

London for Londoners:

# Two Days in the English Capital

Ticked off Buckingham Palace, Harrods and the British Museum? Been on the bus tour? Bought the Union Jack T-shirt? Then spend a couple of days seeing the city through locals' eyes, with an itinerary chosen by Lonely Planet's London staff as their own perfect weekend in the capital.

## A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

Kick off your day with a hearty breakfast at **Smith's of Smithfield** (67-77 Charterhouse Square; [www.smithsofsmithfield.co.uk](http://www.smithsofsmithfield.co.uk)), a cavernous bar opposite central London's last surviving meat market. Where plague victims were once thrown into mass burial pits and cobbles were ankle-deep in excrement, you'll now find smart streets lined with bars and restaurants.

Head south and cross the river at Blackfriars Bridge to reach **Bankside**. Long a forgotten neighbourhood, this lively quarter has now become the last word in stylish London living. The centrepiece is **Tate Modern** (Queen's Walk; [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)), a modern art gallery in the old Bankside Power Station. Take advantage of the free admission, even if just to look into the enormous turbine hall and to gaze out the windows across the river. There's a great view from here of 30 St Mary Axe, aka the **Gherkin** ([www.30stmaryaxe.com](http://www.30stmaryaxe.com)), the Norman Foster-designed skyscraper that has dominated the skyline since 2004.

In front of Tate Modern, Foster's **Millennium Bridge** spans the Thames, affording magnificent views of that older icon of the London skyline, **St Paul's Cathedral** ([www.stpauls.co.uk](http://www.stpauls.co.uk)). Stay south and continue east to **Shakespeare's Globe** (21 New Globe Walk SE1; [www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org)), a faithful replica of the theatre that Shakespeare helped found in 1599. You can walk

the boards and learn about the Globe's history with a guided tour.

Continue along Bankside to Southwark Bridge. Take Southwark Bridge Road south to Southwark Street and turn left towards **Borough**. The area has a village feel and a sense of community that's a rare find in London. Its pride and joy is **Borough Market** (Borough High Street; [www.boroughmarket.org.uk](http://www.boroughmarket.org.uk)), where food has been sold since the 13th century. On Fridays and Saturdays the market is abuzz with shoppers checking out a fantastic range of gourmet stalls. Foodie heaven.

For lunch, settle into one of the local restaurants (try **Roast**, [www.roast-restaurant.com](http://www.roast-restaurant.com), or **Degustibus**, [www.degustibus.co.uk](http://www.degustibus.co.uk)) or pick up some snacks from the market stalls and spread out in the grounds of **Southwark Cathedral** (Montague Close; [www.southwark.anglican.org](http://www.southwark.anglican.org)).

Test the constitution of your stomach with a visit to the **Old Operating Theatre & Herb Garret Museum** (9a St Thomas Street; [www.thegarret.org.uk](http://www.thegarret.org.uk)). In the surgical theatre you'll see the rough-and-ready conditions in which operations were performed in the 19th century, not to mention more pickled human organs than you can wave a rusty scalpel at.

Suitably nauseous, return to the river and continue up to **Tower Bridge**, passing **HMS Belfast** and the mayor's **City Hall** (known locally as the testicle – you can probably work out why). Take a lift into the 'roof' of Tower Bridge for great views across the city ([www.towerbridge.org.uk](http://www.towerbridge.org.uk)).

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Head north of the river and put your feet up at the **Tower XI Bar** (Tower Hotel, St Katharine's Way) or one of the other bars in nearby **St Katharine's Dock** ([www.skdocks.co.uk](http://www.skdocks.co.uk)). As the evening slides in, you have two choices. First is to head east to **Wapping Food** (Wapping Wall), a Mediterranean restaurant in a converted hydraulics station, and follow that up with a few quiet pints in the **Prospect of Whitby** (Wapping Wall), a 16th-century boozier on the river. If you're after something livelier, aim your beer goggles towards **Shoreditch**: have dim sum at the **Drunken Monkey** (222 Shoreditch High Street; [www.thedrunkenmonkey.co.uk](http://www.thedrunkenmonkey.co.uk)), make a dent in the vodka collection at **Schmersh** (5 Ravey Street; [www.smershbar.co.uk](http://www.smershbar.co.uk)) and lounge with the Shoreditch sophisticats at **Dragon Bar** (5 St Leonard Street).

## EASTERN ENCLAVES OF COOL

Start your day with a slow amble down **Broadway Market** ([www.broadwaymarket.co.uk](http://www.broadwaymarket.co.uk)), East London's up-and-coming eating and drinking strip. Pop into the eclectic mixture of shops or stave off a hangover with a Bloody Mary at the **Cat & Mutton** (No 76; [www.catandmutton.co.uk](http://www.catandmutton.co.uk)) or the **Dove** (No 24). From Broadway, head down Goldsmiths Row's to **Columbia Road**. Here, every Sunday from dawn, market stalls selling freshly cut flowers and plants feed flora-starved Londoners, who come in droves. Don't forget to check out the shops and alleys lining the road or the food stalls behind the main flower sellers (we'd happily kill for the fried king prawns and chilli sauce).

Head down Hackney Road and turn left up Kingsland Road, stopping for a drink at Shoreditch stalwart **Dreambagsjaguarshoes** (No 34-46; [www.dreambagsjaguarshoes.com](http://www.dreambagsjaguarshoes.com)). At No 136 you'll find the **Geffrye Museum** ([www.geffrye-museum.org.uk](http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk)). Situated in converted almshouses, this top museum plots the history of English interior design from the 17th century to the present day.

Stop for lunch at **Sông Quê** (No 134), London's best Vietnamese restaurant, before backtracking down Kingsland Road and turning left on Bethnal Green Road. On your right you'll find **Brick Lane**. In 1550 this was a country lane leading up to brickfields – today the vibrant Bengali street is taken up almost entirely by touristy curry houses. There's a Sunday flea market and the roads leading

off the lane reveal fine Georgian houses and interesting shops and pubs. Halfway down you'll pass the **Truman Brewery** ([www.trumanbrewery.com](http://www.trumanbrewery.com)), London's biggest brewery by the mid-18th-century and now an art centre.

From Brick Lane, track back up Commercial Street to **Spitalfields Market** ([www.visitspitalfields.com](http://www.visitspitalfields.com)). This glorious late-Victorian structure was the city's fruit and vegetable market up until 1991 and now offers cool clothes and furniture to eager Hoxtonites. The perfect day should end with a few drinks at the **Golden Hart** (110 Commercial Street) and dinner at **Spitz** (109 Commercial Street; [www.spitz.co.uk](http://www.spitz.co.uk)).

## SLEEPING

### Budget:

St Christopher's Village ([www.st-christophers.co.uk](http://www.st-christophers.co.uk); ☎ 7407 1856) Flagship hostel on the Thames, with friendly service and great views.

### Midrange:

Zetter ([www.thezetter.com](http://www.thezetter.com); ☎ 7324 444) Chic boutique hotel with eco-friendly credentials and a great bar.

### Top End:

Great Eastern Hotel ([www.great-eastern-hotel.co.uk](http://www.great-eastern-hotel.co.uk); ☎ 7618 5010) Achingly hip pad with 267 individually designed rooms.

For more reviews of London accommodation, check out the Sleep section on [www.lonelyplanet.com/accommodation](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/accommodation).

By Amanda Canning

For the complete guide to London grab a copy of Lonely Planet's *London* guide; or get right under the skin of the city with *Best of London*. Both books are available online at [shop.lonelyplanet.com](http://shop.lonelyplanet.com).

