

There are many things to see in the City of London. This self-guided tour will show you the highlights of Old London. This can be a companion or prep guide for taking our [City of London Tour](#).

Start: Temple Underground Station

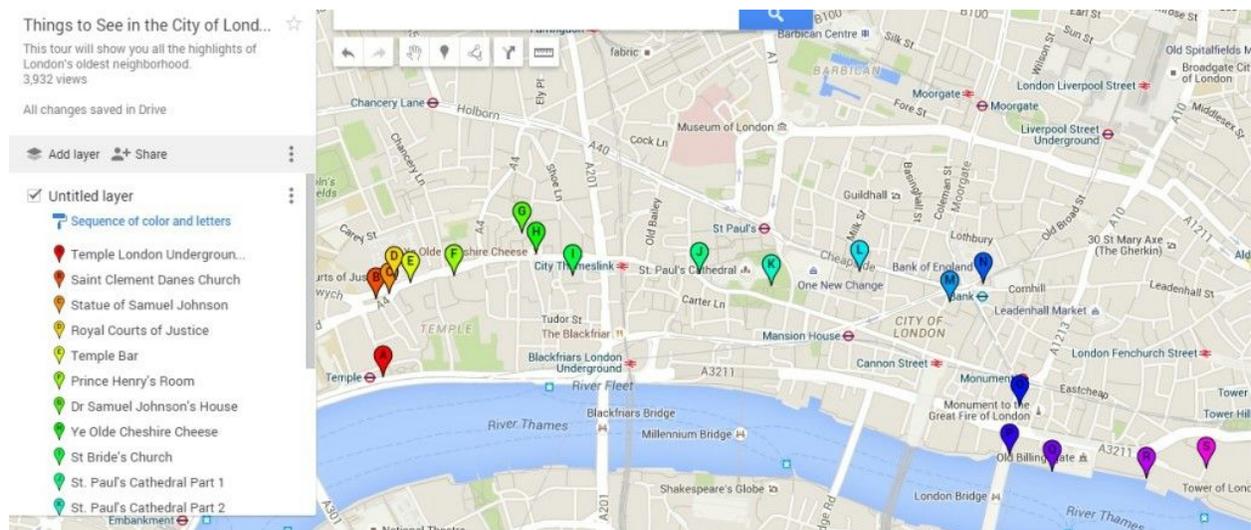
Finish: The Tower of London

Duration: 2 – 2.5 hours

Be sure to also check out our [Guide to London on a Budget](#), where you can find our full selection of [self-guided London tours](#).

Begin (Stop A)– **Temple Station** - As soon as you step out of Temple Station, turn to the LEFT. Walk up the stairs here directly onto ARUNDEL STREET. Walk up the street (up the hill) until you reach the traffic lights on your RIGHT. Cross over **DIAGONALLY** to the courtyard of the Church across the road with the three statues in front.

Click here for a larger interactive [City of London Sights Map](#)



**(Stop B) – St. Clement Danes Church -**

The church here was designed by master architect Sir Christopher Wren and was opened to the public in the 1680's. The curious name of the building is thought to come



from the fact that this area of London had a large Danish population in the 9th century, or perhaps because King Harold I was buried here in 1040 and he had Danish heritage. Originally, the church was just the neighbourhood site of worship for people living in this section of London, although today the church has a very different purpose.

Face the church and take the path to the LEFT. Jump up the ledge and stand just on the side of the building.

You can see quite clearly here that St. Clement Danes shows significant structural damage. All the craters and cracks you can see here are the result of the Blitz: the widespread bombing of London by the German forces during WWII. During the Blitz, Clement Danes was destroyed inside by fire and the external damage that you can see dates from then. Although the inside of the church has been totally refurbished, the outside was left as you can see it today to act as a memorial – and a reminder to all about the suffering of London during WWII. Because of the connection here to the armed forces and the air raids, the Royal Air Force has selected St. Clement Danes church as their principal site of worship. Now continue on to the BACK of the church.

