

# LONDON'S SECRETS MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

A Guide to  
Over 200 of the City's  
Top Attractions

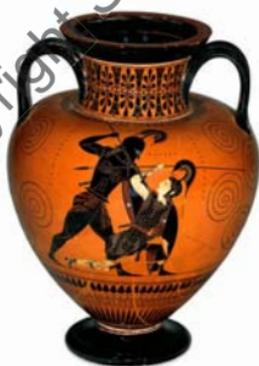


Robbi Atilgan & David Hampshire

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A Guide to Over 200 of the City's Top Attractions

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Survival Books • Bath • England

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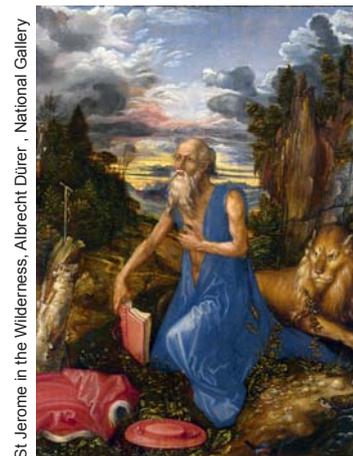
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Last, but not least, a special thank you to the many photographers who provided images (listed on page 318) – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images add colour and bring the museums and galleries to life.

### NOTE

Before visiting anywhere mentioned in this book, it's advisable to check the opening times, which are liable to change without notice.



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# Readers' Guide

The notes below refer to the general information provided for each museum/gallery and other information 'boxes'.

- ◆ **Address:** Includes the phone number and website (if applicable). You can enter the postcode to display a map of the location on Google.
- ◆ **Opening hours:** These can change at short notice, so confirm by telephone or check the website before travelling. Note that the last entry is usually at least 30 minutes before the closing time. Some venues close for private or official events, and smaller galleries have no permanent exhibitions and are open only during exhibitions.
- ◆ **Cost:** Many museums – such as national museums and galleries – offer free entry but charge a fee for special exhibitions. Ask about concession and family rates if not indicated. Many museums have lower fees for groups, either per head or a fixed rate, which must usually be pre-booked (particularly for small museums). Groups may also be able to visit at times when museums are closed to the general public. Major museums allow you to buy tickets online, thus circumventing queues, and prices may also be slightly lower. Museum cafés and shops often allow free public access.
- ◆ **Transport:** The nearest tube or rail stations are listed, although in some cases there may also be a lengthy walk. You can also travel to most venues by bus and to some by river ferry. Some museums are best reached by car, although parking can be difficult or impossible in many areas. Most venues don't provide parking, particularly in central London, and even parking nearby may be a problem (and expensive!). If you need to travel by car, check the parking facilities beforehand.
- ◆ **Amenities:** Facilities such as a restaurant or café, pub, shop, library, garden, park, etc. are noted. Most museums have a WC, although not all are wheelchair accessible.

### Access

Many museums housed in old buildings don't provide wheelchair access or may allow access to the ground floor only. Wheelchairs are provided at some venues, although users may need assistance. Contact venues if you have specific requirements (see also Artsline, [artsline.org.uk](http://artsline.org.uk)).

- ◆ **Food & Drink:** All major museums and galleries provide cafés and/or restaurants, many of which are excellent. Where applicable we have also made alternative suggestions. Some venues provide a picnic area or you can usually eat a packed lunch in a nearby park or square.
- ◆ **Allow:** The time required to see collections varies considerably, from less than an hour for a small gallery to a number of days for national museums. If your time is limited it's advisable to check a museum's website and decide what you most want to see. Don't forget to allow time for travelling, coffee/tea breaks and lunch.
- ◆ **Don't Miss:** This highlights an unusual exhibit, an important piece of art or a 'must-see' attraction.

# Introduction

London is one of the world's great art and cultural centres – many claim it's the art capital of the world – with more popular museums and galleries (some 250, excluding commercial galleries) than any other city. It's also home to seven of the world's top 50 most-visited museums and art galleries, beating rival cities such as New York and Paris. The London art scene is a lot like the city itself – diverse, vast, vibrant and in a constant state of flux – a cornucopia of traditional and cutting-edge, majestic and mundane, world-class and run-of-the-mill, bizarre and brilliant. From old masters to street art and everything in between, London has it all in spades.

Not surprisingly, everyone wants to see the world-class national collections, such as the British Museum and National Gallery, but once you've explored the Egyptian galleries and admired Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, what next? Well, then it's time to seek out smaller but equally captivating collections, such as the Wallace Collection and the Dulwich Picture Gallery; absorbing 'specialist' museums like Sir John Soane's eclectic house of



treasures, Dennis Severs' enchanting house and the fascinating Brunel Museum; and controversial, thought-provoking (even shocking) modern art at the Saatchi Gallery and Tate Modern. London has something for everyone. Furthermore, many museums and galleries are housed in magnificent historic buildings – either purpose-built or former grand homes – which are works of art in their own right.

Also, don't overlook the treasure trove of smaller 'secret' museums (not to mention the plethora of interesting local history museums), many of which are known only to insiders and locals; some are tucked away in the suburbs, but are well worth the extra effort involved to explore them.

**Best of all, most national museums offer free entry (although there's a suggested donation to help defray running costs), as do many others. In fact over half the places featured in this book are free! No other city in the world offers free access to so many museums.**

London is also one of the world's most dynamic



Bacchus and Ariadne, Titian (National Gallery)

centres for contemporary art, with an abundance of commercial art galleries catering to all tastes and forms of modern art. Enterprising galleries and artists' spaces have burgeoned across the capital, and, in turn, have attracted artists from of all corners of the globe to live and work in the city. Most galleries stage regular free exhibitions, including artist retrospectives and showcases for new talent, and visiting them is a great

way to get a feel for the changing arts scene and spot the Next Big Thing! Although the majority of commercial galleries are situated in central London, don't neglect other areas, particularly East London, which has become one of the city's most vibrant art hubs in recent years.

As that great man of letters Samuel Johnson once said, "When a man is tired of London he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." It's hard to imagine anyone tiring of the capital's museums and galleries, where there's always something new, unexpected or unexplored to capture your imagination and fire your enthusiasm.

So, whether you're an art lover, a culture vulture, a history buff or just looking for something to entertain the family during the school holidays, you're sure to find inspiration in London. All you need is a comfortable pair of shoes, an open mind – and this book!

*Robbi Atzilgan & David Hampshire*  
January 2013

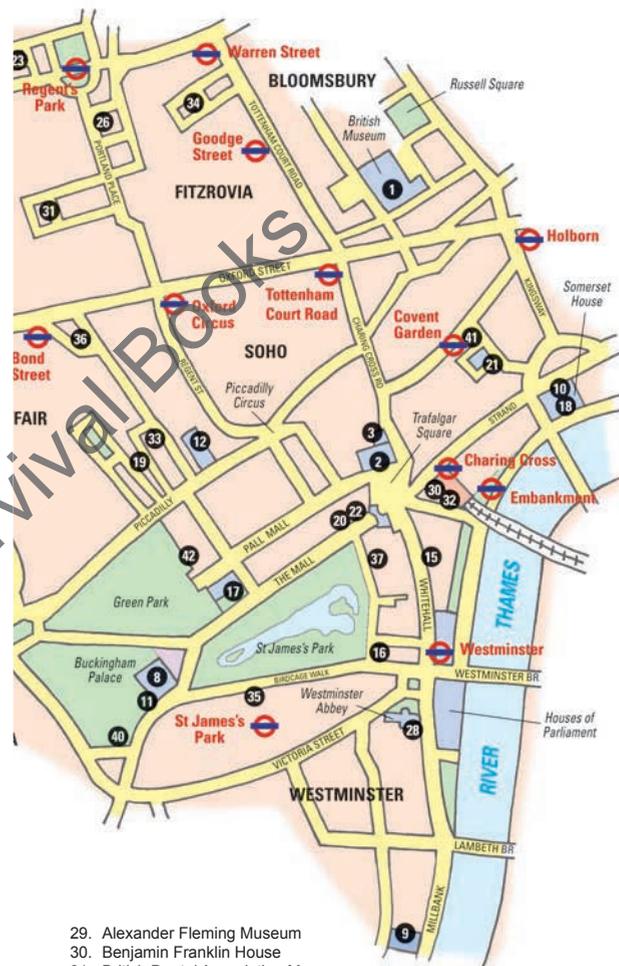


Discobolus (British Museum)



The Plains of Heaven, John Martin (Tate Britain)

# CENTRAL LONDON



1. British Museum
2. National Gallery
3. National Portrait Gallery
4. Victoria & Albert Museum
5. Kensington Palace
6. Natural History Museum
7. Science Museum
8. State Rooms, Buckingham Palace
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37. Household Cavalry Museum
38. Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum
39. Royal Geographical Society
40. Royal Mews
41. Royal Opera House Collections & Tours
42. Spencer House

## 1 BRITISH MUSEUM

**Address:** Great Russell Street, WC1B 3DG (☎ 020-7323 8299, [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)).

**Opening hours:** Sat–Thu, 10am to 5.30pm; Fri 10am till 8.30pm (most galleries). The Great Court opens at 9am. Closed 24–26th December and 1st January, and from 5.30pm on Good Fridays. Galleries may be temporarily closed for refurbishment, so check beforehand.

