

Group TravelWorld

SPECIAL ISSUE 2015

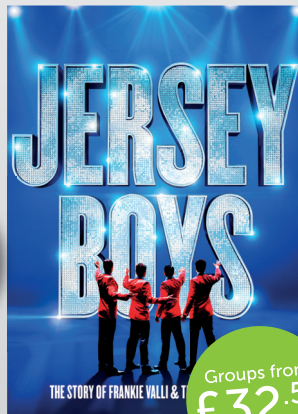
Guide to London

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Welcome to *Group Travel World's* first London supplement, packed full of inspiration and ideas for a group itinerary in the capital.

Inside, GTW have provided a comprehensive list of attractions, accommodation and restaurants, with tourism experts contributing additional tour incentives. *London & Partners* have kindly supported GTW's 'Guide to London' with articles on page (4) and (46).

Flick to our opening spread to read what's new and upcoming in 2015/16, including *Hampton Court Palace* celebrating its 500th anniversary (www.hcp500.hrp.org.uk) and the launch of a new attraction on London's South Bank; *Shrek's Adventure London* (www.shreksadventure.com).

For a scenic jaunt around maritime Greenwich, GTW highly recommends *Greenwich Royal Tours* (www.greenwichroyaltours.com), with acclaimed 'Blue Badge Guide' Graham Bleasdale detailing walking tour options on page (8).

A complete list of 'Blue Badge Guides' is available from page (12).

Additionally, *Talk of the Town* (www.talkofthetownlondon.com) launched in August 2014 and offer bespoke theatrical tours of 'London by Londoners.' You can read their contribution on page (30).

With reference to London's 'TheatreLand,' GTW interviewed Alan Morrissey (38), who plays Gerry Goffin in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* at the Aldwych Theatre (www.beautifulmusical.co.uk).

Keep up to date with *Group Travel World* by subscribing at www.groupravelworld.com or alternatively call Julie Agius, GTW's Marketing and Subscriptions Executive.

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What's new for 2015

London & Partners detail the latest attractions, gallery exhibitions, hotels and theatre trips that prove why London is the world's best city destination for groups

When the *Mastercard Global Cities Index Report* crowned London as the

most popular visitor destination in 2014, they were recognising the outstanding experiences offered by this remarkable city. Make sure you bring your groups to London in 2015, as the city gears up its group offering, with plenty of new attractions opening in the capital.

2015 marks the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta and 500 years since *Hampton Court Palace* was built, so expect plenty of exciting new events to commemorate both anniversaries. We also look forward to the Rugby World Cup, a treat for rugby fans from around the world.

With unique hotels, brand new venues, thrilling culture and brilliant shopping, London's crop of fresh experiences will impress even the most seasoned client.



Here are some of London's eagerly awaited foodie, accommodation and entertainment arrivals that you simply shouldn't miss.

This summer, fans of DreamWorks Animation film *Shrek* will be able to embark on Merlin Entertainments' new attraction, based on the most successful animated film series of all time.

This landmark attraction, featuring *Shrek* and friends, will open at London's County Hall, South Bank, in summer 2015. It will be the first of an initial rollout of six attractions over the next nine years. It will feature an interactive walkthrough adventure and character courtyard, where visitors will be able to meet *Shrek* and his swamp friends, alongside characters from *Madagascar*, *Kung Fu Panda* and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

Opening May 2015, *Madame*



Star Wars at Madame Tussauds will be a unique, immersive experience featuring 16 of the most famous heroes and villains in scenes from some of the most iconic moments featured in Star Wars Episodes I – VI

Tussauds London will take visitors through their favourite *Star Wars* scenes. *Star Wars at Madame Tussauds* will be a unique, immersive experience featuring 16 of the most famous heroes and villains in scenes from some of the most iconic moments featured in *Star Wars Episodes I – VI*.

Look out for *Escape Rooms*, the latest innovation to hit London, which blends old school problem solving with modern interactive technological twists that will make you believe you are in a blockbuster action movie.

Catering for intricate conundrum indulgers and game enthusiasts looking to challenge their team skills, *Escape Rooms* is deservedly creating a buzz amongst the tourism industry.

At *City Academy* the 5-Day Performing Arts Workshop is a fun and action packed course that will enable group members to explore aspects of dance, acting and singing through personal expression and physical demonstration.

The course is designed to be hugely enjoyable and rewarding. It is also designed to build confidence and communication skills by encouraging spontaneity, the opportunity to step out of your comfort zone and work proactively as a team. *City Academy* also offers a range of shorter courses, such as the half-day Fashion and Design Workshop, where groups are guided through the process of finding inspiration, developing mood boards and then translating these ideas into designing their own clothing.

Dazzling new hotels are also coming to the capital. *Marlin Apartments* offer six – and soon-to-be seven apartment developments across the capital.

Other openings include the newly redesigned five-star hotel *The Lanesborough*, the 120-room *Gansevoort Hotels* (famous for their New York hotel in the meatpacking district) which is coming to Curtain Road, and master sushi chef Nobu



Tower of London was home to the 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red' World War One poppy installation throughout 2014, which drew a number of visitors to the attraction



BOOK NOW

Looking to book your group visit? **London & Partners** can help you access everything the city has to offer. With its informative website, extensive listings and dedicated team, **London & Partners** is on hand to ensure your group get the very best out of London.

Visit **London & Partners'** dedicated Travel Trade website at londonandpartners.com/travel-trade to find out more.

Matsuhisa's first European hotel, the *Willow Street Hotel* in Shoreditch.

2015 also brings a new unique and delicious way to experience London. Join *Chocolate Ecstasy Tours*, founded by Jennifer Earle, on one of their six different tours. Each outing offers a perspective of the region it explores, combining the history of the area with the history and production of chocolate, stopping en route to sample a selection of high quality truffles, pralines, caramels, bars and other treats.

