bustling shopping district and played a prominent role in English literature, frequently appearing in Dickens's works. In "Great Expectations", Pip described the nearby street market of Cheapside as "all smear with filth and fat and blood ... the great black dome of Saint Paul's bulging at me."</p> <p>Charles Dickens, Jr. penned in his 1879 book "Dickens's Dictionary of London": "Cheapside remains now what it was five centuries ago, the greatest thoroughfare in the City of London. Other localities have had their day, have risen, become fashionable, and have sunk into obscurity and neglect, but Cheapside has maintained its place, and may boast of being the busiest thoroughfare in the world, with the sole exception perhaps of London-bridge."</p>

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		<p>In the contemporary landscape, Cheapside retains its status as a vibrant retail hub widely known for its diverse array of outlets and offices. The area also features The City's lone major shopping centre, One New Change (at the Saint Paul's Cathedral end), with restrooms and a glass elevator leading to a rooftop terrace offering panoramic views of Saint Paul's and the London cityscape.</p>
C	Guildhall	<p>Excavate beneath the streets of London, and you'll uncover layers of Roman, Saxon, and Mediaeval remnants. This locale has served as a gathering point since the days of ancient Rome (take note of the circular trace of the former Roman amphitheatre on the square). During mediaeval times, it served as the meeting place for various guilds, a tradition that endures with approximately 100 professional associations congregating here today.</p> <p>The venerable hall, which miraculously has withstood both the Great Fire of 1666 and the bombings of World War II, can trace its origins back to the 15th century, making it a precious relic of civil architecture from the Middle Ages that still stands. Adjacent to this historic hall is the Guildhall Art Gallery, offering free admission and a fascinating glimpse into the social fabric of old London through a collection primarily consisting of Victorian paintings depicting various scenes from the city's past. This gallery houses one of London's finest Victorian art collections, thoughtfully arranged into thematic categories such as home, beauty, faith, leisure, work, love, and imagination. Additionally, it showcases enchanting Pre-Raphaelite artworks. In the gallery's basement, you'll find a meticulously curated exhibition dedicated to the aforementioned Roman amphitheatre unearthed during a construction project in 1988.</p>
D	Mansion House	<p>Mansion House, the opulent neoclassical residence of the Lord Mayor during their term in office, is open to the public once a week, but access is available solely through guided tours (lasting approximately 1 hour) with no prior booking required. Designed in 1753 by the architect George Dance the Elder, the most splendid room within the building is the Egyptian Hall, characterised by its impressive columns and a soaring barrel-vaulted ceiling adorned with coffered designs.</p> <p>Another noteworthy aspect of Mansion House is its extensive collection of gold and silver tableware, including the Mayor's remarkable 36-pound gold mace and the pearl sword gifted by Queen Elizabeth I, traditionally presented to the sovereign during visits to</p>

