



The Perfect 4 Day London Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival, Hotel Check-in, Borough Market

The first day will mostly be a travel day, as you arrive, get settled, and experience your first taste of London. These are our recommendations for how to get around, where to stay, and where to eat on your first day in the city.

Arrival

Our flight arrived at London Heathrow later in the afternoon, and we took the train into the city. This is the fastest and most affordable option.

We boarded the Elizabeth Line at the airport, transferred to the Jubilee Line at Bond Street Station, and exited at London Bridge Station. From the London Bridge Station, it was about a 10-minute walk to our hotel.

The entire journey took less than an hour and cost under \$20. An Uber would have been nearly triple the price and much slower due to traffic.

For convenience, you can just tap and pay using a credit card or Apple Pay at the Tube gates. However, I recommend getting an Oyster card to prevent your credit card number from being stolen at the scanners.

Hotel Check-in: The Dixon

We stayed at [The Dixon](#), a Marriott Autograph Collection hotel located a few blocks from Tower Bridge. It was a beautiful hotel and a good home base for exploring the city.

Overall, we were very happy with our stay. The location was great, and the price was reasonable for the area. The rooms were a little on the smaller side, but were clean and tastefully decorated.

The continental breakfast was delicious, but it is an additional charge (unless you are a platinum member).

The historic building itself adds to the experience. It was originally constructed in 1905 and served as the Tower Bridge Magistrate's Court and Police Station until 2013. It was beautifully restored and reopened as the Dixon in 2019.

Borough Market

After a long travel day, we were starving! We headed to Borough Market, one of the best food markets in London, and only about a 15-minute walk from the hotel.

The market is open Tuesday–Saturday until 5:00 pm and Sundays until 4:00 pm (closed Mondays). We arrived in time for an early dinner and sampled a few different dishes.

Our favorites include raclette from Kappacasein Dairy, a sandwich from The Black Pig, crème brûlée donuts from Bread Ahead Bakery, apple cinnamon crumble from Humble Crumble, and chocolate strawberries from Turnips.

For a full breakdown, check out my guide, [5 Foods You HAVE to Try at Borough Market](#).

Day 2: Tower Bridge Area

We spent our first full day exploring around Tower Bridge. Everything is within walking distance, so we didn't need public transportation at all.

We also purchased the 2-day [London Pass](#), and packed in as many attractions as we could to get our money's worth. It made sense for us, but you'll want to price it out to see if it ends up saving you money.

Tower Bridge

We booked the first time slot available for the Tower Bridge Tour, which was 9:30 am. Admission is included with the London Pass, but timed tickets still need to be reserved in advance.

The self-guided audio tour lasts about an hour and takes you up inside the bridge. They have informational displays at each level, and it was interesting to learn about the history and construction of the bridge.

One of the highlights of the tour is walking across the glass floor high above the River Thames and visiting the old Victorian Engine Rooms.

We thought it was worthwhile to tour such an iconic landmark!

Tower of London

The Tower of London is more than just a tower, it's a 1,000-year-old medieval complex packed with so much history!

Admission is also included with the London Pass, with the option to pay extra for the self-guided audio tour.

They do offer a fantastic free guided tour led by the "Beefeaters". These tours run every 45 minutes starting at 10:00 am and last about an hour. The tour covers the exterior grounds, and then you are free to explore the interiors on your own.

We arrived for the 10:30 am tour, then spent about another hour exploring afterward on our own. Don't miss the Bloody Tower, White Tower, Beauchamp Tower, Traitors' Gate, and of course, the Crown Jewels.

St. Dunstan in the East

St. Dunstan in the East is a quick stop along the way, but well worth your time.

This public garden is set within the ruins of an old church that was destroyed during the London Blitz in 1940.

The few remaining walls and hollow windows are draped with vines, and it is hauntingly beautiful to see new life growing from the literal ashes of the demolished church.

Host Cafe

For lunch, we stopped at Host Cafe, one of the most unique and beautiful cafes in London. This coffee shop is located inside an old Gothic church that dates back to 1682.

We ordered savory focaccia sandwiches and rich hot chocolate, then sat in the pews to eat our lunch and soak in the stunning architecture.

I loved the food and the whole experience! The cafe is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 am until 4 pm. It is closed on the weekends for worship, so keep that in mind while planning your itinerary.

St. Paul's Cathedral

St. Paul's Cathedral blew us away! Admission is included with the London Pass, and gives you access to the crypt, main nave, and the dome climb.

The climb includes stops at the Whispering Gallery overlooking the Cathedral floor, the Stone Gallery outdoor viewing deck, and finally the Golden Gallery at the very top of the dome.

It's a narrow climb, but the panoramic view from the Golden Gallery is one of the best views in London.

One New Change

After visiting St. Paul's Cathedral, we made a quick stop at One New Change just across the street from the Cathedral.

Many tourists are unaware of this, but the mall features an exterior glass elevator that offers one of the most unique views of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Take the elevator to the 6th floor, where you'll find a free observation deck with the best view of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Leadenhall Market

On our walk, we took a quick detour to Leadenhall Market. This gorgeous Victorian-era covered market is one of the most photographed spots in London.