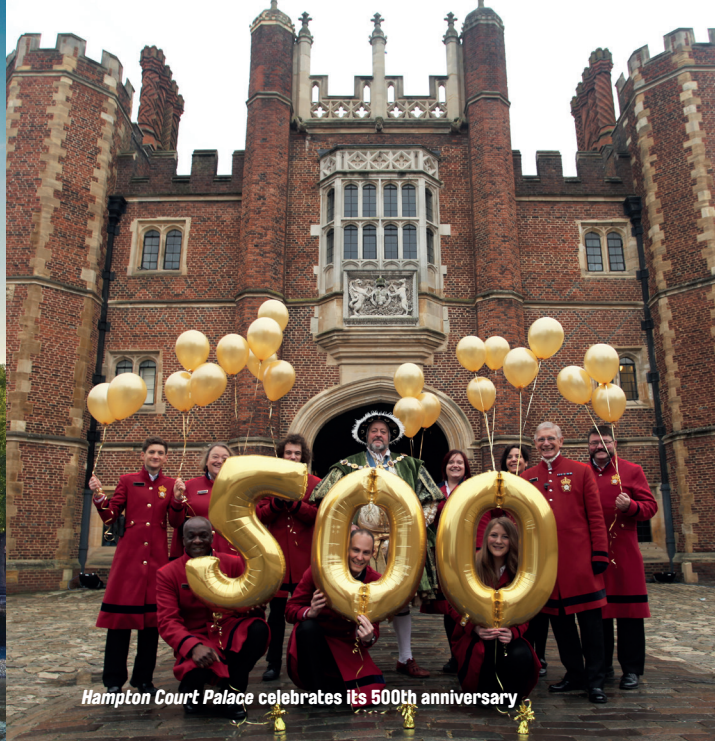
Additionally, discover London's peerless heritage and explore centuries of stunning living history, including royal palaces and parks. In 2015, Historic Royal Palaces

marks the 500 year anniversary of *Hampton Court Palace*, revealing the complex, thrilling and often surprising stories of the palace and its people through a range of immersive events, live interpretation, commissions and artist residencies.

2015 is also the year to delight visitors by booking brand new exhibitions at some of London's most iconic museums and galleries.

At the *National Gallery* from October 2015, *Goya: The Portraits* will celebrate one of art history's most famous portrait artists and provide a penetrating insight into both public and private aspects of his life. He was considered a supremely gifted painter and an

In 2015, Historic Royal Palaces marks the 500 year anniversary of Hampton Court Palace, revealing the complex, thrilling and often surprising stories of the palace and its people



Be among the first to see the long-awaited Bend It Like Beckham – the Musical, which makes its debut on the West End stage or catch Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown at the Playhouse Theatre

excellent social commentator, who took the genre of portraiture to new heights. Meanwhile, Tate Modern will reveal how artists around the world engaged with the spirit of pop art, in *The World Goes Pop* from September 2015.

Be among the first to see the long-awaited *Bend It Like Beckham – the Musical*, which makes its debut on the West End stage or catch *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* at the Playhouse Theatre. Starring Olivier Award-winning actress Tamsin Greig (*Episodes*, *Green Wing*, *Jumpy*, *God of Carnage*) and directed by Tony Award-winner Bartlett Sher (*South Pacific*,

The King and I), this hilarious and heartfelt musical is based on Pedro Almodóvar’s award-winning film that celebrates women.

This season, Sadler’s Wells plays host to a poignant reflection on World War One performed by English National Ballet.

Lest We Forget features a trio of works expressing the experiences of those who fought in the war and those who stayed behind, created by three of the most sought-after choreographers, Liam Scarlett, Russell Maliphant and Akram Khan.

Music fans will be delighted to know that award-winning musician David Byrne is curating

the annual Meltdown Festival at the Southbank Centre in summer 2015. Byrne will follow in the footsteps of previous directors, including Jarvis Cocker, Patti Smith, David Bowie, Yoko Ono, Ray Davies and Ornette Coleman.

From September 2015, travelling within the city will become much simpler, as selected lines on the London Underground will run round the clock on Fridays and Saturdays.

In addition to the extensive network of London’s iconic red buses and black taxis, transport includes trains, river boats and 8,000 bikes available through London’s cycle hire scheme.

Looking to book your group visit? *London & Partners* can help you access all this. With an informative website, extensive listings and dedicated team, we are here to help make sure your group get the very best out of London. Visit our dedicated Travel Trade website at londonandpartners.com/travel-trade to find out more. ■

WHY VISIT?

The *Cutty Sark* is the world's sole surviving tea clipper. ALL PICTURES GRAHAM BLEASDALE

Explore Greenwich

Greenwich Royal Tours was launched four years ago and provides private walking tours of maritime Greenwich by local, entertaining and knowledgeable guides. Its original *Best of Greenwich Day Tour* has since been expanded and the company now has six tours available, with a seventh planned to launch in spring 2015.

Offering coach groups a different take on Greenwich, the private tours are popular with all parties, from WI's to corporate groups.

The area is home to a huge amount of culture and history, not to mention stunning world-class architecture courtesy of Sir Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor.

BEST OF GREENWICH DAY TOUR

The *Best of Greenwich Day Tour* runs from 0930hrs until 1600hrs and combines all of Greenwich's major venues together with a pub lunch. Attractions include the *Greenwich Royal Observatory*, the *National Maritime Museum*,

Greenwich Royal Tours give walking groups a unique insight into the area's rich heritage

Cutty Sark, *Queen's House*, *Old Royal Naval College* and *Greenwich Market*.

Tours run daily and can be tailored to meet a group's needs in terms of time and cost. Admission costs are included, as they are on all the tours.

GREENWICH HIGHLIGHTS HALF-DAY TOUR

This three and a half hour tour takes in most of the key venues in Greenwich, including *Greenwich Royal Observatory*, the *National Maritime Museum*, *Cutty Sark*, *Old Royal Naval College* and the *Greenwich Market*. Groups can opt for a pub lunch following their tour.

The tour starts at the southern side of *Greenwich Park* where the coaches pull in, which is a 10-minute walk from *Greenwich Royal Observatory*.

Tours usually start at 1230hrs, but times can be changed to suit. *Greenwich Highlights Half-Day Tour* runs daily.