### **(Stop C) – Statue of Samuel Johnson -**

The statue here is of Samuel Johnson, who attended services at St. Clement Danes church when he lived in London during the 18th century. Johnson is best known as the first person to ever compile of a comprehensive English dictionary, although in the 1700's he was known for being a literary critic and great public speaker, hence the fact that he is holding a book – and is talking! Step down now onto the traffic island.



**(Stop D) – Royal Courts of Justice -**

This fantastic building across the road looks a lot like Hogwarts! However, this building houses the Royal Courts of Justice: two dozen purpose built courtrooms that were erected here in the 1860's in an architectural style known as 'neo-gothic,' very popular in the Victorian age. The Royal Courts of Justice can be visited by the public – for free!

During the week the front door is open and guests can visit the large entrance hall, or even sit in the public galleries of the courtrooms. Tours of the RCJ are available, but must be booked in advance at

<https://www.justice.gov.uk/courts/rcj-rolls-building/rcj/tours>. Now cross the street AWAY from the Royal Courts of Justice towards the TWININGS TEA SHOP. Facing TWININGS, with the ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE behind you, head LEFT down THE STRAND. Stop outside the monument in the centre of the road with the dragon on top.

**(Stop E) – Temple Bar -**

This monument, topped with a Dragon, marks the boundaries into the City of London. So technically speaking, you are walking out of the City of Westminster, and entering the City of London. The City of London is actually only 1 square mile – starting here and finishing near the Tower of London. The City of London is separate from the rest of London in a number of different ways: they have their own police force, they have their own mayor (the Lord Mayor), and is considered the financial centre of the United Kingdom. The City of London has been inhabited far longer than the City of Westminster – or any of the other areas that make up 'the Greater London area.' In fact, the City of London has existed here since the Roman settlement of England in the year 47! This means you are exploring the oldest streets of London on this walk.

Continue down THE STRAND (which is now called THE FLEET since you have entered the City). When you get to the brown and white Tudor building on your RIGHT, stop to see it.



**(Stop F) – Prince Henry’s Room -**

This house dates from 1610 and was originally a pub. Today, it belongs to the office of the Lord Mayor and events are held inside, meaning there is no more public access. It is worth stopping to see this building – known as Prince Henry’s Room – because it is very rare in the City of London for there to be a building as old as this.

Prince Henry’s Room survived the Blitz – but also the Great Fire of London in 1666 (details on which later). Continue in the same direction down THE FLEET until you cross over BOUVERIE STREET which is on your RIGHT. Just past this street are a set of traffic lights. Turn LEFT and cross here. Walk up BOLT COURT (the small alley in between the McDonald’s and Starbucks). Continue up, bear to the right and then left – past the metal bicycle stands until you get to a group of benches and a statue of a cat.

(Stop F-2)

"Here you are looking at Temple Church, a rare surviving building dating from the late 12th century. Originally belonging to the Order of the Knights Templar, the Church has since been the location of theatre productions (including performances arranged by William Shakespeare himself) as well as featuring in both the book and film of *The Davinci Code*. Packed with a myriad of historical facts (as well as a few legends) Temple Church is a real hidden gem in London. Depending on the day and time that you are taking this tour, it may be possible for you to go inside. There is no fixed cost, but it is asked that you make a donation when you enter. Inside you will see small parts of the original church, as well as pieces that have been heavily restored, after bomb damage the church sustained during World War Two. For more information on Temple Church - check out our blog post: <http://www.freetoursbyfoot.com/temple-church/>'

### **(Stop G) – Samuel Johnson’s House -**

The House standing at the end of the courtyard here – with the blue plaque on front – was lived in by Samuel Johnson, who you saw earlier outside St. Clement Danes Church. Johnson did not own this house, he actually rented it, for the price of £30 a month! Also living with Johnson inside this house was his favourite cat, Hodge. Hodge was a big black tom cat and Johnson is quoted as saying that Hodge was, “a very fine cat indeed.” You can see these words carved onto the side of the statue of Hodge amongst the wooden benches here. The statue of Hodge was erected in 1997 and he is depicted here sitting on top of Johnson’s dictionary next to some oyster shells. It is common for Londoners to leave money in the oyster shells here – so that Hodge can buy oysters up in cat heaven! Johnson’s House is open to visit at scheduled times throughout the year. <http://www.drjohnsonshouse.org/>. With JOHNSONS HOUSE and Hodge behind you, go RIGHT back down past the metallic bicycle stands. But instead of going back the way you came, go LEFT. You will pass one pathway on the right then come to a dead end with another alleyway on the right.