This was actually the filming location for the exterior of Diagon Alley in the *Harry Potter* films. We even found the entrance to the Leaky Cauldron, which is now the 2i's Coffee Shop located at 42 Bull's Head Passage.

Sky Garden

We ended our day with an early dinner at Sky Garden, London's highest public garden and best free observation deck.

Although it is free to visit, you need to reserve a timed ticket. Tickets are released 3 weeks in advance every Monday at 10 am London time, and they go fast.

The tickets were all booked up during our visit, but if you make a reservation at one of the restaurants, then admission to the sky garden is included. If you have a dining reservation, you will also be able to skip the line to go up the elevator. The line was wrapped around the building when we visited, so it's worth it just for that!

We made early dinner reservations at Darwin Brasserie so that we could order from the cheaper a la carte menu (there is a set dinner menu later in the evening) and still be there for golden hour and sunset.

With a dinner reservation, you can arrive at any time. We arrived about an hour early and walked around enjoying the views from the expansive glass walls and the 35th-floor observation deck.

We also had time after our meal to soak in the beauty of golden hour and the sunset over the city.

Sunset at Tower Bridge

Instead of taking the Tube back, we walked across Tower Bridge while it was lit up at night. It was worth the extra steps!

For more ideas, see my guide, [11 Things to Do Around Tower Bridge](#).

Day 3: West End

London's West End isn't set by specific boundaries, but generally refers to the western part of Central London.

The West End is known as the Theater District, and you may want to fit a performance into your itinerary. We didn't see a show on this trip, but I heard *Les Misérables* is fantastic in the West End!

Uber Boat to Westminster

The next morning, we took the Uber Boat from Tower Bridge to Westminster. An all-day ride pass is included with the London Pass, and it was a quick, easy, inexpensive, and scenic way to get to the other side of the city.

It takes about 20 minutes to reach Westminster, and the boat runs about every half hour. We hopped on the 9:14 RB6 yellow route boat.

The Westminster dock is located right by the base of Big Ben. For the best view, walk across Westminster Bridge to get an unobstructed view of the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben.

The London Pass also includes an all-day hop-on-hop off pass on a double-decker bus if you would like to take that instead. We tried using it once in the city, but the traffic was so bad that we ended up just getting off and walking.

The London Eye is also nearby, if that's something you are interested in. I am extremely claustrophobic, so it didn't appeal to me.

Westminster Abbey

Westminster Abbey exceeded our expectations. The architecture is mind-blowing, and the history is just as impressive.

Admission to the Abbey and an audio guide are included with the London Pass.

The tour lasted about an hour and was very informative. Some of the highlights include the Poets' Corner, the RAF Chapel, the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, the tombs of countless royals and notable figures, and the coronation chair used by every monarch since King Edward in 1308.

Churchill War Rooms Museum

The Churchill War Rooms Museum is a short walk from Westminster Abbey and offers a fascinating glimpse into WWII history.

This underground bunker served as Churchill's headquarters during WWII. We took a self-guided audio tour through the narrow maze of hallways to see places like the cabinet room, Churchill's living quarters, the broadcast room, and the map room.

It was surreal and deeply moving to be in the exact spot where monumental decisions were made that ended the war.

Buckingham Palace

Buckingham Palace is a little out of the way, and we ended up doing some backtracking to see it, but no trip to London is complete without visiting the Palace!

We stopped at the Horse Guards Parade to snap a photo of the mounted guards, then continued our walk through the beautiful St. James Park until we reached Buckingham Palace.

We weren't able to time our visit with the Changing of the Guards ceremony, but click the link for the [schedule](#) to see if you can make it work with your itinerary.

If you're visiting in the summer, you can actually book tickets to tour the palace state rooms.

Trafalgar Square

We walked back through St. James Park and made our way to Trafalgar Square. This is one of London's most iconic squares.

We sat down and took a little rest while admiring Nelson's Column, the fountains, and the lion statues.

If you have time, the National Gallery is a free museum located at Trafalgar Square. Although it is free, it is highly recommended to reserve timed tickets in advance.

Lunch at Cafe in the Crypt

Cafe in the Crypt is another unique cafe in London. It is located in the former crypt of the St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church on the northeast corner of Trafalgar Square.

It is such a unique experience to be dining in the brick vaults that were once filled with tombs. We were especially surprised to see that the floor was made of old gravestones!

The food is served cafeteria-style with a rotating menu. We weren't overly impressed with the options when we visited, but other reviewers online raved about the variety and fresh ingredients.

It's worth going just to say you've eaten lunch in an 18th-century crypt!

Cecil Court & Goodwin Court

As we wandered around the West End, we stopped at a few hidden alleys.

Cecil Court is known as "Bookseller's Row" and is lined with about 20 secondhand Victorian-era bookshops.

Just around the block is Goodwin's Court. It is believed that this 17th-century cobblestone alley, with gas lamps and bowed shop windows, is the inspiration for Knockturn Alley in the *Harry Potter* films.

Covent Garden

If you are planning to watch a performance, Covent Garden is where you'll find some of the most popular theaters in London.