GREAT GREENWICH PUB TOUR

Great Greenwich Pub Tour runs every evening except Sunday, and includes visits to four Greenwich pubs. Each has its own unique character and touring groups receive a free half pint of ale at each stop.

Great Greenwich Pub Tour is a great way to learn more about the British pub culture.

The tour starts at 1800hrs and usually runs until 2130hrs.

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM TOUR

Brand new for the 2015 season, the *National Maritime Museum Tour* is a half-day tour that

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WHY VISIT?

includes the museum itself, and also incorporates nearby *Queen's House*. Whilst in the museum, visitors can see everything from pirate stories to the jacket Nelson was wearing the day he died on board HMS Victory. *National Maritime Museum Tour* takes in the café, which is perfect for a mid-term coffee break, and also includes a visit



Greenwich Royal Observatory features architecture by Sir Christopher Wren



National Maritime Museum Tour is new and exclusive for the 2015 season

to *Queen's House*, designed by the talented Indigo Jones, which is now the art gallery for *Royal Museum Greenwich*. This tour runs daily.

SHAKESPEARE IN LONDON TOUR

Shakespeare in London Tour explores where the Bard drank, acted and worshipped on London's Southbank.

It takes in the original site of *Shakespeare's Globe*, the earlier *Rose Theatre*, the ruins of *Winchester Palace*, *Southwark Cathedral* - where Shakespeare's younger brother is buried - and past the infamous *Clink Prison*.

The tour also includes the official in-house *Globe Theatre* tour. It starts at 0900hrs and finishes around noon. *Shakespeare in London Tour* runs daily.

LAW IN LONDON TOUR

Guided by a practicing lawyer, this one-of-a-kind tour takes visitors into the *Royal Courts of Justice*, past the famous *Old Bailey* and into the *British Law Society* as honoured guests, where the group breaks for tea and coffee. The tour then takes in the *Inns of Court*.

The tour finishes at the *Old Cheshire Cheese Pub* for a half pint of ale, compliments of your guide. The tour runs Monday-Friday,



Law in London Tour is guided by a practicing lawyer

with a maximum of 12 people per booking.

SECRET GARDENS OF LONDON TOUR

Secret Gardens of London Tour takes you to some of London's hidden beauty spots, including the rose garden at the Artists' Church in Covent Garden, *Lincoln's Inn Fields*, *Inns of Courts' gardens* and the *London Garden Museum*, where the group breaks for coffee and tea.

It also takes in the *Chelsea Physic Garden*, with high tea at *Kensington Palace*. After tea, the group can enjoy the palace's beautiful sunken garden.

The tour runs every day in the garden season (from April 1 to September 30) except Mondays and Saturdays. ■

PLEASE NOTE

Group travel organisers should book at least three - four months in advance. To book visit www.greenwichroyaltours.com or freephone 0800 180 4565 (Greenwich Office: 0208 319 2143).

Alternatively, email bookings@greenwichroyaltours.com

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*Exclusions apply. A £2.50 transaction fee applies per group booking.

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Group Travel World lists a choice selection of 'Blue Badge Guides' that offer bespoke, informative walking tours of London.

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The *02 Arena* is an iconic landmark in North Greenwich and is one of the many attractions that offer panoramic views over the city of London. *BRITAIN ON VIEW*



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E: wendythompson@btconnect.com

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T: 07771783425
E: yvgeof@hotmail.com

Groups in the Driving Seat



ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF GARETH EVANS

To help group travel organisers and coach operators plan their trip to London, *Transport for London* (TfL) has an in-depth website packed with useful advice and information, simply visit www.tfl.gov.uk.

In addition to practical help, the website is also home to a detailed coach parking map, which you'll find on page (20) of GTW's London supplement. www.tfl.gov.uk has live information on delays and roadworks, as well as details of the city's Emission Zones and Congestion Charges.

Did you know that vehicles classed as a bus, but not registered with the DVSA (including Northern Ireland

Information and advice to help coach operators and group travel organisers negotiate the streets of London

vehicles) will need to register with TfL for a 100% discount? Find out more at www.cclondon.com/exemptions. TfL has a helpline offering advice on coach parking and driver facilities throughout central London, simply call 0845 604 0770.

TIPS FOR SAFE AND LEGAL COACH PARKING IN LONDON

TfL's website - www.tfl.gov.uk - has the following advice for coach drivers touring the capital:

- Plan your trip to London in advance.
- Different attractions have different parking rules, therefore drivers should familiarise themselves with parking arrangements at popular sites and/or places of interest.
- Engines should be switched off when the coach is parked to avoid disturbing residents.
- Don't obstruct other traffic with your coach.
- Don't enter coach ban



PARKING ON LONDON PIERS

Turn to page (20) for a labelled guide to coach parking in the capital, which includes details of the parking facilities available at central London piers; from London Bridge City Pier to Embankment Pier.

areas, unless access is permitted and/or you need to serve a property in the area.

- Don't park overnight on the street, unless you have permission.
- *Penalty Charge Notices* (PCNs) should be paid or disputed according to the designated instructions.
- Ensure your group is ready when picking up.
- Don't wait or park on clearways.
- Don't arrive early to load or remain parked after unloading.
- Don't park or wait at bus stops.
- Remain with your vehicle at all times.
- Pick up/drop off is permitted on double and single yellow lines

only. Some London boroughs allow an observation time, though this does not apply when loading restrictions are in force.

- Double red lines mean no stopping at any time. Single red lines mean no stopping during restricted hours.
- Vehicles registered as a bus can use red route bus stops, but must not park or wait.
- For more information download TfL's guidance for drivers, tour operators, tour guides, group travel organisers, tour managers and couriers via the TfL website.

PLANNING WHERE TO PARK

GTW's map on page (20) has details of short and medium-term coach bays to help you plan

PLANNING A SCHOOL GROUP TO LONDON?

Registering for TfL's 'School Party Travel Scheme' means your group could benefit from free off-peak travel. Find out more at www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s/school-parties



Groups should always plan drop off/pick up points well in advance

your drop off/pick up routes.

In addition, there are a number of pay-by-phone and coach meters available, where you can park for up to four hours.