**Cost:** Free. There's a fee for some temporary exhibitions.

**Transport:** Tottenham Court Road, Holborn, Russell Square and Goodge Street tube.

**Amenities:** Restaurant, two cafés, four shops, wheelchair access.

The British Museum is a London landmark and both the city's most popular museum (attracting some 6m visitors annually) and the third most-visited museum in the world after the Louvre and New York's Metropolitan Museum. It provides an almost overwhelming smorgasbord of human history and culture stretching across centuries and continents, one that's best appreciated in small bites. The museum has a permanent collection of some 8m objects – although only around 1 per cent is on show at any one time – housed in almost 100 galleries.

The British Museum grew from the private collection of curiosities bequeathed to George II by physician and scientist Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753). Sloane's collection comprised around 71,000 objects including books, manuscripts, natural history specimens and antiquities. The museum was

established by Act of Parliament in 1753, and opened in 1759 in Montagu House in Bloomsbury, on the site of the current building. It was the first national public museum in the world, and set a precedent by offering free entry to 'all studious and curious persons'.



### ALLOW...

The British Museum covers over 92,000m<sup>2</sup> (990,000ft<sup>2</sup>) and it's impossible to see it in a day (or even a week). It's better to concentrate on one or two departments at a time. But if time is short, the museum's website ([britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)) is invaluable. As well as allowing you to explore 2m objects online, it provides themed object trails and suggested itineraries if you have only a few hours to spare.

The museum has grown over the last two and a half centuries in an



Tomb of Nebamun

attempt to keep pace with its ever-expanding collection, which has been swelled by numerous bequests and by discoveries by colonial adventurers from Asia Minor to the South Sea Islands. The magnificent building you see today – a quadrangle with four wings and a Greek revival façade, based on the temple of Athena Polias at Priene in Asia Minor (Turkey) – was designed by Sir Robert Smirke and completed in 1852. There have been many additions since, including the cast iron circular Reading Room which housed much of the British Library until its move to St Pancras in 1997. Its removal made way for the Great Court, Norman Foster's spectacular glass structure which opened in 2000 and is the largest covered public square in Europe.

Start your tour in the Great Court, where information desks provide floor plans and itineraries, including the award-winning BBC collaboration, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, which tracks human evolution from Stone Age tools to a solar-powered lamp. If your time is limited you can opt for a 40-minute 'eyeOpener' tour of a chosen department or hire one of the multimedia guides (£5) and explore at your own pace. Note that the Montague Street entrance at the rear (north side) of the British Museum can be much less crowded than the main entrance, and is a quick way to access the Egyptian and African rooms.

The main departments and highlights are as follows:

**Ancient Egypt** (rooms 4, 61–66): The largest collection of Egyptian



Reading Room



Egyptian Column

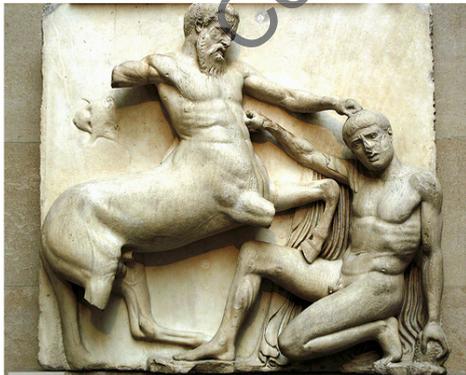
Upstairs, the perennially popular collection of 140 mummies and mummy cases and other objects offers insight into the Egyptians' preoccupation with the afterlife. One of the most studied is the Mummy of Katebet from Thebes, which dates back to 1300-1280 BC; this elderly woman was mummified with a scarab beetle for protection and a mummy statue to act as her servant.

Don't miss the Sphinx of Taharqo, a ruler of Kush around 700 BC, which was found in Upper Nubia (Sudan) and has a distinctively African face.

**Ancient Greece & Rome** (rooms 11-23, 69-73): One of the world's most inclusive assemblies of antiquities from the classical world, from the Greek Bronze Age (around 3200 BC) to the reign of Emperor Constantine I (4th century AD). It also encompasses the Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean cultures, plus elements of two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

The biggest draw is the so-called Elgin Marbles, a group of iconic sculptures removed from the Parthenon in the early 19th century and bought by the British government in 1816. Put aside their much-debated relocation

antiquities outside Cairo. Room 4 contains the blockbuster sculptures, including the authoritative bust of Ramesses II (1250 BC) and the Sarcophagus of Nectanebo II (360 to 343 BC), which was once rumoured (wrongly) to have contained the body of Alexander the Great. The most important object is the Rosetta Stone, a large slab of granite featuring writing in three scripts – Greek, everyday Egyptian and hieroglyphics – which enabled linguists to decipher the hieroglyphic code.



Elgin marbles



China's Terracotta Army Exhibition, 2007-8

and instead enjoy their intricate and life-like detail, in particular the reclining statue of Dionysos and the head of the noble Selene horse.

Smaller but no less impressive are the collections of jewellery, bronzes, Greek vases and Roman glass. Look out for the bronze statue of a Minoan bull leaper from Crete, a gold coin said to have belonged to King Croesus and the elegant Portland Vase, made from Roman cameo glass.

**FOOD & DRINK**

**Court Restaurant:** Fine dining and afternoon tea under the Great Court's glass roof.

**Court Cafes:** Fill up on sandwiches and snacks between exhibits.

**Museum Tavern:** Decent pub grub in a historic hostelry opposite the main entrance to the museum.

**Middle East** (rooms 6-10, 34, 52-59): These collections represent the great ancient civilisations of the Near East – the area between the Mediterranean and modern-day Iraq.

The museum possesses by far the world's largest and most important collection of Mesopotamian antiquities outside Iraq. The flagship pieces are the massive winged human-headed lion statues from the biblical city of Nimrud and the alabaster bas-reliefs which depict scenes from ancient Nineveh. The Royal Lion Hunt reliefs are among the museum's most important possessions.

Smaller but still significant are the Flood Tablet found at Nineveh, which tells part of the story of Gilgamesh – and has parallels with the biblical story of Noah – and the Royal Game of Ur, a board game from 3,000 BC unearthed in the Royal Cemeteries at Ur in southern Iraq.

The Oxus Treasure is a collection of precious metal items from the first Persian Empire, which includes an intricate gold chariot and vessels shaped like fish, while another room houses Islamic art: pottery, inscriptions and Iznik tiles.

**Prehistory & Europe** (rooms 40-51): This collection covers a geographical area from Spain to the

Black Sea and from Scandinavia to North Africa, and a timescale stretching from earliest man – some objects date back 2m years – to the present day. It's particularly strong on life in Britain under the Romans, featuring armour, mosaics and even a party invitation inscribed on a stone tablet! Some of the most ornate objects are from hoards – buried treasure unearthed centuries later – and include a ceremonial helmet from the 7th century (Sutton Hoo), gorgeous silver tableware used by Romans (Mildenhall Treasure) and the Bronze Age Mold Cape made from beaten gold.

Objects range from the rudimentary – a swimming reindeer carving from a mammoth's tusk – to the flamboyant. The Royal Gold Cup, solid gold and lavishly decorated, was the proud possession of several European monarchs.