Stop 	Name 	Information 
		<p>the City. As you explore the rooms, you'll encounter a remarkable assortment of Dutch and Flemish paintings by renowned artists such as Hals, Ruisdael, Hobbema, Cuyp and de Hooch.</p> <p>Tour spots are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so it's advisable to arrive promptly at the Walbrook entrance.</p> <p>Tip: After your visit, consider taking a stroll down Cornhill, keeping the Royal Exchange on your left. Along the way, you'll come across a monument dedicated to James Henry Greathead, the 19th-century engineer whose inventions, including the "travelling shield," played a pivotal role in making the construction of the Tube possible. A few blocks further down at Cornhill #50 on the right, you can also drop by The Counting House pub, originally built as a bank in 1893 and a popular lunch spot in the area.</p>
E	Royal Exchange	<p>Easily the most impressive and refined among the Bank's structures is the Royal Exchange, originally constructed in 1570 through the lavish financial support of the extraordinarily wealthy businessman, Thomas Gresham (notice his gilded grasshopper adorning the rooftop). During that era, the term "stock" referred to goods that could be loaded onto or unloaded from ships on the Thames. Over time, Londoners began to assemble here, transitioning from trading live goats and chickens to exchanging slips of paper representing "futures." As trading grew, so did the need for money changers and subsequently, bankers, leading to the flourishing of London's financial district.</p> <p>The present-day structure, featuring an imposing eight-column portico and convenient steps for the lunchtime crowd, is the third building to occupy this historic site and was constructed in the 1840s. Today, the Royal Exchange is home to upscale shops catering to those with expense accounts. Nevertheless, it's still worth taking a look inside the inner courtyard, which boasts a beautifully tiled floor, a glazed roof, and half-columns designed in three classical orders. The stylish Fortnum's Bar and Restaurant occupies both the courtyard and the mezzanine level, offering a vantage point to admire a series of frescoes depicting the City's history.</p>
F	Leadenhall Market	<p>Originally the location of Londinium's Roman Forum, this place has accommodated two millennia of trade. Its name was derived from the innovative lead roof of the mediaeval market hall. The present-day hall, a classic Victorian structure from the 19th century, complete</p>

Stop 	Name 	Information 
		<p>with its charming iron meat hooks, serves as a retreat for office workers. In this 21st-century era of towering skyscrapers, it survives solely due to government protection. While exploring this area, you'll encounter pubs, stores, and even a traditional shoe shine station, making it a truly enchanting destination for shopping.</p>
G	Sky Garden	<p>Designed by the Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly, 20 Fenchurch Street is commonly referred to as the "Walkie-Talkie" due to its distinctive resemblance to a radio handset. Although not without its share of controversy, primarily because of its shape and prominent position in the city skyline, it stands out as one of the few skyscrapers offering free public access. To gain entry to the Sky Garden, a three-level observation deck, visitors need to make advance reservations. Tickets are made available every Monday for bookings up to three weeks in advance and tend to sell out rapidly. The bars and restaurants within the Sky Garden remain open until late.</p> <p>This location serves as an ideal vantage point for taking in the views of London's other towering structures. To the south, you can spot the Shard, while to the north, you'll find Tower 42, the "Gherkin", the Leadenhall Building (also known as the "Cheesegrater"), "The Scalpel", and 22 Bishopsgate, the tallest skyscraper in the City.</p> <p>The garden itself features semi tropical trees and succulent plants that create a natural border around the bars, restaurants, and expansive walkways spanning the 35th, 36th, and 37th floors. Among the flowering plants, you can admire African Lilies, Red Hot Pokers, and Birds of Paradise, accompanied by aromatic herbs, particularly French Lavender.</p>
H	London Bridge	<p>For nearly as long as the city of London has existed, a bridge has stood at this very location. The inaugural bridge was constructed over 2,000 years ago, and successive bridges were erected during the Roman era, William the Conqueror's reign, and King John's rule.</p> <p>In the year 1014, the Danes held control of London, prompting King Ethelred the Unready, a Saxon monarch, to join forces with a Viking raiding party led by King Olaf of Norway in a bid to reclaim the English throne. They navigated up the Thames, fastened their boats to the wooden bridge supports, and, as the tide carried them away, pulled down the bridge behind them, giving rise to the famous chant, 'London Bridge is Falling Down'.</p> <p>During the Tudor era, about 600 structures lined the bridge, some soaring to heights of over six stories. It was so densely populated that it became its own city ward. The heads of traitors were a gruesome sight, impaled on the poles of the bridge's gatehouse. However, as automobiles became widespread, and traffic continued to surge, the</p>