In most areas of London, you can't park on the street between 1830hrs and 0800hrs, unless you're in a coach bay during operational hours. If you need to park for longer periods or overnight, you'll need to use privately operated coach parks. For details visit www.tfl.gov.uk/coachdrivers.

PERMITS FOR TRAVEL

Always check before you travel whether a permit is required for any section of the journey. Details of all restricted areas can be found on *TfL's* website.

Bear in mind that commercial vehicles including buses and coaches, will need a permit to park near Buckingham Palace. Only single-deck vehicles are permitted, visit www.royalparks.org.uk for more information.

Free coach permits are available from Merlin Entertainments Group for its London attractions, including the Coca-Cola London Eye and the London Dungeon; call 0871 282 9280 for more information.

See *TfL's* 'Guide to Operating Coaches in London' for full details.

FACILITIES AVAILABLE AT VICTORIA COACH STATION

Visit www.tfl.gov.uk for further information on *Victoria Coach Station's* facilities for coach drivers and touring groups.

Victoria Coach Station is open for overnight coach parking between 2230hrs and 0730hrs, call 0845 604 0770 to find out more. Overnight parking costs from £21.60 (including VAT) and keys must be left with a member of staff, where they'll be locked away securely.

Victoria Coach Station is CCTV monitored and patrolled by staff 24 hours a day. For more information email jamesmckinnon@tfl.gov.uk.

Working in association with *Sammy's Garage*, *Victoria Coach Station* offers the following to coach operators:

- Refuelling
- Toilet Drop
- Coach Wash
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Maintenance

For more information contact *Sammy's Garage* directly on 020 7730 8867. ■

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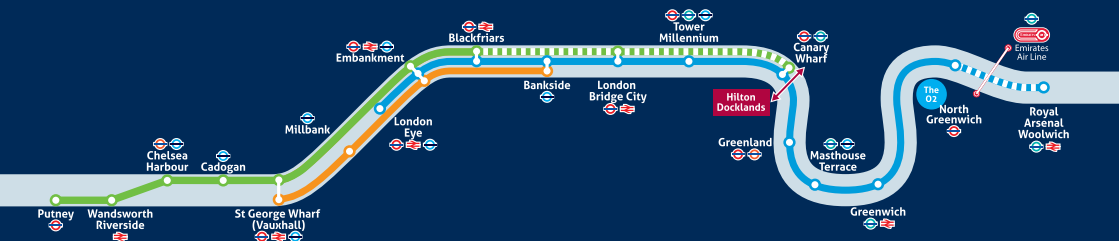
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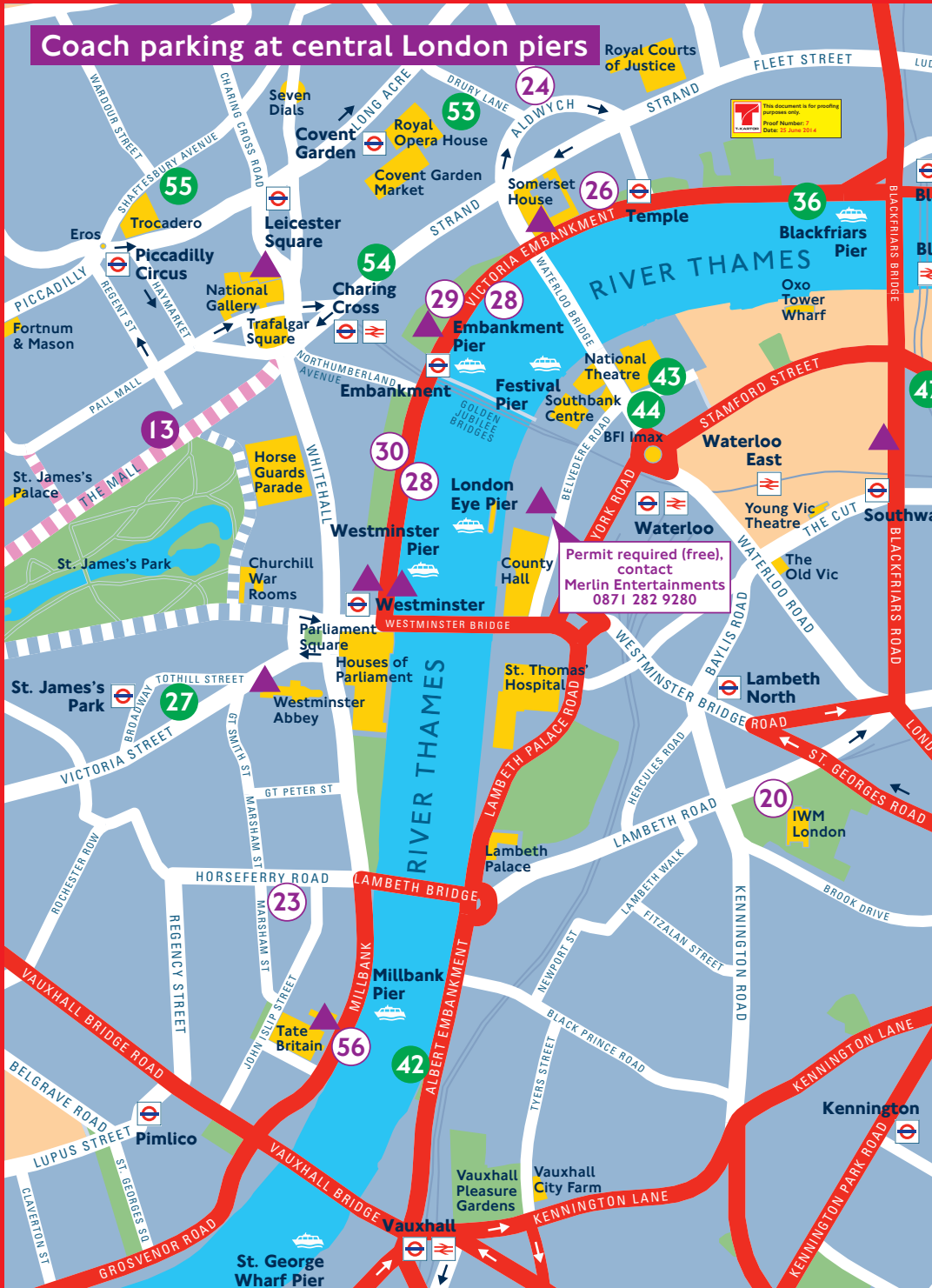
*River Roamer tickets valid from 9am onwards, not valid on Putney-Blackfriars or River Bus Express for The O2 routes