Royal Gold Cup

**Asia** (rooms 33, 67, 92-94): The broadest collection in terms of countries covered, this department features over 75,000 objects. Highlights include sculptures and paintings celebrating

the region's religions, such as the 1st-century BC Buddhist limestone reliefs from Amaravati in India, and a vast collection of Chinese paintings, porcelain, lacquerware and jade. One of the most pleasing jade objects is an incredibly lifelike terrapin, which probably belonged to a Mughal emperor in 17th-century India. Equally charming are the detailed burial figures which were recovered from the tomb of a Chinese soldier from the Tang dynasty (around 700 AD). The collection also boasts the most complete collection of Japanese pre-20th-century art in the Western world, from Samurai armour to tea sets.

### DON'T MISS!

The Lewis Chessmen are a set of characterful chess pieces made from walrus tusk and whale tooth, which were unearthed on the Scottish Isle of Lewis in the 1830s. They are thought to date from 12th-century Norway and would once have kept Viking warriors amused. See them in the Medieval Europe gallery (room 40).



**Africa, Oceania & the Americas** (rooms 25, 26-27): A diverse and compelling collection which gives a glimpse of the indigenous peoples of three continents. Visit the Sainsbury African Galleries to view masks,

sculptures and the amazing Benin Bronzes, detailed brass plaques from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin (in present day Nigeria) depicting sophisticated courtly life in 15th-century Africa. The Americas collections feature objects from Inca, Mayan and Native American cultures. Many have an animal theme, such as the otter-shaped pipe from 1st-century Ohio and the elegant ballgame belt from Veracruz in Mexico with the face of a toad and a grisly secret – losers in this ceremonial game often lost their heads as well.

**Prints & Drawings** (room 90): The museum has about 50,000 drawings and over 2m prints dating from the 15th century to the present day. It's one of the largest and best print room collections in existence, ranking alongside the Albertina in Vienna, the Paris collections and the Hermitage, and a selection is displayed in room 90.

**Enlightenment Gallery** (room 1): Opened in 2003 to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the museum, this is dedicated to discoveries made during the Age of Enlightenment (1680-1820), when our thirst for knowledge was at its keenest. Objects reflect the exciting new disciplines of the age – religion and ritual, trade and discovery, archaeology, art history, classification, the decipherment of ancient scripts and natural history – and many were collected by the museum's founder Sir Hans Sloane. They range from the delicate Sloane astrolabe, a map



Enlightenment Gallery



gold statue of Kate Moss, Marc Quinn

of the heavens first used in medieval times, to a flint hand axe dating back some 350,000 years and discovered in London in the late 1600s.

**The Wellcome Trust Gallery** (room 24): This room displays objects from places as diverse as New Zealand, Ghana and the Pacific islands on the theme of Living and Dying, and is



Apollo

dominated by one of the largest objects in the museum: the four-ton basalt statue from Easter Island known as Hoa Hakananaia'a ('Stolen or Hidden Friend'). Once a potent symbol of ancestor worship, the statue was one of many discovered by Captain Cook, and was later transported to England on board the HMS Topaze – with the permission of the islanders – in 1868.

There are many more rooms to explore, including one devoted to money – a coin collector's nirvana – and another dedicated to clocks and watches, while The Changing Room (room 2) features a rotating selection of objects from the main collection.

The British Museum is famous for its landmark exhibitions, such as the Treasures of Tutankhamun, which had visitors queuing around the block in

1972, and The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army which brought some of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's 3rd-century terracotta warriors from Xi'an to London in 2007. But the free exhibitions are also well worth exploring. In 2012 and 2013, these included a virtual autopsy of a 5,000-year-old Egyptian mummy; Renaissance to Goya, presenting Spanish art from the mid-16th to the early 19th century; and the highly acclaimed *The Horse: from Arabia to Royal Ascot*, examining the history of equine influence on civilisation since 3500BC.

Once you've completed your tour(s), the British Museum's shops are an irresistible diversion, selling everything from beautifully illustrated books to a rubber duck in the shape of a sphinx!



The British Museum

## NATIONAL GALLERY

2

**Address:** Trafalgar Square, WC2N 5DN (☎ 020-7747 2885, [nationalgallery.org.uk](http://nationalgallery.org.uk)).

**Opening hours:** Daily, 10am to 6pm (9pm Fridays). Closed 24-26th December and 1st January.

**Cost:** Free. There's a fee for some temporary exhibitions.

**Transport:** Charing Cross tube/rail.

**Amenities:** Restaurant, two cafés, three shops, wheelchair access.



Hay Wain, Constable

One of the finest collections of Western European art in the world, the National Gallery is the second most-visited museum in the UK and a must-see for anyone interested in art. It boasts more than 2,300 works of art, dating from the 13th century to 1900 – from Botticelli's *Venus and Mars* to Constable's *The Hay Wain*. It's a museum for contemplation rather than interaction, and one that deserves to be dipped into time and again.

Despite its grand frontage, the National Gallery (NG for short) was always intended to be a people's gallery. The founders chose Trafalgar Square for its location – the rich could ride up from the west in their carriages,

and the East End's poor could get there on foot – and entrance has been free since its inception. That said, it's one museum that really deserves your donations as without gifts and bequests it wouldn't exist.

Unlike other European countries, which nationalised their royal art collections for public consumption, the British government had to buy its paintings. Its first purchase was a private collection of 38 paintings from John Julius Angerstein in 1824 which cost £57,000; a huge investment, although it pales in comparison with the £95m the NG paid for two Titians in recent years. The only place to display Angerstein's paintings was in his former



The Wilton Diptych, 1395-9

home in Pall Mall and that's where they stayed, along with other acquisitions, until a decision was made to build a gallery on the site of the former Royal Mews overlooking Trafalgar Square.

The building was designed by William Wilkins who may have lacked the foresight to realise the sheer number of paintings it would be required to display. It opened in 1838 and the first director, Sir Charles Lock Eastlake, appointed in 1855, soon expanded the collection by making frequent buying trips to Italy and attracting further bequests. Some gifts, including over 1,000 works left to the nation by the artist Turner, couldn't

be accommodated and ended up in other locations. This led to the creation of a gallery on Millbank – now Tate Britain – dedicated to British art. The National Gallery continued to expand, most recently with the addition of the Sainsbury Wing, the Postmodernist extension which opened in 1991.

The National Gallery's paintings are grouped chronologically and displayed in four wings. The Sainsbury Wing hosts medieval and early works, while the 16th-century Renaissance paintings are housed in the West Wing. The North Wing to the rear is home to 17th-century works and the East Wing has 18th- and 19th-century paintings,



Venus and Mars, Botticelli

including the British School. The NG's map is colour-coded and easy to navigate, and the website version is interactive so you can see at a glance which paintings are in which room.



**ALLOW...**

Allow plenty of time to take in the paintings – you can make sketches although taking photos is banned – as each of the four wings could easily occupy you for a day. If you cannot spare the time, the website suggests 30 'must-see' paintings and lets you take a virtual tour. There are daily one-hour guided tours which leave from the Sainsbury Wing at 11.30am and 2.30pm, or use the NG's multimedia touch screen system, ArtStart, to plan your own tour and print a free map.

It's impossible to list the full collections here, just as it is to see them all in a day, but the following is a taster of what's on view.

**Sainsbury Wing: Early Italian, Dutch and German Schools (1250 to 1500).** The collection includes works by Uccello, van Eyck, Lippi, Botticelli, Dürer and Bellini, among others. Many were intended as icons and altar pieces, and the monochrome interior of the rooms (51-66) is the perfect foil for the paintings' jewel-like colours. Overriding themes are the life of Christ and the saints, although from the 1400s onwards characters from mythology – notably Venus – were popular subjects, and portraits of the painters' contemporaries begin to appear. Highlights include:

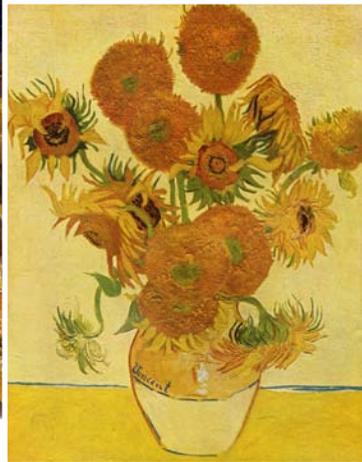
- ◆ *The Wilton Diptych* by an unknown artist was painted in 1395-9 as an altarpiece for Richard II. It's one of very few to survive from medieval England.
- ◆ *The Battle of San Romano* and *Saint George and the Dragon*, both by Uccello. The latter has a

The National Gallery





The Boulevard Montmartre at Night, Pissarro



Sunflowers, Vincent van Gogh

fairy-tale quality with the fearsome dragon held on a leash by the princess.