Stop 	Name 	Information 
		<p>bridge began to sink at one end in the 1960s. The structure was acquired for £1 million (equivalent to \$2.4 million at the time) by the McCulloch Oil Corporation, which then transported the bridge across the Atlantic and reassembled it, piece by piece, over Lake Havasu in Arizona, where it stands today.</p> <p>The current London Bridge, completed in 1973, comprises three spans of pre-stressed concrete cantilevers and is rather minimalist in appearance, featuring only granite obelisks on the pier faces and polished granite cladding on the parapet walls.</p> <p>Each autumn, on one Sunday, vehicle traffic yields to a unique tradition known as the Sheep Drive by the Freemen of the City of London, a practice dating back to the 12th century, where sheep replace vehicles on the bridge for the day.</p>
	Tower of London	<p>Nowhere else in London does history appear as vividly alive as within this miniature city, founded by the Normans over a millennium ago. Throughout its existence, the Tower has served various roles, functioning as a fortress, a coin mint, a palace, an archive, and even housing the Royal Menagerie (the foundation of London Zoo). However, its most notorious role has been as a place of confinement and death. Countless individuals, including many nobles and even a few monarchs, spent their final days here, with some leaving their last thoughts etched into the walls of their cells. The Tower's stones have witnessed the shedding of royal blood, making it a place of grim significance.</p> <p>Executions within the Tower were reserved for the aristocracy, with the most privileged meeting their end in the seclusion of Tower Green rather than facing the public spectacle at Tower Hill. Only seven individuals were granted this macabre "honour", including Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, two of Henry VIII's six wives.</p> <p>The White Tower, the oldest structure within the complex (comprising 20 towers in total), stands as its most prominent feature. Initiated by William the Conqueror in 1078 and later whitewashed by Henry III (1207–72), it houses the Armouries, a remarkable collection of weaponry and armour. Across the moat to the right lies the riverside Traitors' Gate, where the most famous prisoners were rowed to their impending doom. Opposite is the Bloody Tower, infamous for imprisoning the "little princes"—uncrowned boy king Edward V and his brother—by their malevolent uncle, who subsequently claimed the throne as Richard III.</p> <p>Not to be missed are the exquisite Crown Jewels housed in the Jewel House. The original symbols of royal authority—the crown, orb, and sceptre—were lost during the English Civil War, and the ones on display here date from the Restoration in 1661. The most dazzling</p>

Stop 	Name 	Information 
		<p>gems were added in the 20th century, during the time when their nations were part of the British Empire.</p>
J	Tower Bridge	<p>Tower Bridge, surprisingly, only opened its iconic spans in 1894, a fact that often astonishes both tourists and Londoners. Nevertheless, this relatively brief history hasn't stopped it from becoming an iconic symbol of London and the Victorian Era.</p> <p>Interestingly, Queen Victoria initially harboured reservations about Tower Bridge. Her concern revolved around potential security compromises for the Tower of London, which was serving as an armoury during that period. Despite her reservations, the bridge was originally adorned in Queen Victoria's favoured hue: Chocolate Brown.</p> <p>Sophisticated steam-powered engines orchestrate the bridge's ascent and descent, enabling the passage of tall-masted ships through its span. In its inaugural year, Tower Bridge was raised an impressive 6,160 times, and to this day, it continues to open approximately 1,000 times annually. Remarkably, despite this extensive operation, there have been no major accidents. If you happen to be fortunate, you might witness the bridge's operation as it swings open to allow barges and ships to navigate through.</p> <p>For a memorable experience, take in the panoramic views of the bridge, the river, City Hall (the distinct egg-shaped glass building on the opposite bank), the Shard (London's striking architectural statement), and the vibrant cityscape. Alternatively, consider purchasing tickets that include elevator access to and from the top of the bridge. From there, you can enjoy unobstructed vistas of the east and west banks of the Thames River, complete with a captivating glass floor on the elevated walkways. Visitors also have the opportunity to explore the original steam engines that were once responsible for raising and lowering the two bascules—a genuinely captivating and informative experience. To top it off, there are convenient restroom facilities at the top for added convenience.</p> <p>Why You Should Visit: Unique and majestic structure; amazing to see especially at night!</p>