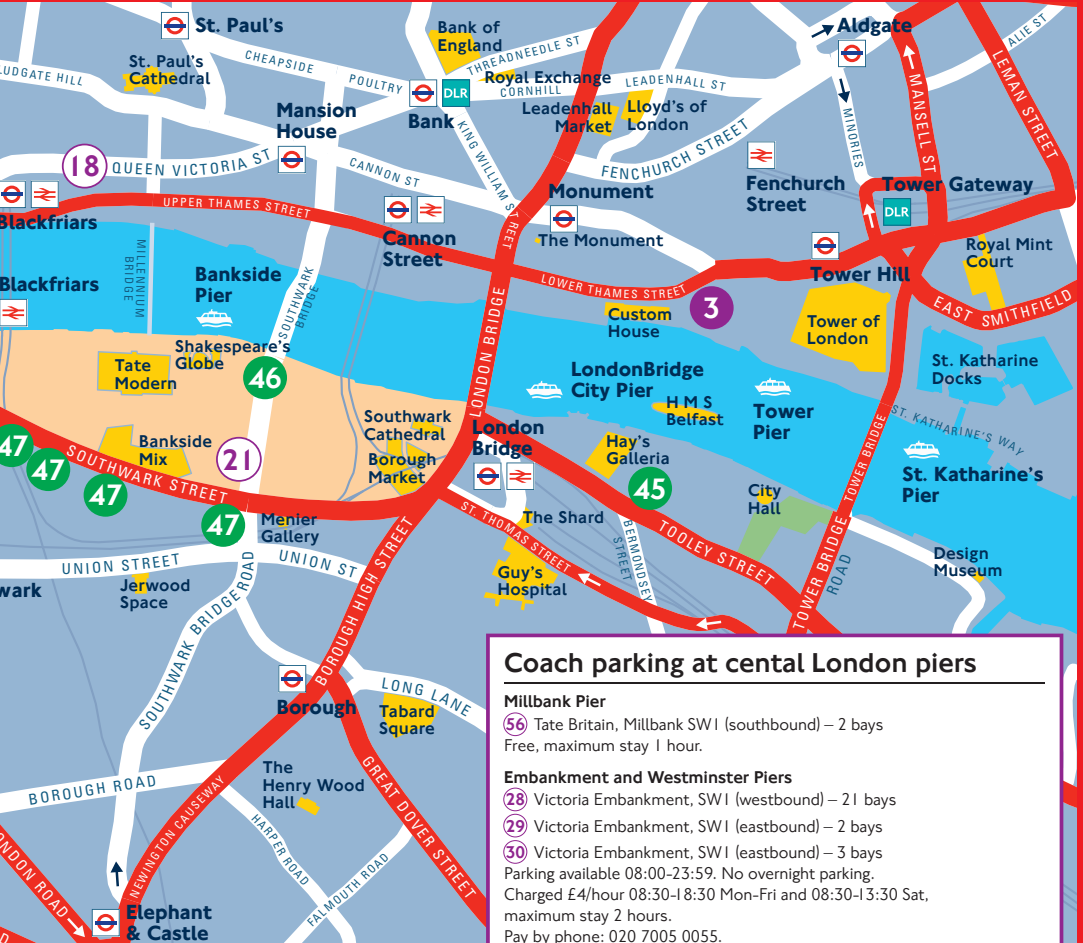
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Coach parking at central London piers





Coach parking at central London piers

Millbank Pier

36 Tate Britain, Millbank SW1 (southbound) – 2 bays
Free, maximum stay 1 hour.

Embankment and Westminster Piers

28 Victoria Embankment, SW1 (westbound) – 2 bays
29 Victoria Embankment, SW1 (eastbound) – 2 bays
30 Victoria Embankment, SW1 (eastbound) – 3 bays
Parking available 08:00-23:59. No overnight parking.
Charged £4/hour 08:30-18:30 Mon-Fri and 08:30-13:30 Sat,
maximum stay 2 hours.
Pay by phone: 020 7005 0055.

Festival Pier

44 Upper Ground Slip Road, SE1 – 4 bays
Free, 08:30-23:59, set down/pick up 15 minutes.

Blackfriars Pier

36 Blackfriars pier, EC4V – 2 bays
Free, maximum stay 20 minutes.

Bankside Pier

21 Southwark Bridge, SE1 – 5 bays
£5/hour 08:00-18:30 Mon-Fri and 09:30-12:30 Sat, maximum stay 2 hours.
46 Southwark Bridge, SE1 – 4 bays
Free, maximum stay 20 minutes.

London Bridge City Pier

45 English Grounds, SE1 (off Tooley Street) – 3 spaces
Free, maximum stay 20 minutes.

Tower Pier and St. Katherine's Pier

3 Tower Hill (Lower Thames Street), EC3R – 16 bays
First 15 minutes free.
1 April – 30 September £10 first hour, £6/hour thereafter.
1 October – 31 March £6/hour.
£20 overnight 17:00-09:00 (all year).
Pay by phone: 0870 241 7492 (Apcoa Parking).

Key

- 36 Coach bay (short term)
- 21 Coach bay (medium term)
- 3 Coach park
- ▲ Setting down/picking up point. No waiting.
- ↗ One-way street
- Underground station
- DLR station
- National Rail station
- River pier
- Coach ban area
- No access without Royal Parks permit
- No access to coaches

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Exploring London's Hidden Gems

Stéphanie Kuypers, Senior Tour Guide at *Talk of the Town London*, reveals the capital's most intriguing group-friendly tourism spots

To the avid group traveller, London may seem like a daunting destination, but there are plenty of hidden gems around the city that highlight the capital's history and culture, making initial planning worthwhile.