- ◆ *The Arnolfini Portrait* by van Eyck. This famous but homely portrait of a nobleman and his wife illustrates the artist's incredible use of light. The wife isn't pregnant but rather is holding up her skirts as the fashion decreed.
- ◆ *The Virgin of the Rocks* by Leonardo da Vinci is one of two versions; the other hangs in the Louvre.
- ◆ *Venus and Mars* by Botticelli shows Mars in post-coital slumber, to the amusement of the satyrs.
- ◆ *The Painter's Father* by Dürer is an honest but affectionate study.

### FOOD & DRINK

**National Dining Room:** The best of British fine dining with prices to match.  
**Café in the Crypt, St Martin-in-the-Fields:** Just across Trafalgar Square, open until 8pm – the Les Routiers London Cafe of the Year 2012.

**West Wing: Renaissance Italian, Dutch and German Schools (1500 to 1600).** Works by Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Holbein and Brueghel among those on display in rooms 2 to 14. The stars of the show are undoubtedly the Italian Renaissance painters. This was the era in which the skill of the artist began to win as much appreciation as the subject matter, as the great and the good commissioned art for art's sake. Highlights include:

- ◆ *The Ambassadors* by Holbein which is notable for the incredible detail of objects surrounding its subjects, such as the Turkish carpet, and the skull which appears distorted unless viewed from a certain angle.
- ◆ *The Raising of Lazarus* by del Piombo, from Angerstein's collection, was the first painting to enter the gallery in 1824.
- ◆ *The Entombment* and *The Manchester Madonna* by Michelangelo are the only works by the artist in the National Gallery; both are unfinished.

- ◆ *The Madonna of the Pinks* by Raphael is a tender depiction of the young Virgin Mary amusing baby Jesus with a bunch of carnations.
- ◆ *The Family of Darius before Alexander* by Veronese depicts a triumphant Alexander with the family of the Persian king; most of the subjects wear Venetian attire.
- ◆ *Bacchus and Ariadne* by Titian. Among the gods and satyrs, you can spot a King Charles spaniel – a popular pet in Titian's time.
- ◆ *Seaport with the Embarkation of Saint Ursula* by Claude – a fabulous seascape.
- ◆ *Self Portrait at the Age of 34* by Rembrandt shows the artist at the peak of his career.
- ◆ *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House* by Samuel van Hoogstraten is an early attempt at presenting a scene in 3D.
- ◆ *Samson and Delilah* by Rubens presents a sensual retelling of the Old Testament tale featuring an unsuspecting Samson at the mercy of voluptuous Delilah.

**North Wing: Dutch, Flemish, French, Italian and Spanish Schools (1600 to 1700).** The 17th-century artists represented in rooms 15-32 and 37 include Caravaggio, Rubens, Poussin, Van Dyck, Velázquez, Claude, Rembrandt and Vermeer. This is the era in which artists began to impose their own style onto traditional subject matters, while the subjects they painted shifted from religious themes to everyday scenes, still lifes and landscapes. Highlights include:

- ◆ *Equestrian Portrait of Charles I* by Anthony Van Dyck is more than 3m high and would have dwarfed its subject. Charles was only 5ft 4in (163cm) tall and was often painted on horseback to increase his stature.
- ◆ *The Supper at Emmaus* by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio perfectly captures the disciples' shock when they realise they're eating with the resurrected Jesus.

**East Wing: British, French and Italian Schools (1700 to 1900).** The latest



The Fighting Temeraire, JMW Turner

paintings are in rooms 33-36 and 38-46, and include works by Canaletto, Goya, Turner, Constable, Ingres, Degas, Cézanne, Monet and van Gogh. This is the time when artists began to rebel against conformity and form new art movements. The Impressionist and Post-impressionist rooms are always popular, as are those displaying the best of British paintings. Highlights include:

- ◆ *The Hay Wain* by Constable. This was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1821 where it failed to find a buyer, although it was much appreciated in France.

### DON'T MISS!

One of the gallery's more controversial paintings, *The Toilet of Venus* by Velázquez (see below) was completed between 1647 and 1651. Also known as *The Rokeby Venus*, it's one of very few nudes to be painted by a Spanish artist for fear of reprisals by the Inquisition! In 1914 it was famously slashed by a suffragette, Mary Richardson, in protest at the arrest of Emmeline Pankhurst.

- ◆ *The Fighting Temeraire* by Turner shows the last of the victorious Trafalgar fleet on her way to be

scrapped; she appears ghostly in Turner's misty light.

- ◆ *Whistlejacket* by Stubbs depicts the Marquess of Rockingham's racehorse in all his temperamental splendour.
- ◆ *The Stonemason's Yard* by Canaletto shows an unexpected view of the Grand Canal in Venice and is full of detail, from a woman spinning thread on a balcony to a mother rushing to comfort her fallen child.
- ◆ *The Water-Lily Pond* by Monet. The National Gallery is fortunate to have 18 Monets, including *The Beach at Trouville* and *Irises*.
- ◆ *The Umbrellas* by Renoir. This wonderful Parisian street scene was left to the gallery by Sir Hugh Lane, who died in the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915.
- ◆ *Sunflowers* by Vincent van Gogh. Possibly the world's greatest still-life painting, it's one of several sunflower paintings by the artist who had to work early in the morning before the blooms began to wilt.

There's a lot more going on, including temporary exhibitions, concerts, workshops and talks, most of which are free. It's hard to get out of the National Gallery, however, without spending money in the shop which sells prints and posters of its entire works, alongside art books and other goodies.



The Toilet of Venus, Velázquez

## NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

3

**Address:** St Martin's Place, WC2H 0HE (☎ 020-7306 0055, ✉ npg.org.uk).

**Opening hours:** Daily, 10am to 6pm (9pm on Thursdays and Fridays). Closed 24-26th December.

**Cost:** Free. There's a fee for some temporary exhibitions.

**Transport:** Leicester Square tube.

**Amenities:** Restaurant, café, bar, two shops, wheelchair access.



Whether you're seeking artistic inspiration or voyeuristic pleasure, you'll find it in the National Portrait Gallery, where a unique collection of portraits shows famous and influential British people from the last 500 years – from Henry VIII to Winston Churchill – captured in paintings, sculpture, drawings and photography.

Established in 1856, the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) was the first of its kind in the world. It was the forerunner of today's *Hello!* magazine in that it allowed the public to see the people who had shaped their world, although it was born out of a desire to educate and inspire, rather than titillate and amuse.

The NPG was founded by Philip Henry Stanhope, Thomas Babington

Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle, all of whom are immortalised in stone above the main entrance. Its first portrait was one of William Shakespeare which was donated by Lord Ellesmere. The man in charge of the gallery was an illustrator, George Scharf, who managed the collection for 40 years until just before its move to its permanent home.

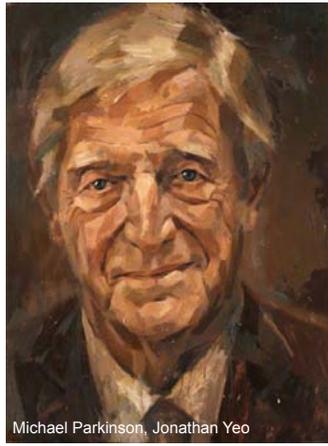
As the collection grew, it was shifted between several locations until the philanthropist William Henry Alexander donated £80,000 for a permanent museum to be built in St Martin's Place, next to the National Gallery. The architect Ewan Christian designed the building in rather fanciful Florentine style, and it opened to the public in 1896. The site has been extended twice: the Duveen Wing was

opened in 1933 and the Ondaatje Wing in 2000.



### ALLOW...

It's possible to see the highlights of the National Portrait Gallery in a day but it takes a little planning. Start off in the Digital Space on the ground floor and make use of the Portrait Explorer, which helps you find out what's currently on display and follow a themed tour or plan your own route. The entire primary collection can be viewed on the Portrait Explorer and it also allows access to much of the reference collection. Audio guides are available in several languages and cost £3.



Michael Parkinson, Jonathan Yeo

The following is a brief guide to some of the highlights, albeit a subjective one. Note that some may be removed when you visit. The website provides an up-to-date room-by-room guide to what's currently on display.

