

Self-Guided Westminster Walking Tour

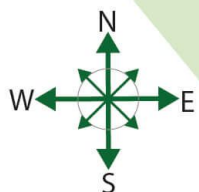
Distance: 4.5 miles
Duration: 3 hours



Tube Stations

CC - Charing Cross
CG - Covent Garden
E - Embankment
GP - Green Park
LS - Leicester Square
SJP - St James's Park
T - Temple
W - Westminster
WC - Public Toilets

To Hyde Park Corner



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Small-group day trips & extended tours from London



BB - Big Ben
BH - Banqueting House
BP - Buckingham Palace
CG - Covent Garden
CH - Clarence House
CT - Chinatown
DS - Downing Street
FM - Fortnum & Mason
HG - Horse Guards Parade
HP - Houses of Parliament
LE - London Eye
LS - Leicester Square
NG - National Gallery
PC - Piccadilly Circus
PS - Parliament Square
RH - Ritz Hotel
SB - South Bank
SJ - St James's Palace
SH - Savoy Hotel
TC - The Cenotaph
TS - Trafalgar Square
WA - Westminster Abbey

BB - Big Ben

Re-named the 'Elizabeth Tower' in 2012 to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the tower was completed in 1859. 'Big Ben' is actually the nickname of the Great Bell inside the tower, which weighs 13.5 tonnes. The origin of the name 'Ben' is uncertain; referring to either the Chief Commissioner Sir Benjamin Hall, or local boxer Ben Caunt. Currently under maintenance, to be concluded in 2021.

BH - Banqueting House

The only remaining part of the Palace of Whitehall; the previous home of the British Monarch during the 16th and 17th centuries. Constructed from 1619-22, it's now the grandest remaining building of its type. In 1649, King Charles I was beheaded in front of the house.

BP - Buckingham Palace

The principle residence of the Monarch of the UK since 1837. Originally built in the early 1700's for the then Duke of Buckingham and later expanded. Features a total of 775 rooms, including offices, state rooms and the royal suite; 12 rooms on the north side, plus 40 acres of garden. The Royal Standard flag flies when the monarch is in residence. Changing of the Guard takes place at 11.00am every day from April-July and every other day the rest of the year.

CG - Covent Garden

Set in London's entertainment district, this area is known for luxury shopping, restaurants, bars, pubs and theatre. A fruit & veg market started in 1654, but due to congestion was relocated to Nine Elms in the 1970's.

CH - Clarence House

Royal residence since construction in the 1820's. Commissioned by the Duke of Clarence, who became King William IV. This was the home of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Phillip after their marriage. Subsequently occupied by The Queen Mother, Princes William & Harry, and currently the official residence of Prince Charles.

CT - Chinatown

Set in & around Gerrard Street and bordering the Soho district. Originally in the Limehouse area to cater for Chinese sailors, today's Chinatown was established in the 1970's & features a variety of restaurants and shops.

DS - Downing Street

Constructed in the late 17th century, this street has been the home of senior British cabinet members for three centuries. Since 1735, 10 Downing Street has been the official residence and office of the British Prime Minister. However, from 1997 it has become common for the Prime Minister to reside above the more spacious no. 11, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer living above no. 10.

FM - Fortnum & Mason

Luxury department store. Established in 1707 as a grocery store by Hugh Mason and William Fortnum, the latter a footman in Queen Anne's household who started selling leftover wax from candles. Said to have invented the Scotch Egg, the store is known for its quality and speciality food items.

LE - London Eye

Also known as the Millenium Wheel, built to mark the Millennium celebrations of 2000. It is Europe's tallest cantilevered observation wheel, standing 443ft/135m tall, and possesses 32 'pods'; one for each borough of London. Originally a temporary attraction, the Eye is now permanent, carrying 3 million passengers a year.

LS - Leicester Square

Set out in 1670 as Leicester Fields, taking the name from Leicester House. An entertainment district for several centuries, now a hub for film and cinema.