A great place to start - especially for an early morning snack - is *Borough Market*. Dating back to 1851, the variety of smells, sounds and tastes experienced here provides the perfect opportunity to try out some authentic London street food. Visit on a Friday or Saturday to get the full - busy, but fun - experience.

My personal favourites include *Horn OK!* (vegetarian Indian street food) and the crumbly fudge made at *Whirld*. Also located here are artisan bakers *Bread Ahead* who run bread making classes, which is a fun activity for everyone after you've enjoyed a spot of breakfast.

Coming in the afternoon? *Vinopolis* offers wine tasting in all shapes and (glass) sizes and you're right on the Thames Path to walk off the food and drink afterwards.

EXPLORING LONDON ON FOOT

The best way to see London is on foot, so forget the bus and leave the Boris Bikes to the wayside.

Talk of the Town London offers unique walking tours around all parts of the city.

Strapped for time and want to see it all? Our *London 101 Tour* is a comprehensive half-day tour covering *Trafalgar Square*, *Houses of Parliament* and *Big Ben*, and the *Tower of London*. Interested in the gruesome and the grisly? *Grim Tales of London* takes you around London's famous *East End*, where notorious serial killer Jack the Ripper dwelled and where you'll learn more about the creepy and the bizarre.

Alternatively, for a refined afternoon with London's elite, walk around the St James area on our *High Society Tour*, where you'll learn how the privileged and influential conducted themselves. On our *High Society Tour*, you'll travel





Talk of the Town London has proved popular with groups



past some of the most royal hangouts, such as *Fortnum and Mason*. In the shadow of *Buckingham Palace*, the group is turned into Lords and Ladies of old as *Talk of the Town London* observe the traditions of the 'season' and the debutantes greeting the King and Queen. Towards the end, *Talk of the Town London* honour the great British tradition of light afternoon tea at a secret 1940's tea room in the heart of Soho.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Step back in time and visit the *Greenwich Naval College*. It's free and so beautiful that it frequently gets used as a television and film location.

If you head here at the weekend, be sure to stop by *Greenwich Market* for antiques and vintage maps - a take-home reminder of London's ever-changing cityscape.

The *National Maritime Museum* and *Cutty Sark* are just around the corner and will give you an insight into Britain's glorious seafaring history. On your way back, jump on the *Thames Clipper* that travels across the river underneath such architectural highlights as *Tower Bridge* and *Millennium Bridge*, with familiar sights including the *HMS Belfast*, *St Paul's Cathedral* and *Shakespeare's Globe*. End up near the *Tate Modern* or carry on to the *London Eye* for a different view of the city, where you can book a capsule exclusively for your entire group.

END YOUR DAY IN STYLE

To finish off the evening, catch a classical concert at *St Martin-in-the-Fields*, where you could decide to grab an early dinner in its atmospheric *Café in the Crypt*. Alternatively, visit Brick Lane to sample authentic Indian food. With so many places vying for your attention, you can haggle for the best deal and there's no booking required - not even for a big group.

If you're prepared to queue, *Banana Tree* in Wardour Street is cheap and cheerful, with accommodating staff. For a more upscale experience, *Christopher's* near Covent Garden has a Martini Bar and a classy dining room serving tasty American cuisine (think steak and Missouri lamb). However you decide to spend your time in London, you certainly won't be bored.

There are a whole host of options available, so don't be afraid to get stuck in and explore, whether it's with us at *Talk of the Town London*, or through one of the many experiences mentioned here. ■



For more information call 020 3151 2565 or email info@talkofthetownlondon.com. For the latest news and updates follow [@tottLondon](https://twitter.com/tottLondon) or visit www.talkofthetownlondon.com.


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TONY BLACKBURN, BBC RADIO 2

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interview: ALAN MORRISSEY

Amy Moore speaks to Alan Morrissey, who plays Gerry Goffin in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* at the Aldwych Theatre



Beautiful recently announced an extended booking period to February 13, 2016. Katie Brayben plays the title role of Carole King, alongside Alan Morrissey, who plays songwriter husband, Gerry Goffin. *Beautiful* narrates the life of Carole King before she became a chart-topping music legend. A guaranteed feel-good production, *Beautiful* features such familiar hits as *Will You Love Me Tomorrow*, *Take Good Care Of My Baby* and *Locomotion*.

DO YOU THINK YOUNGER AUDIENCES CAN RELATE TO BEAUTIFUL?

It depends on the generation. My nephew is nine and I was surprised to find that he really enjoyed it.

Certainly the generations above him were surprised at how many of these songs have filtered into their life, because their parents grew up listening to the music from their parents.

My sister and I grew up listening to a lot of the old soul records. The songs in *Beautiful* just seem to have been passed on from generation to generation.

They're just massive hits.

ARE YOU SURPRISED THAT BEAUTIFUL HAS BECOME SO SUCCESSFUL?

I think we all felt like we had created something that was really magical. Being a successful show in New York, the basic structure was exactly the same. We had an idea that it might do well over here, but obviously we weren't sure how well known Carole King was compared to how well she's known in America. We've got such an amazing cast. Because there was so much excitement with this musical, they were able to get immensely talented people to support the ensemble.

HAS ANYTHING BEEN ADAPTED FROM THE AMERICAN VERSION OF BEAUTIFUL?

There's been quite a lot of little changes. Marc Bruni [Director] really let us find our own versions of the characters. There are a couple of script changes, like certain jokes that didn't quite make it across the Atlantic. It's very similar to the Broadway show, but it's an original London cast.

HOW DOES BEAUTIFUL COMPARE TO OTHER

PRODUCTIONS?

We travel from 1950 right through to 1971, so we cover a couple of decades. In that sense, we have a lot in common with *Memphis*, *Sunny Afternoon* and even *Jersey Boys*.

The costumes in *Beautiful* are phenomenal and really help map the generations as they change, but mostly it's portrayed through the music. There was a massive transition from the songs that Cynthia Weil, Barry Mann, Gerry Goffin and Carole King were writing in the 1960s. The music is one of the main ways we manage to map the journey, assisted throughout by beautiful costumes from each period.