### **(Stop H) – [Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese](#) -**

You are now looking at one of the oldest pubs in London! [Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese](#) has stood on this site in one form or another since the 1530’s. Today it is a popular pub known for it’s history, but also for the well-known clientele the pub has hosted throughout the years: Mark Twain, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Pepys, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde, Teddy Roosevelt, and Voltaire just to list a few! The pub is kept very atmospheric inside and is a great example of a traditional, historical London pub. Open 6 days a week, Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese also serves food and children are welcomed. This is one of the best things to do in the City of London. Walk now down the alley past YE OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE. You will come back out on THE FLEET. Turn to your LEFT and walk until you get to the RED POST BOX showing the initials of Queen Victoria. Here, carefully CROSS THE FLEET, then turn

LEFT. You will walk over a road known as Salisbury Ct on your right and continue on before turning RIGHT into BRIDE'S COURT.



**(Stop I) – St. Bride's Church -**

This is another of Sir Christopher Wren's churches. Built in the 1680's it was known as a London landmark for decades. Today, although it is somewhat lost in the modern buildings of the area, it is still a popular church which can be evidenced by the gleaming white spire on top of the building. The spire here, the most notable aspect of the building, has recently undergone a £2 million restoration project and all the money was raised by donations! St. Bride's is considered a historical part of London's history and is also known as the "Journalist's Church" from the time when Fleet Street was dominated by newspapers, magazines and the printing industry. Facing the church, turn LEFT and walk down ST BRIDES AVE (the alley way between the office buildings here and the Church.) At the bottom of the Ave you will walk down stairs then turn LEFT onto BRIDE LANE. When you come back to FLEET STREET turn RIGHT until you get to the large junction with NEW BRIDGE STREET. In the same direction, cross the street (past the Co-Op store) and continue up LUDGATE HILL. At the top of the hill is ST. PAULS CATHEDRAL.



**(Stop J) – St. Paul's Cathedral Part 1 -**

You are now standing outside Christopher Wren's masterpiece: St. Paul's Cathedral. St. Paul's has actually existed in one form or another for the last 1,000 years or so on this site. The current church was completed by Wren and declared 'officially' open on Christmas Day in 1711. The Church is used for numerous events and ceremonies and has seen the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Victoria in 1897 and Queen Elizabeth II in 2012. It also

hosted the royal wedding of Lady Diana Spencer and Charles, the Prince of Wales in 1981. Buried inside the church are notable figures such as the Duke of Wellington, Admiral Lord Nelson and Christopher Wren, himself! It is possible to visit St. Paul's Cathedral by either purchasing a ticket and taking the audio guide, or on weekday evenings and Sundays throughout the day for FREE by attending a church service. Read our complete [blog post on St. Paul's Cathedral](#). Standing between the statue of Queen Anne and ST PAULS itself, go to the RIGHT of the church and follow the pathway along the side of the Cathedral. Continue to walk right beside St. Paul's until you get to the red phone box just beyond the back end of the church.



### **(Stop K) – St. Paul's Cathedral Part 2 -**

From here you have a perfect view of the dome of St. Paul's – which is the second largest church dome in the world, just behind St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. At the top of the dome is the Golden Gallery which guests are able to climb to once they have bought their entrance ticket to the Cathedral. Just behind St. Paul's is the bell tower of another, smaller church: St. Augustine. St Augustine is another Christopher Wren church from the 1680's, although it was nearly entirely demolished during the Blitz. The back of the building, as you can see, is modern 1960's style and now houses a school. But it is worth paying attention to just how close St. Augustine is to St. Pauls and to reflect on the fact that even though St. Paul's survived the Blitz mostly unscathed, buildings literally inches away were totally destroyed. With ST. PAUL'S behind you, walk past ST. AUGUSTINES on your left and continue down the pedestrian path here until you get to the road – NEW CHANGE. Cross the street and keep the modern office building on your LEFT. You will walk past a tea shop – and JAMIE OLLIVER'S BUTCHERS SHOP on your left. At the end of the building, outside BREAD STREET KITCHEN, turn left onto BREAD STREET. Walk down until you have passed the restaurant BURGER & LOBSTER. Just to the side of the

restaurant is an alleyway called JOHN MILTON PASSAGE. Go down the alleyway into the churchyard.