We didn't catch a show, but we did browse the stalls at Seven Dials Market and Apple Market. Of course, we had to get another apple crumble dessert from Humble Crumble!

Neal's Yard is a colorful courtyard in Covent Garden and is worth stopping by for a photo if you have time.

Chinatown

We spent the evening wandering around the streets of Chinatown. I loved the vibe of this neighborhood with red lanterns hanging above the street and the glow of neon lights.

We picked up a snack of Taiwanese-style popcorn chicken at The Chicken Shop and ate fresh knife-shaved noodles at Lanzhou Noodle Bar for dinner.

For dessert, we ordered bubble waffle ice cream from Bubble Wrap. It was all so good!

Picadilly Circus & Leicester Square

Before taking the Tube back to our hotel, we stopped by Picadilly Circus to see the flashing billboards and bright lights.

Nighttime is the best time to see Picadilly Circus. It's like a miniature Times Square!

Leicester Square is also a popular city square nearby. It is known for the dozens of statues of popular film characters that are scattered around the square.

For more details and recommendations, see our guide [The Best Things to Do in London's West End](#).

Day 4: Kensington & Notting Hill

We skipped the London Pass on our final day and focused on exploring charming neighborhoods.

Kensington Palace & Hyde Park

We started our last day by taking the Tube to Queensway Station. From there, we walked along the Broad Walk in Hyde Park. We visited towards the end of October, and the trees lining the walk were bursting with golden leaves.

The Broad Walk ends at Kensington Gardens and Kensington Palace. We took a self-guided audio tour of the palace, and it was so fascinating to see the state rooms where some of England's most beloved Kings and Queens once lived.

Admission is included with the London Pass, but this was the only attraction we were planning to visit this day, so it wasn't worth buying a 3-day pass. If you want to save money, you can squeeze Kensington Palace into the previous day's itinerary after visiting Buckingham Palace.

After our tour, we ordered pastries from the cute Orangery Cafe at the Palace.

If you have time, the Natural History Museum is located on the south end of Hyde Park and is a fantastic free museum.

Notting Hill

From Kensington Palace, it's about a 1.5-mile walk to Notting Hill, or you can take the Tube.

Notting Hill is my favorite neighborhood in London. It is so charming and picturesque that it's no surprise they made a movie based here.

While in Notting Hill, we shopped at the famous Portobello Road Market, visited filming locations from the *Notting Hill* movie, took photos on Lancaster Road and Landsdowne Crescent, browsed the shelves at Alice's Antiques, and ate sausage rolls and focaccia sandwiches at Layla Bakery for lunch.

For more recommendations, see our guide [What to Do Around Notting Hill: A One Day London Guide](#)

Little Venice

From Notting Hill, we took the Tube to Paddington Station. We had to stop and see the Paddington Bear statue on Platform 1 by the station clock, before walking over to Little Venice.

Little Venice is a bit of a London hidden gem with a 19th-century canal running through the heart of the neighborhood.

We enjoyed walking along the canal under the fall leaves and checking out the character-filled houseboats. I would have loved to take a boat tour down the canal and through the locks, but we didn't have time.

We tried to stop for a bite to eat at Cafe Laville overlooking the canal, but the wait was too long. I recommend making reservations if you would like to eat here.

Little Venice was a charming little spot, but I wouldn't say it is a "must-see" if you're short on time.

Regent's Park

It's about a 1.5-mile walk from Little Venice to Regent's Park, but we hopped back on the Tube to save time.

Regent's Park is one of our favorite [places to go during the Fall in London](#). The Broad Walk at this park is one of the most picturesque spots in London during the fall.

The main highlight for us was the autumn leaves, so if you're not visiting in the fall, you could probably skip this park.

Daunt Books

From Regent's Park, we walked through the darling Marylebone neighborhood and stopped at Daunt Books.

This independent bookseller has a few locations around the city, but the shop on Marylebone High Street is the most iconic and Instagrammable.

The building dates back to 1912 and is believed to be the world's first custom-built bookshop. While the shop has changed names and ownership over the years, it has exclusively been a bookstore for over a century.

It was pretty crowded when we visited, but it was worth stepping in for a minute to browse the shelves and snap a few photos.

Dinner at Mercato Mayfair

We continued down Marylebone High Street to Bond Street, one of the most popular shopping streets in London.

We window-shopped at the high-end retailers and stepped into the historic 6-story Selfridges department store.

Eventually, we ended at Mercato Mayfair. This is such a unique and beautiful food hall located inside the former St. Mark's Church.

We sampled a few different dishes from various food stalls, and loved the bao dumplings from Steamy & Co., the Neapolitan pizza from Fresco's, and the pistachio hot chocolate from Badiani's.

There are tables scattered around the balcony, the former church nave, and even in the basement crypt. We ate on the main floor next to an old tomb. It was definitely a unique and memorable experience!

Final Thoughts

This 4-day itinerary is fast-paced but incredibly rewarding. We were exhausted by the end, but so glad we experienced so much of London in a short time.

With more days, I'd love to visit the Cotswolds, Windsor Castle, Oxford, Bath, Stonehenge, or the Harry Potter Studio Tour. Luckily, London always gives you a reason to come back!