TALK US THROUGH THE CHARACTER OF GERRY

Gerry Goffin was Carole King's first husband.

Gerry is quite a complex character and a phenomenal lyricist. He wrote the lyrics to *You Make Me Feel Like A Natural Woman*. He beautifully encapsulated what it felt like to be a woman at that time.

He had a lot of mental health issues and so a lot of his genius was fuelled by some of his darker and more difficult

LEFT: Katie Brayben as Carole King and Alan Morrissey as Gerry Goffin. BRINKHOFF MOGENBURG

characteristics. Some of the bad decisions he makes have a real direct impact on Carole.

Beautiful focuses on the love they share. What's great about both of them as artists, they seem to use what's happening in their life to fuel the beautiful and life changing songs that they created.

HOW DO YOU WORK TO BRING THAT EMOTION TO THE STAGE?

It was something I was worried about when I got the role. I'd played Romeo at the *Globe Theatre*, where I had a lot of emotional work. Gerry has a nervous breakdown during the show and that was certainly a challenge for me. It's quite hard to get the audience to empathise with him.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE SONG IN *BEAUTIFUL*?

Up On The Roof – I don't get to sing the whole number, because there's a concept in the

show where certain songs get introduced and the original artist takes them over.

It was my Dad's favourite song and I grew up listening to it. Every night, it's a really beautiful moment for me, because the lyrics connect to Gerry's relationship with his own father.

TALK US THROUGH YOUR FAVOURITE SCENE

When we first hear *You've Got A Friend*. You get to see the principal cast round a piano with no orchestration. It's such a beautiful song and such a beautiful moment in the story; people coming together to support each other through difficult times. I spend every night in the wings watching it.

HOW DOES THE CHARACTER OF GERRY COMPARE TO OTHER CHARACTERS YOU'VE PLAYED?

Gerry isn't written as a traditional lead character.

He does some things that make the audience not necessarily like him. That was one of the things I loved about him.

Gerry is the catalyst for the growth of Carole.


The stuff that I've done in the past has helped fuel Gerry and my interpretation of Gerry.

DESCRIBE *BEAUTIFUL* IN THREE WORDS

Carole. King's. Journey.

WHAT CAN AUDIENCE'S EXPECT FROM *BEAUTIFUL*?

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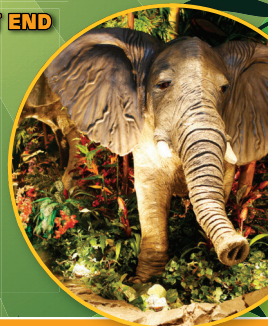
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Here, we round up the city's top dining experiences.

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See visitlondon.com/travel-trade for more information on how to book.

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Let's start our journey in Covent Garden, the heart of London's Theatreland.

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London & Partners round up the best places to enjoy a delicious meal before embarking to one of London's world-famous theatres

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Also located within the hustle and bustle of Covent Garden, *Fire & Stone* offers an innovative take on traditional pizza fare. Famous for its unique flavour combinations and authentic toppings inspired by cities around the world, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

FROM THE STRAND TO WHITEHALL

Not far from the piazza, you will

find the *Strand Dining Rooms*.

Whether you're drawn by the dining décor at the front or the gentleman's club ambience at the back, this recently opened restaurant is bound to prove a hit with groups seeking classic British fare.

Its pre-theatre menu - served from 1700hrs until 1900hrs Monday to Sunday - includes hanger steak with Stilton and port butter, smoked garlic mashed potato and the appetising Strand seafood crumble, among other dishes.

WHITEHALL FAVOURITES

While in Whitehall, why not visit the *OneTwentyOneTwo Restaurant* at the historic Royal Horseguards Hotel.

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BOOK NOW

For more information and to start planning your pre-theatre dining experience contact *London & Partners*. Visit our dedicated travel trade website at visitalondon.com/travel-trade to keep up-to-date with the latest openings and group offerings.



Hard Rock Café offers authentic American cuisine and rock music. *HARD ROCK CAFE*

hotel's former neighbour Scotland Yard, this restaurant is named after its famous telephone number, Whitehall 1212.

Situated on the ground floor of the hotel, don't miss the restaurant's outdoor terrace that overlooks the *London Eye*. Specialising in contemporary dining, it caters for groups of up to 40 people with private dining rooms and al fresco dining as additional options.

FUN DINING IDEAS

Looking for a fun pre-theatre dining option? Just around the corner from Victoria - and a short walk from Piccadilly - is

the original *Hard Rock Café*. Opened in June 1971, it was the first of its kind.

Tuck into authentic American cuisine whilst experiencing the spirit of rock music, surrounded by memorabilia from iconic US artists. Before you leave, remember to pop to *The Vault* - London's only rock and roll museum housed in The Rock Shop.

Crowned the UK's Best Group Dining Experience at the prestigious Group Travel Awards in summer 2014, *Planet Hollywood* is the UK's only Hollywood-inspired restaurant, showcasing more than 60 pieces

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DINE AT UNUSUAL LOCATIONS

If you want to surprise your group with a more unusual location, the stunning Georgian architecture of St Martin-in-the-Fields' *Café in the Crypt* is ideal.

It's also perfect if you plan to see a lunchtime concert followed by a theatre show, as both are within easy reach. Just across the road you'll find the *National Café*. Located in the magnificent *National Gallery*, it's one of the most charming and elegant restaurants in London offering all day dining, from hearty breakfasts to evening meals. ■

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What's on

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Booking To: December 2015
Times: Mon-Sat 1930, Thu & Sat 1430

Length: 3hrs

Celebrating 10 years on the stage, *Billy Elliot* is the inspirational story of a young boy's struggle against the odds to make his dreams come true.

i Groups of 10 plus receive a reduced rate of £31, valid for Monday-Thursday performances. Groups of 10 plus attending a performance on Friday evening will receive a reduced rate of £36.50. Groups of 10 plus attending a Saturday matinee will receive a reduced rate of £36.50. www.billyelliottthemusical.com