**Tudors & Stuarts** (1485-1714, rooms 1-8): Many of the people portrayed here are familiar, from Holbein's powerful 'cartoon' of Henry VIII, which became the blueprint for how we now see him, to the shifty-looking image of Richard III. There's a plump Cardinal Wolsey, a pensive Thomas Cranmer, later burned at the stake, and several of Henry's ill-fated wives, including a lovely study of Anne

Diana, Princess of Wales, Mario Testino



King Henry VIII, unknown artist

Boleyn, described as having 'eyes which were black and beautiful'. Elizabeth I is at her most regal in the 'Ditchley Portrait' by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger. It was completed around 1592 when Elizabeth was approaching her 60s although in it she looks around 35!

Other royal portraits include several paintings of Charles II, from a plump baby grasping a King Charles spaniel by the ear to a grumpy and dissolute man painted a few years before his death. There's an unfinished sketch of James II by Sir Peter Lely, a renowned court painter, and a flattering full-length one of Queen Anne.

Significant subjects from this period include John Bunyan, Samuel Pepys, Sir Issac Newton and Ben Jonson, whose appearance is incredibly modern compared to his peers. Here, too, you can see the famous

Chandos portrait of Shakespeare that began it all, though some experts have questioned whether it really is a picture of the Bard.

### DON'T MISS!

One of the strangest paintings is an anamorphic portrait of Edward VI by William Scrots, usually on show in room 1. The deliberately distorted perspective is a way for the painter to show off – view the painting from a particular angle and it magically corrects itself.

**Georgian & Regency** (1714-1837, rooms 9-20): These rooms present the movers and shakers of the 18th and early 19th centuries, including artists, scientists, politicians and royals. One room is devoted to the be-wigged Whigs of the Kit-Cat club, painted by



Queen Elizabeth II, Dorothy Wilding, 1952

Sir Godfrey Kneller. Other highlights include Sir Christopher Wren, satirists Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope, the latter crowned with a Roman laurel wreath, William Hogarth's self-portrait and Handel holding a score of the *Messiah*. The courtesan Kitty Fisher is painted with a bowl of goldfish, which may be a comment on the effects of celebrity in Georgian times.

### FOOD & DRINK

**Portrait Restaurant:** Great food and a panoramic view of Nelson's Column and Big Ben in this rooftop restaurant. A two-course lunch starts from around £25.

**Portrait Café:** Reasonably priced sandwiches and drinks in the basement café with its signature glass roof.

There are some fascinating ensemble pieces, including one of abolitionist Granville Sharp and his family giving a concert on a Thames barge – clearly a joyous occasion. In complete contrast, *The Death of the Earl of Chatham* by John Singleton Copley is a moving historical document recreating the collapse of William Pitt the Elder in the House of Lords; it required sittings by 55 of the Earl's peers.

Regency subjects include two dashing portraits of George

IV and a vivid recreation of the 'trial' of his popular wife, Queen Caroline of Brunswick, whom the king wished (but failed) to divorce. There are studies of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, and the Duke of Wellington. The romantics are well represented, with portraits of poets Wordsworth, Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron in Albanian dress. Subjects from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution include George Stephenson and John Loudon McAdam, inventor of tarmac.

**Victorians & Edwardians** (1837-1910, rooms 21-29): This is one of the largest collections, reflecting the age in which the gallery was founded. Queen Victoria's coronation portrait shows her looking young and apprehensive, although *The Secret of England's Greatness* portrays a much more assured Victoria presenting a Bible to

a grateful African man! There's more empire-building in the Statesmen's Gallery, with its great many busts and oils of politicians, and it's a pleasant surprise to find the be-whiskered cricketing legend WG Grace tucked in among them.

Victorian arts are represented by a fresh-faced Charles Dickens, a pugnacious William Makepeace Thackeray, a painting of Edwin Landseer modelling one of the lions for Nelson's Column and complementary portraits of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barratt Browning side by side. One of the most charming paintings is of Anne, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, painted by their brother Branwell; it was lost for many years before being rediscovered on top of a cupboard in 1914!

These galleries are a roll call of accomplishment, from Michael Faraday to Isambard Kingdom Brunel. There are several likenesses of Charles Darwin, including one in which he's cheekily caricatured as an ape. The portraits become less posed in the later part



Shakespeare, John Taylor

of the century – look for Robert Louis Stephenson, captured in a single setting by William Blake Richmond as the pair drank coffee and told ghost stories.

**20th Century** (1914-1990, rooms 30-32): Important figures from the two world wars figure highly here. *Statesmen of World War I* by Sir James Guthrie is a group painting which shows Churchill surrounded by Lloyd George, Kitchener and other great men of the age. There's also a sketch for Graham Sutherland's 'bulldog' portrait which Churchill hated; his wife destroyed the original!

There are many images of the Queen, including Cecil Beaton's timeless monochrome photographs from the '50s and '60s. One of the loveliest is *Conversation Piece at the Royal Lodge* by James Gunn, which revealed a new informality as George VI enjoyed tea with his wife and daughters.

With so many familiar faces summing up a turbulent century it's hard to pinpoint the best portraits, but look out for a young Dylan Thomas



Winston Churchill, Ambros McEvoy

## VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM 4



Portrait Restaurant

– painted by his friend Augustus John – and Kingsley Amis wreathed in smoke from his pipe, Aleister Crowley adopting a mystical pose and Anna Neagle oozing Hollywood glamour. The portrait of writer-turned-farmer Beatrix Potter makes her look like one of her cuddly animal characters. *Carry On* star Sid James scowls out of a TV screen, Paul McCartney is captured in vibrant colour, while a black and white photo by Peter Rand catches Richard Branson in his pre-Virgin student days.

**Contemporary Portraits** (rooms 35-36, 38 and 41): These walls are lined with celebrities, from actors and writers to sportsmen and comedians, plus the odd politician. Worth seeking out are portraits of footballer David Beckham and director Mike Leigh, as well as actors Ian McKellen, Helen Mirren and a curiously disembodied head of Michael Caine. Some rooms are set aside for themed exhibitions, while others host major events, such as 2012's 'The Queen: Art and Image', which presented some of the NPG's 712 images of Her Majesty, and the annual BP Portrait Award, an open-

entry competition for portraitists which takes place each summer. There's a fee for some exhibitions but many are free.

There are a range of special events, including talks, drop-in sketching sessions and guided walks. Many take place during the late shift (Thursdays and Fridays until 9pm) when there's a bar and live music or DJs providing the soundtrack. Be warned: the NPG has an excellent gift shop and book shop, and you're unlikely to leave empty handed.



Lucian Freud, self-portrait

**Address:** Cromwell Road, SW7 2RL (☎ 020-7942 2000, ✉ vam.ac.uk).

**Opening hours:** Daily, 10am to 5.45pm (Fridays selected galleries remain open until 10pm). The National Art Library, Prints & Drawings and RIBA Architecture study rooms are closed on Mondays. Closed 24-26th December.

**Cost:** Free. There's a fee for some temporary exhibitions.

**Transport:** South Kensington tube.

**Amenities:** Two cafés, two shops, wheelchair access.

The Victoria and Albert Museum (usually abbreviated to the V&A) is the world's leading museum of art and design. Its immense and eclectic investment in decorative art takes in glass and ceramics, textiles and costumes, metalwork and jewellery, domestic items and furniture – and the museum is also rich in fine art. Its permanent collection numbers over 2.2m objects, of which around 60,000 are displayed at any one time. They are divided into five main themes – Asia, Europe, Materials & Techniques, Modern and Exhibitions – and displayed in 145 galleries.

The V&A has the reputation of being a maze and one that's constantly evolving. An intensive programme of refurbishment to update the entire museum for the 21st century has seen entire galleries remodelled, new ones opened and others closed. Work is on-going and it's advisable to check the V&A's website or call ☎ 020-7942 2211 if you have your heart set on seeing a particular exhibit or gallery. You can track down specific objects via the excellent online archive (📄 collections.vam.ac.uk).

The museum was established in 1852, after the Great Exhibition. Prince



**ALLOW...**

Like London's other great galleries and museums, it's impossible to 'do' the V&A in a day, but it's easy to dip into the sections which most interest you. To help you find your feet, there are free one-hour introductory tours leaving the Grand Entrance several times a day – see website for details.