NG - National Gallery

Established in 1824 and home to a collection of 2,300 paintings from the 13th to 20th century. Features works by artistst such as Turner and Van Gogh. Free to enter.

The City of Westminster

The political and spiritual heart of London. A 'minster' is an important church or cathedral, and this district lies to the west of the older City of London. Westminster has a history dating to the 11th century, when Edward the Confessor decided to move his royal residence to the area, although nothing of that remains. However, this move established Westminster as London's area of governance, which it still is today, through the Houses of Parliament. Established as a borough in 1965, Westminster's population is around 240,000, and the area has numerous important buildings, large parks and is the centre of London's entertainment district.

HG - Horse Guards Parade

Set to the back of Whitehall, this open parade was formerly used to host tournaments during the reign of King Henry VIII. It remains the venue for the annual Trooping the Colour, which marks the British Monarch's official birthday. Changing of the Guard takes place here at 11.00am (10.00am on Sunday), changeover takes place every hour on the hour and Dismounted Parade of the Guard takes place at 4.00pm.

HP - Houses of Parliament

The seat of government of the United Kingdom. Its actual name is the Palace of Westminster, comprised of the House of Commons and House of Lords. First established in the 11th century, this has been the meeting place for England's Parliament since the 13th century. The 'Palace' was re-built in the mid-19th century after a fire in 1834 destroyed the previous structure. The tallest part is the Victoria Tower, with the Sovereign's entrance at its base.

PC - Piccadilly Circus

Road junction built in 1819, 'circus' is the Latin word for circle and a 'Picadilly' is a type of collar fashionable in the 16th & 17th centuries. This was home of the world's first illuminated signs, installed in the early 1900's. In the centre is a statue of Anteros: Greek God of requited love.

PS - Parliament Square

Set out in 1868 with London's first traffic signals. Around the square are statues of significant individuals, including Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela and Millicent Fawcett. Commonly used as a site for protests.

RH - Ritz Hotel

Founded in 1906 by Cesar Ritz, dismissed former manager of the Savoy Hotel. One of the most prestigious hotels in the world and a prime location to take afternoon tea.

SB - Southbank

Cultural district on the bank of the Thames between Westminster & Blackfriars bridges. Became a centre of arts & entertainment with the Festival of Britain in 1951. Features a range of attractions, restaurants and venues like the National Theatre and the Southbank Centre.

SH - Savoy Hotel

First luxury hotel in Britain, opened in 1889. A chosen hotel of the rich, famous and powerful. In front of the hotel is Savoy Court, where vehicles must drive on the right-hand side, one of the only such streets in Britain.

SJ - St James's Palace

The most senior Royal Palace, and official residence of the sovereign. St James's was the home of the monarch from its construction in 1536 during the reign of King Henry VIII until the late-18th century. No monarch has lived here for two over hundred years, but the Palace is still used for official ceremonies and receptions.

TC - The Cenotaph

National memorial to the 'glorious dead' from WW1 and WW2. Cenotaph is from the Greek word meaning 'tomb'. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1919-20, this memorial is central to the annual remembrance day commemorations on the Sunday closest to the 11th November.

TS - Trafalgar Sqaure

Takes its name from Admiral Nelson's victory in the Battle of Trafalgar, 1805. Standing 169ft/51m high in the centre is Nelson's Column. Guarding the columns are four lions, designed by Sir Edwin Lanzeer; they are the world's most photographed lions. In the centre of the square are two fountains, set out in the 1840's and designed to reduce the amount of open space. Commonly used as a site for gathering, celebration & protest.

WA - Westminster Abbey

'The Collegiate Church of St Peter at Westminster' dates back to the 960's, perhaps earlier. It is called an 'abbey' as it was previously occupied by monks. It is also known as a 'Royal Peculiar' as it is under the jurisdiction of the monarch, not a bishop. Every monarch of Britain has been crowned here for the last 1,000 years, since William the Conqueror. 'The Abbey' is the burial site of kings, queens, prominent individuals and the unknown soldier.