**(Stop L) – St. Mary-le-Bow -**

Here you are in the courtyard of another Christopher Wren church, St. Mary-le-Bow. In the centre of the churchyard is the statue of Captain John Smith (popularly known from the Disney film Pocahontas). On the side of Smith's statue you can see a piece of artwork depicting the coat of arms of the City of London. You will see two dragons (just as on the top of Temple Bar) as well as the red cross of St. George and the red sword of St. Paul. This

design is also on every road sign in the City of London – and most of the bins, too!

With the statue of John Smith behind you and ST. MARY-LE-BOW to your right, walk toward the main road of CHEAPSIDE. Turn RIGHT and continue down the road until you get to MANSION HOUSE, at the corner of Cheapside and Lombard St.

**(Stop M) – Mansion House -**

You are now standing outside the official home of the Lord Mayor of London. Different than the Mayor of London, the Lord Mayor is responsible for the day-to-day running of the City of London. The job of Lord Mayor has existed for 800 years and they have been living here since this building was erected in 1752 by architect George Dance. We are currently on our 686th Lord Mayor (as of writing) and out of all of them, there have been only two female Lord Mayors. The job of Lord Mayor comes with a one year term – only! So, Lord Mayors can be re-elected but there always has to be a one term gap in between their tenure. From here you can either see the next two stops from where you are standing, or you can cross the road and stand beside the STATUE OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.



## **(Stop N) – The Royal Exchange and the Bank of England -**

Now standing in the financial heart of London, you are right next to two buildings of large importance. The Royal Exchange is the building with the columns in front and the statue of the Duke of Wellington on horseback outside. Originally, the Royal Exchange was founded in the 16th century by Queen Elizabeth I

as a place for wealthy people to shop. Many different merchants traded underneath a single roof here and all the buying, trading and selling that took place here eventually spawned the Royal Stock Exchange. The Stock Exchange was moved to another building and today The Royal Exchange has been brought back to its origins: it is now again filled with luxury shops! You can expect to find inside companies like Rolex, Tiffany and Hermes for example. Now with the Royal Exchange behind you – facing the statue of

the Duke of Wellington – the building on your RIGHT is the BANK OF ENGLAND.



The world's second-oldest central bank, the Bank of England was founded in 1694 and has been located here ever since the mid 1700's. The Bank of England is currently holding in excess of £403,003,000,000 in 7 levels of vaults located underneath the ground! It is possible to [visit the Museum of the Bank of England](#).

Entry is free. Click the link for more information.

Now stand with both the Royal Exchange and the statue of the Duke of Wellington behind you. You will be facing Mansion House. You want to cross the street that is to your LEFT and walk down LOMBARD STREET. At the bottom of Lombard Street is a large junction. Gown DOWN THE STAIRS to your left. At the bottom of the stairs is the entrance to House of Fraser on your left and more stairs on your right. Go down the stairs on the RIGHT. Walk straight until you can turn LEFT. There will then be stairs on your left and right, with an entrance to the Tube station ahead of you. Go up the stairs

on your RIGHT. Once you get to the top of the stairs, keep walking in that direction until you can see THE MONUMENT on your left.



### **(Stop O) – The Monument -**

You are now looking at the tallest freestanding column in the entire world: The Monument to the Great Fire of London.

Burning over the course of 5 days in September 1666, the Great Fire demolished all of medieval London, devastating the city and rendering tens of thousands of people completely homeless.