Albert was one of the Exhibition's organisers and was disappointed that Britain, while excelling in manufacturing, missed out on design prizes. He wanted a museum of applied arts that would inspire and educate

people, and was assisted by Henry Cole – inventor of the Christmas card – who became the museum's first director. Five years later, the collection moved to its current site and was officially opened by Queen Victoria in June 1857. Not only was the collection world class, but the building was also a work of art (see the Ceramic Staircase below) and much copied.

Throughout the next four decades, buildings were added and extended and in 1899 work began on a new building by Aston Webb, which now provides the museum with its distinctive façade. When Queen Victoria laid the foundation

The Ceramic Staircase, Frank Moody



stone on 17th May that year – her last official public appearance – the Victoria and Albert Museum was born.

 **DON'T MISS!**

Tipu's Tiger is a mechanical organ designed in the form of a tiger mauling a British officer. It was commissioned around 1795 by Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore, and when the handle is turned you can hear the tiger's growls and its victim's cries for help! See it in room 41.



From the outset, the V&A was seen as a 'practical' museum, one which documented its evolution by preserving current pieces as well as historical objects. It has any number of must-see items, including the ornate Ardabil Carpet from Persia (Iran), the oldest dated carpet in the world (1539), and the massive Great Bed of Ware

(1590) which at more than 3m (10ft) wide was able to accommodate up to 15 sleepers at a time – such was its notoriety, it even merits a mention in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Lord Byron's *Don Juan*. But you will need many visits to take in all the V&A's diverse delights. Some of the main subject areas are described below.

**Architecture:** Four centuries of architecture are represented in the V&A's display, created in collaboration with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Drawings, models and photos are on show, including work by British greats such as Adam, Nash and Wren. Don't miss the outtakes from original buildings, including a pillar from the Alhambra Palace in Spain.

**Asia:** The collection of Asian art comprises over 160,000 objects, including pottery, jade, Buddhas and kimonos. The Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art has the abovementioned Ardabil Carpet, as well as a stunning tiled fireplace from 18th-century Istanbul. Chinese art takes in objects from the Ming, Qing and Tang dynasties, and includes earthenware tomb guardians and a 2,000-year-old horse's head made from jade, as well as modern Chinese art. The Nehru gallery of



Delft Flower Pyramid

Indian art features religious sculptures – Hindu, Buddhist and Jain – jewel-encrusted spoons used by Moghul emperors and glorious textiles.

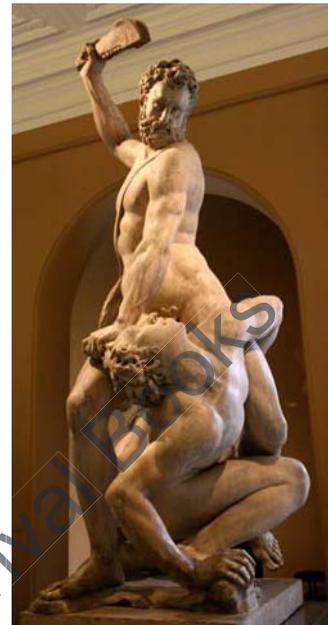
**British Galleries:** Refurbished and reopened in 2001, these 15 galleries are among the most visited. They present four centuries of design from 1500 to 1900, and include work by such icons as Grinling Gibbons, Josiah Wedgwood, Thomas Chippendale and William Morris. There are reconstructions of period rooms, some of them rescued from demolished houses, including the parlour from 2 Henrietta Street circa 1727-28, designed by James Gibbs, and the Norfolk House Music Room, St James's Square, which dates from 1756. Other notable items include Henry VIII's lavishly gilded writing desk, a life-size sculpture of the composer Handel by Louis-François Roubilliac, and Arts & Crafts furniture by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Exhibits are supported by computer interactive displays, objects which you can handle and video screens.



Fashion and Textiles

**Ceramics & Glass:** The V&A has the largest collection of ceramics in the world, from Delft and Meissen to Worcester and Royal Doulton, while its glass includes Venetian and Tiffany glass and stunning stained glass windows. Highlights include the Möllendorff Dinner Service of Meissen porcelain which was designed around 1762 by Frederick II the Great, King of Prussia, and features nymphs and satyrs cavorting on the cruet sets.

**Fashion & Textiles:** The costume collection contains over 14,000 outfits from 1600 to the present day, from medieval vestments and 19th-century corsets to statement pieces by modern designers. Important items include the wedding suit of James II, elegant ball gowns from the '50s, and a collection of 178 Vivienne Westwood costumes. The V&A has over 53,000 textile samples, dating back to the 1st century AD. Look out for the Devonshire Hunting Tapestries from the 15th century, woven in the Netherlands and depicting in incredible detail Flemish nobility hunting deer, otters and bears.



Samson Slaying a Philistine, Giambologna

**Furniture:** Clocks, musical instruments and all manner of chairs, cabinets and commodes make up this 13,000-strong collection. Most of it is British, although there are reconstructions of elegant European rooms, such as the Boudoir of Madame de Sévilly straight from 1780s Paris. The Melville Bed gives the Great Bed of Ware a run for its money in the must-see stakes: it's an extraordinarily opulent four-poster draped in crimson hangings and looks as comfortable today as when it was made for a Scottish earl in 1700. Contrast it with streamlined '60s designs, such as Peter Ghyczy's yolk-yellow Egg Chair on show in the Contemporary galleries.

**Jewellery & Metalwork:** Over 6,000 items of jewellery, including pieces by Fabergé and Lalique, are on display, much of it in the William and Judith Bollinger Gallery. Historic

pieces include diamond-studded ornaments worn by Catherine the Great and the 'tutti frutti' bandeau of rubies, sapphires and diamonds bought by Lady Mountbatten from Cartier in 1928. Metalwork encompasses gold, silver, bronzes, enamels and even ironwork – one of the largest objects in the V&A is the Hereford Screen, an 11m wide structure of timber and cast iron embellished with brass and copper, which once stood in the chancel of Hereford Cathedral. The Whiteley Galleries shimmer with their vast collection of silver, historic and contemporary, secular and religious, and the V&A also houses the famous Gilbert Collection of gold, silver, mosaics, snuff boxes and miniatures.

**Medieval & Renaissance:** A remarkable collection of treasures from 300 to 1600, including sculptures by Donatello, Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks and the Becket casket, an enamelled box said to contain the bones of the medieval martyr Thomas à



Silver Galleries

Becket. Don't miss the intricately carved frontage of Sir Paul Pindar's house dating back to 1600, which miraculously escaped the Great Fire of London,

**Painting & Photography:** Though not a fine art gallery as such, the V&A has many fine paintings. British artists are well represented with works by Constable, Turner and Landseer to name but a few; Europe by Botticelli, Van Dyck, Degas, Rembrandt and many others. Major crowd-pullers include the seven Raphael Cartoons which were commissioned by Pope Leo X as designs for tapestries to hang on the wall of the Sistine Chapel, beneath the ceiling of Raphael's great rival Michelangelo. They now belong to the Royal Collection, and were loaned to the V&A by the Queen.

**Sculptures:** Beautifully displayed in modern light-filled galleries, the V&A's sculpture collection numbers some 22,000 pieces, including over 20 works by Rodin which the sculptor gave to the V&A in 1914, as acknowledgement of Britain's support of France in World War One. Especially interesting are the Cast Courts, which host Victorian plaster copies of some of the world's most celebrated sculptures, from Trajan's Column – cut in half to fit the room – to Michelangelo's David. The latter has a specially commissioned fig leaf which could be hooked onto his manhood to save Queen Victoria's blushes when she visited the courts! He no longer wears it but it's preserved in a glass case to the rear of his plinth.

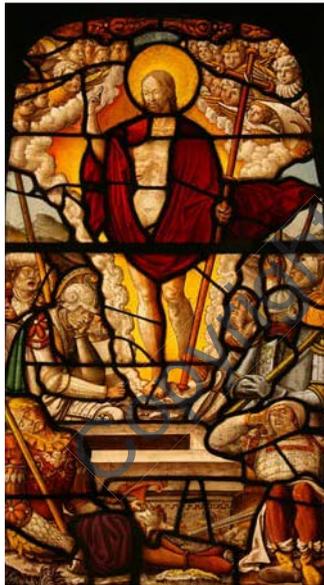
The above highlights only scratch the surface of the V&A which has a great many more elements, including the National Art Library with over 750,000 books, the Contemporary galleries which feature the cream of 20th-century design ideas, and the many temporary exhibitions which take place each year.

