

# Five-Minute Guide: LONDON

**1. ABOUT:** A world leader in music, fashion, art, theater, cinema and business, you can spend a lifetime in London and not see everything it has to offer—so a few days barely scratch its surface. Best of all is how much of it is free. Besides magnificent museums and galleries like the British Museum and National Portrait Gallery, the streets are full of interesting buildings, shops, entertainers and eccentrics.

**2. HOTEL:** The Wyndham Grand on the Thames in Chelsea is a hidden gem and the capital's only five-star, all-suite hotel. Its 154 immaculate rooms, all with separate seating area and some with private balconies, can accommodate a family of four.

**3. MUSEUM:** There's no shortage of world-class museums, but be sure to visit the new Galleries of Modern London. Three years in the making, five galleries tell the story of the city from 1666 to the present day. Around 7,000 objects, interactives, family areas, film and changing displays reveal the city's tumultuous history, rich with drama, triumph and intrigue.

**4. BUILDING:** On a summer evening or Christmas night, there's perhaps no finer place to enjoy a slice of London's theatrical heritage than the open-air Globe, situated on South Bank. The building's thatched roof and half-timbered walls take you back to the time of Shakespeare himself: take in a play or one of the daily tours. First built in 1599, a modern reconstruction was opened in 1997.

**5. SHOP:** London has everything from quirky designer outlets to luxury boutiques and malls. And while Harrods might seem the tourist centerpiece of Knightsbridge, most Londoners prefer the eight-storey

Harvey Nichols, housing every conceivable item for fashion, beauty and the home. The areas around both are full of luxury brand-name stores.

**6. RESTAURANT:** Given the popularity of Brick Lane, many visitors must think London's traditional cuisine is now curry. However, there are still many traditional English menus around. Maggie Jones's is named after the late Princess Margaret, a regular visitor from nearby Kensington Palace. This cozy restaurant serves staples such as steak and kidney pie and traditional stodgy puddings. Wine is served in large carafes and charged by consumption. The chic, antique shop interior is equally quirky.

**7. BAR:** In this day and age, it makes a nice change to visit somewhere dedicated to doing things properly. Take Champagne. Pretty much everywhere sells it, but for real bubble connoisseurs, a Champagne bar is your best bet. The grand opening of St. Pancras International station in 2007 saw the longest Champagne bar in Europe arrive in town with up to 60 bins, ranging from £42 (\$66) to £6,800 (\$10,720), and 18 types available by the glass.

**8. VIEW:** Short of hiring a helicopter, you won't find a better view of London than inside a London Eye capsule. Pray for good weather and enjoy views stretching as far as Windsor Castle 25 miles away while looking down on Westminster, Buckingham Palace and other iconic Central London landmarks. To make it special, check out the range of themed packages from Champagne flights and cupid capsules to afternoon tea flights and wedding ceremonies.

Exhilarating both day and night, London's history, culture and entertainment make it a great capital city.

Source: *ASTAnetwork*, Winter 2010

Ask your Covington Travel advisor to plan your trip to London.