As London was rebuilding after this disaster, King Charles II commissioned Christopher Wren to build a monument to commemorate the disaster. The resulting monument was opened to the public in 1671, making it one of the oldest tourist attractions in London. It is still possible to visit the monument and climb to the top! But do get ready to work...it's over 300 steps to the top! [Read our blog post on the Monument](#). The reason the structure was built so tall is so that if you were to tip the monument onto its' side, it would touch the spot where the Great Fire of 1666 is said to have begun! With the Monument on your left, cross Monument Street and continue down KING WILLIAM STREET. Shortly after the bus stop on your right, before the road you are on crosses the river, you will see a set of stairs going down on the LEFT. Go down the stairs all the way.

### **(Stop P) – [London Bridge](#) -**

You are now standing underneath London Bridge! One of the most famous bridges in the world, London Bridge has actually existed here for nearly 2,000 years. During the Medieval era, the Bridge here was so large that it actually supported over 250 buildings on top! Also displayed on top of the Bridge were 30 spikes displaying the severed heads of traitors against the crown... Although the name London Bridge is well-known the world over, many people confuse London Bridge with Tower Bridge. For more information, read our [London Bridge post](#).



With the stairs behind you, and the piece of the Bridge that is inscribed with 'London Bridge' in front of you, turn LEFT over the small wooden bridge. Follow the path around the corner and you will then spot AHEAD of you TOWER BRIDGE. As you follow the river path along you will pass THE SHARD on your right.

**(Stop Q) – [The Shard](#) -**

Officially opened in February 2013, as of writing, The Shard is the tallest building in the European Union at 309m (1,104ft). There is a platform at the top that visitors can purchase tickets to, however they are at a price of £25.00. For a cheaper view it is possible to go to one of the bars located near the top of the building for a drink!

Now continue TOWARD TOWER BRIDGE along the river. Walk until you hit the curve of the wall, with OLD BILLINGSGATE FISH MARKET on your LEFT.

**(Stop R) – Tower Bridge -**



Tower Bridge is the bridge that most people think of when they think of 'London Bridge.' Although, if you look behind you now you can get a view of the real London Bridge and you will probably notice it is not nearly as beautiful as Tower Bridge! Tower Bridge was opened in 1894 and spans a length of 244m (801ft). Tower Bridge is actually a draw

bridge and the centre span can be opened to allow river traffic through, which happens a lot! In fact, they raise Tower Bridge around 1,000 times a year. It's possible to check on their website for the next lifting, if you want to go down to take a look. Crossing Tower Bridge is free and if you'd like to know more there is a Museum located in the northern most Tower that can be visited with the purchase of a ticket. Check out our full [blog post on Tower Bridge](#). From where you are standing,

looking at TOWER BRIDGE, you will notice on the right a long path along the river with a BLUE FENCE. Head along that path. At the end, you will turn LEFT. Pass the building on your right then turn RIGHT at the end onto LOWER THAMES STREET. Follow that Street until the end, which brings you to the TOWER OF LONDON.



### **(Stop S) – Tower of London -**

You have now reached Her Majesty's Fortress, the [Tower of London](#). The Tower of London was originally begun in 1071 when it was, indeed, just a single tower. You can see that over the centuries, many monarchs expanded and added pieces and buildings to the Tower which means that, despite its' name, it is a complex series of buildings including towers, but also turrets, walls, houses and courtyards. Throughout its' nearly 1,000-year existence, the Tower of London has been a royal palace, a fortress, the Royal Mint where money was manufactured, a menagerie where animals were kept, a prison, and a site of execution. It is the reputation as a site for executions that most people associate most with the Tower of London. Although it is worth noting that until the 20th century, only 12 people were officially executed here. The majority of executions took place in public, at a place called Tower Hill, just across the road from the Tower of London today. Visitors to the Tower need a ticket but once inside can take part in audio guides, a tour led by the world famous Beefeaters ([read our Beefeaters post](#)), or are able to wander on their own. On display are suits of armour belonging to Kings over the past centuries, the old royal Mint rooms, old prisoner cells, and the [Crown Jewels](#). Guests also can see the [ravens of the Tower](#) (it is said that should the ravens that live here ever leave...the monarchy would fall! For this reason there is a full-time Raven Master who looks after the birds today), and the Beefeaters themselves. You can also visit for free during the [Ceremony of the Keys](#). The Tower of London is where your walk ends and it's advised by us, that you get yourself a ticket and head inside to enjoy one of the most 'London' experiences available.