Of course, few can resist the gift shop which sells books, posters, fabrics plus jewellery, clothes and home ware, reproductions of exhibits and new cutting-edge designs.

### FOOD & DRINK

**V&A Café:** Hot dishes, sandwiches and cakes served up in the original Morris, Gamble and Poynter Rooms which were the first museum 'cafes' in the world. The ornate tiling is said to be modelled on Prince Albert's dairy.

**Garden Café:** Drinks and snacks in a quiet corner of the John Madejski Garden.



stained glass window, Steinfeld Abbey, Germany (1540-1542)

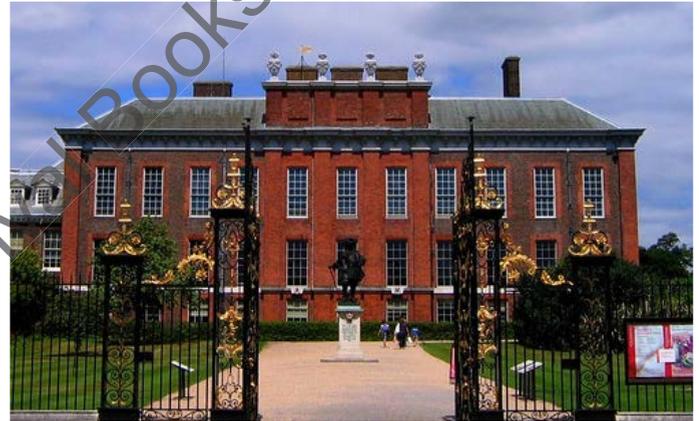
**Address:** Kensington Gardens, W8 4PX (☎ 0844-482 7777, 🌐 [hrp.org.uk/kensingtonpalace](http://hrp.org.uk/kensingtonpalace)).

**Opening hours:** Daily, 10am to 6pm (5pm from November to February). Closed 24-26th December.

**Cost:** £14.50 adults, £12 concessions (over 60s, students), children (under 16) free when accompanied by an adult.

**Transport:** High Street Kensington or Queensway tube.

**Amenities:** Restaurant (Orangery in Kensington Gardens), café, two shops, gardens, wheelchair access.



Kensington Palace has been a residence of British royals since 1689 – before Buckingham Palace was built – and has a fascinating historical and archaeological heritage. For many people, it's inextricably linked with the late Diana, Princess of Wales and the vast sea of floral tributes spreading out from the gates following her death in 1997. Fittingly, her son Wills and his bride Kate (the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge) live there now. Current residents also include the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, the Duke and Duchess of Kent and Prince and Princess Michael of Kent.

Kensington Palace (or KP as it became known during Diana's time) began as a Jacobean mansion, built

in the early 17th century for the Earl of Nottingham and purchased by William III and his wife Mary II in 1689 as an escape from damp and dirty Whitehall. Sir Christopher Wren enlarged it by adding pavilions to each corner and also reoriented the building to face Hyde Park.



### ALLOW...

Three hours should be time enough to explore Kensington Palace, but allow extra time if you also wish to look around the gardens.

The couple didn't live long enough to enjoy their palace – Mary died in 1694, William in 1702 – and their successor



Queen Anne did little to the house, although she lavished attention on the gardens. George I embarked on a major rebuild with Sir John Vanbrugh in 1718 and commissioned William Kent to decorate the new rooms, but it was his son George II who benefited and the palace was a principle royal residence during his reign. After his death in 1760, it became a home for less important royals and courtiers who lived at the King's 'Grace and Favour'. Edward VIII once called it an 'aunt heap' because of the number of his older relatives residing there.

### DON'T MISS!

Over the fireplace in the King's Gallery is a wind dial dating from the time of William III. Made in 1694 by Robert Morden, it's connected to a weather vane on the roof by chains and pulleys and showed the King (quite literally) which way the wind was blowing, allowing him to plan military campaigns. Amazingly, it's still working today.

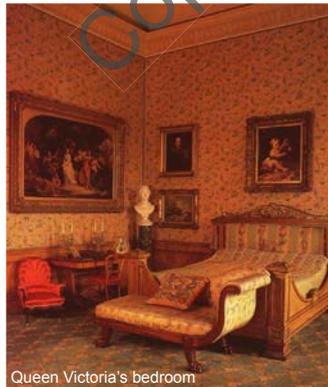
One of its most famous inhabitants was Princess Victoria, who was born at the palace in 1819 and brought up there in solitude until her accession to the throne in 1837. She later moved to Buckingham Palace, but her affection for her former home ensured that Kensington Palace was restored and

opened to the public at the end of the 19th century.

Managed by the charity Historic Royal Palaces, KP was re-launched as an attraction in 2012, following a £12m transformation project, which included the creation of new 'routes' to provide a more

logical path though the sometimes confusing jumble of rooms. The state apartments have also been given a thematic twist with multi-medium installations, interactive theatre and costume displays. The result may be a bit Disney but it should keep children and teens entertained. The main attractions include the following:

**Victoria Revealed:** The first of four new 'routes' through the palace, this takes visitors through some of the rooms where Victoria lived, recreated to reflect her era. These include the bedroom she shared with her mother and the Red Saloon where she held her first Privy Council meeting as an 18-year-old queen. The design was inspired by her journals, and the rooms feature personal objects such as her



Queen Victoria's bedroom



ceiling detail

dolls, wedding gown, baby clothes and mementoes of Prince Albert.

Three more 'Routes': *The (Very Public) Private Life of the Queen* (covering the reigns of William III, Mary II and Anne), *The Curious World of the Court* (George II) and *It's Not Easy Being a Princess* (Princesses Diana and Margaret) were due to be launched in 2013.

### **The Queen's State Apartments:**

These private rooms were created for Mary II and used by her successors, including Queen Anne. They include the Queen's Gallery, which was the backdrop for Mary's huge collection of oriental porcelain, the Dining Room with its 17th-century panelling and the Closet which features portraits of Anne and her much-loved husband George of Denmark. Visitors are taken on a journey through the rooms by Anne's son Prince William, once heir to the Stuart throne, who supposedly danced himself to death on his 11th birthday.

**The King's Staircase:** Providing the entrance to the King's Apartments, this is notable for the life-size paintings of George I's court by William Kent. The vast crowd peering over the painted balustrade includes not just courtiers and ladies-in-waiting, but also the king's two Turkish servants, Mahomet and Mustafa, and Peter, the 'wild boy' who was found in woods near Hanover and brought to live at court. Look up at



King's Staircase

the ceiling to see a self-portrait of Kent admiring his handiwork. Not everyone was a fan – one 18th-century art critic described some of Kent's paintings as a 'terrible glaring show'.

### **The King's State Apartments:**

These grand rooms recreate life in the Georgian era and visitors can join in an interactive card game to experience the social manoeuvring that was an essential part of courtly life. The most important room is the Cupola Room, with its blue and gold ceiling and an eye-catching centrepiece: a clock dating from 1793 by Charles Clay and John Pyke which once played tunes by Handel, who was a regular guest at George II's court. This is also where the infant Victoria was christened using a punchbowl from the Tower of London.

Other rooms include the Presence Chamber, where formal receptions took place – a gilded armchair once

owned by George II's son Frederick takes the place of a throne – and the Privy Chamber which is decorated with another of Kent's murals, this time depicting the gods Mars and Minerva reclining on a cloud. In the Council Chamber you can see what people wore in these splendid rooms.

**The King's Gallery:** At 29m (96ft) long, this is the largest of the palace's state rooms and looks much as it did in George I's time. It was designed for exercise and to display royal works of art. The walls are hung with paintings from the Royal Collection, while the ceiling displays scenes from the tales of Ulysses by Kent.

**The Gardens:** Transformed by Charles Bridgeman in the 1720s to include the Serpentine and the Round Pond, Kensington Palace Gardens are one of the capital's most tranquil spots. Explore at your leisure or take a free, hour-long tour during the summer months, held on

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at noon and 2pm. They take in the secluded Sunken Garden and other horticultural (and historic) highlights, and can be booked at the palace.

### FOOD & DRINK

**Orangery Restaurant:** From Shetland salmon to Cornish yogurt, thoroughly British fare served up in Queen Anne's greenhouse.

**Palace Café:** Light refreshments, sandwiches and cakes with a view of the gardens and the Wiggly Walk.

The Orangery



Sunken Garden

## NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM 6

**Address:** Cromwell Road, SW7 5BD (☎ 020-7942 5000, 🌐 nhm.ac.uk).

**Opening hours:** Daily, 10am to 5.50pm, plus a late session until 10.30pm on the last Friday of the month. Closed 24-26th December.

**Cost:** Free. There's a fee for some temporary exhibitions.

**Transport:** South Kensington tube.

**Amenities:** Restaurant, two cafés, snack bar, three shops, garden, wheelchair access.

From dinosaurs to diamonds, the Natural History Museum is one of London's most enthralling destinations – and especially popular with children. Covering all aspects of life and earth sciences, it doesn't just preserve the past but also seeks to preserve our planet by providing a hub for research and education.

The museum began as a collection of specimens given to the nation by Sir Hans Sloane in 1753. They were originally displayed in the British Museum, where they were overshadowed by the mummies and 'marbles', until a new superintendent of natural history, Richard Owen, was appointed in 1856 and lobbied for the building of a separate museum. Designed by Alfred Waterhouse, the Natural History Museum opened in 1881, although it didn't formally split from the British Museum until 1992.

The museum is one of the most architecturally pleasing in Britain: a Romanesque confection clad in terracotta tiles. The design incorporates reliefs and sculptures of creatures both living and extinct – look out for

the dodo and pterodactyls – as well as detailed ceiling panels depicting plants from around the world. The central hall is truly impressive, and it's easy to understand why Victorian visitors described the museum as 'the animals' Westminster Abbey'.

More manageable than the British Museum or the V&A, the Natural History Museum still has a challenging number of galleries to take in. It has some 70m items grouped in five main collections – botany, entomology, mineralogy, palaeontology and zoology – laid out over five floors. To





Diplodocus

make exploration easier, there are four colour-coded zones, each dedicated to a different theme. All include interactive displays that entertain and educate by answering questions you'd never thought to ask, such as 'What might you find in a crocodile's stomach?' and 'How do you tell the age of a whale?'

**From Dinosaurs to Man (Blue Zone):** This zone contains the most-viewed section of the museum – the Dinosaurs gallery, where an animatronic T. rex roars a greeting to visitors from its pit and you can get up close to dinosaur skeletons and a nest full of hatchlings. Just as impressive is the life-size, skeleton-model of a blue whale which hangs from the ceiling of the Mammals gallery; weighing 10 tons, it dwarfs even the dinos. Other mammals on display include elephants, lions, polar bears, a duck-billed platypus and the skull of a woolly mammoth.

There are fish, reptiles and marine invertebrates galore, including a Komodo dragon, a spooky vampire squid and the intricately coiled skeleton of an Indian python, while the Human Biology gallery reveals the most complex animal of all – us! Don't miss the giant baby who helps visitors experience life in the womb. Also take time to see the 'Images of Nature' gallery, which has over 100 drawings, paintings and photographs of the natural world.

**ALLOW...**

The time it takes to see the museum depends on your interests and how crowded it is but you should allow at least a day. Unless you're a parent, avoid weekends and school holidays, when it can take an hour just to get inside! Queues are often shorter at the Exhibition Road entrance. During summer holidays you can jump the queue into the Dinosaurs gallery by booking free tickets in advance by phone or online.

**Birds, Bugs, Fossils & Minerals**

**(Green Zone):** Beginning in the central hall which is dominated by the 32m (105ft) replica skeleton of a Diplodocus – 'Dippy' for short – who grazed the earth some 150m years ago, this area takes in the other inhabitants of our planet: animal, vegetable and mineral. The marvellous collection of Birds includes the legendary dodo while the aptly-named Creepy Crawlies gallery is a celebration of insects, spiders, crabs and centipedes. You can step inside a termites' tower and build your own arachnid!

**DON'T MISS!**

The Power Within (Red Zone) lets you experience violent natural events in 'scientific' safety. Here, you can watch lava erupt from underneath a volcano, and stand in a Japanese supermarket during a computer regeneration of the Kobe earthquake.

Our Place in Evolution looks at our earliest ancestors, including the skull of a Neanderthal who lived 400,000 years ago, while Ecology explores the earth's environment. It resists the temptation to lecture visitors by presenting the subject in a very visual way, from a giant leaf factory to the recycling of a rabbit. The Minerals gallery displays its rocks and stones in Victorian oak cabinets, giving a sense of how the museum appeared to early visitors. The rarest and most beautiful finds are kept safe in the Vault: don't miss the unique medusa emerald (on display until July 2013) or pieces of meteorites from Mars and the moon.

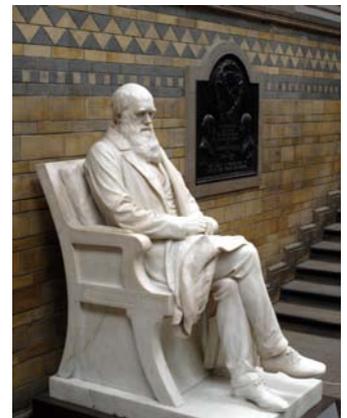
**Planet Earth (Red Zone):** These galleries present the story of our planet, past, present and future – from the Big Bang to current environmental issues. It's best entered from Exhibition Road, into a vast hall lit by constellations and

baby in womb



up into a giant globe (by escalator). From here you can examine the remains of creatures from the distant past, including a dinosaur's footprint, admire the glittering treasures beneath Earth's surface – which include a chunk of 'kryptonite' – and find out how wind, water and our weather systems are creating constant change.

**Darwin Centre and the Wildlife Garden (Orange Zone):** The newest part of the museum is the Darwin Centre, housed in an eight-storey



Charles Darwin

## SCIENCE MUSEUM 7



entrance to the Red Zone



main entrance hall

cocoon. Named after Charles Darwin, its cutting edge design protects the immense collection of specimens and provides space for scientists to work. Visitors enter at the top and meander down through its myriad collections of plants, insects and microscopic creatures, guided by 'virtual' curators. Highlights include daily free tours of the Zoology Spirit Collection (book in advance), a zoo-full of specimens preserved in glass jars, many collected by Darwin, including sharks and giant squid.

Outside, the Wildlife Garden offers a complete contrast to the overcrowded museum. Open from 1st April to 31st October (10am to 5pm), it's a living exhibition which shows the potential for wildlife conservation in the inner city. It portrays a range of British lowland habitats – including fen, reed bed, hedgerow, woodland and meadow – and attracts dragonflies, moorhens,

moths, foxes, robins, marsh marigolds, primroses and even grazing sheep.

In addition to the main attractions, the museum hosts four temporary exhibitions each year – in 2012 these included 'Scott's Last Expedition' and 'Animals Inside Out'. There are frequent special events, many aimed at young visitors, and several gift shops, including one entirely devoted to dinosaurs!

### FOOD & DRINK

#### The Restaurant (Green Zone):

Freshly-prepared food, drinks and puddings, including vegetarian dishes, dairy-free food, gluten-free dishes and a kids' menu.

**Deli Café (Red Zone):** Veggie options and child-sized portions.

**Central Hall Café (Blue Zone):**

Good for cakes and snacks.

**Picnic Area (Green Zone basement):** Bring your own lunch and buy drinks from the snack bar.

**Address:** Exhibition Road, South Kensington, SW7 2DD (☎ 020-7942 4000, [sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://sciencemuseum.org.uk)).

**Opening hours:** Daily, 10am to 6pm (7pm during school holidays and weekends in summer – check website). Closed 24-26th December.

**Cost:** Free. There's a fee for some attractions, such as the flight simulator and IMAX cinema, and for some special exhibitions.

**Transport:** South Kensington tube.

**Amenities:** Restaurant, two cafés, shop, wheelchair access.

If you think science is boring or baffling, the Science Museum will change your mind. Forget test tubes and telescopes; this museum presents a clear and compelling record of man's achievements in all scientific fields – communications, engineering, medicine, transport and more – in an entertaining environment that appeals to all the senses.

Like the Victoria and Albert Museum across the road, the Science Museum was born out of the Victorians' insatiable curiosity and passion for learning. Both institutions were founded

in the wake of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and at first the scientific collections shared a building and name – the South Kensington Museum – with the V&A's art and design exhibits. The Science Museum didn't become an independent entity until 1909, and it was another two decades before it moved to its current site.

The building's core, the East Block, was designed by Sir Richard Allison, who is said to have modelled its three-story open-plan interior and surrounding galleries on a department store. It opened in 1928 and changed very little