SEE GTW's INTERVIEW WITH DEKA WALMSLEY IN OUR MAY 2015 EDITION OR ONLINE AT WWW.GROUPTRAVELWORLD.COM

THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE CHARLIE & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Booking To: June 2016
Times: Mon-Sat 1930, Thu & Sat 1500

Length: 2hrs 30mins

Charlie & The Chocolate Factory sees Roald Dahl's deliciously dark tale come to life in the West End. Backed by an award-winning creative team, *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory* is guaranteed to dazzle your senses.

i Groups of 12 plus receive a reduced rate of £45, valid for Monday-Friday performances and Wednesday matinees. Groups of 40 plus receive a reduced rate of £35, valid for Monday-Thursday performances. www.charlieandthechocolatefactory.com



Les Misérables at the Queen's Theatre celebrates its 30th year in 2015

PICCADILLY THEATRE JERSEY BOYS

Booking To: October 2015
Times: Tue-Sat 1930, Tue & Sat 1500, Sun 1700

Length: 2hrs 35mins

Jersey Boys documents the rise to fame of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, featuring such hits as *Bye Bye Baby (Baby Goodbye)* and *Big Girls Don't Cry*.

Jersey Boys has been seen by over 20million people worldwide and has won 55 major awards, including the Olivier Award for 'Best New Musical.'

i Groups of 10 plus receive a reduced rate of £32.50, valid for Tuesday-Thursday performances. Friday evening and Sunday matinees are reduced to £37.50. Groups of 40 plus receive a reduced rate of £32.50, valid for Friday evening and Sunday matinees. www.jerseyboyslondon.com

QUEEN THEATRE LES MISÉRABLES

Booking To: March 2016
Times: Mon-Sat 1930, Wed & Sat 1430

Length: 3hrs

Les Misérables is set in 19th century France and tells the

enthralling story of broken dreams and unrequited love, passion, sacrifice and redemption. Celebrating its 30th year, such songs featured include *I Dreamed A Dream*, *Bring Him Home*, *One Day More* and *On My Own*.

i Groups of 10 plus receive a reduced rate of £42.50, valid for Monday-Thursday performances and Wednesday matinees.

Educational Workshops and Backstage Tours are available and provide an informative insight into the history of the production and stagecraft used during each performance.

i Groups are admitted at £8.50 per pupil, with Backstage Tours available for an additional £5 per pupil. Choral Workshops costs £8.50 per pupil. www.lesmis.com/uk

LYCEUM THEATRE THE LION KING

Booking To: October 2015
Times: Tue-Sat 1930, Weds, Sat & Sun 1430

Length: 2hrs 45mins

The Lion King celebrates its 16th year at London's Lyceum

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www.thelionking.co.uk

NOVELLO THEATRE
MAMMA MIA

Booking To: October 2015
Times: Mon–Sat 1945, Thu & Sat 1500
Length: 2hrs 30mins
Mamma Mia at the Novello Theatre celebrates the timeless music of ABBA, and invites students of various ages to discover their inner disco diva by recreating production highlights through an Educational Workshop.

i Groups of 10 plus are permitted at £8.50



Mamma Mia at the Novello Theatre celebrates the timeless music of ABBA

per person. Groups of 10 plus attending *Mamma Mia* at the Novello Theatre will receive a reduced rate of £38.50, valid for Monday–Friday performances.
www.mamma-mia.com/london

CAMBRIDGE THEATRE
MATILDA – THE MUSICAL

Booking To: December 2015
Times: Tue 1900, Wed–Sat 1930, Wed & Sat 1430, Sun 1500
Length: 2hrs 40mins
Based on the twisted novel by Roald Dahl, *Matilda The Musical* is a captivating masterpiece produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company. *Matilda The Musical* revels in the anarchy of childhood, the power of imagination and narrates the inspirational story of a young girl who dares to change her destiny.

i Groups of 10 plus receive a reduced rate of £45, valid for Tuesday–Thursday performances. Groups of 40 plus receive a reduced rate of £39.50, valid for Tuesday to Thursday performances.
www.uk.matildathemusical.com

ST MARTIN'S THEATRE
THE MOUSETRAP

Booking To: December 2015
Times: Mon–Sat 1930, Tue 1500, Sat 1600
Length: 2hrs 15mins

The world's longest running musical celebrates 63 years in 2015, with *The Mousetrap* recently celebrating its 25,000th performance at St Martin's Theatre. Agatha Christie's classic 'whodunit' is an unmissable piece of theatrical history. *The Mousetrap* embarked on its diamond anniversary tour in April 2015.

i A maximum of nine tickets can be purchased online via www.the-mousetrap.co.uk. For bookings of 10 or more, contact the Box Office on 0844 499 1515.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Booking To: March 2016
Times: Mon–Sat 1930, Thu & Sat 1430
Length: 2hrs 30mins
Phantom of the Opera is celebrating its 29th year at Her Majesty's Theatre. *Phantom of the Opera* features an unforgettable score by Andrew Lloyd Webber, combined with intense scenery and breathtaking special effects that work to bring the legendary love story to live on stage.

i Groups of 10 plus receive a reduced rate of £39.75 (£42.50 from September 28, 2015), valid for Monday–Friday performances and Saturday matinees. Thursday matinees are reduced to £28.

Q&A's are available to book following the Thursday matinee performance. A pre-matinee Educational Workshop is available for those who wish to make a day of it.

Q&A costs £5 per pupil, with groups of 10 plus permitted to the Workshop at £8.50 per pupil.
www.thephantomoftheopera.com/london

LYRIC THEATRE
THRILLER LIVE

Booking To: April 2016
Times: Tue-Fri 1930, Sat 1600 & 2000, Sun 1530 & 1930
Length: 2hrs 30mins
 Celebrating its 6th year, *Thriller Live* commemorates the late musician, Michael Jackson. *Thriller Live* opened at the Lyric Theatre on January 2, 2009 and has since become the longest running show performed at the venue. From pop to rock and soul to disco, *Thriller Live* features such tunes as *Smooth Criminal*, *Dirty Diana* and *Thriller*.

i Groups of 8 plus receive a reduced rate of £29.50, excluding Friday and Saturday evenings. www.thrillerlive.com

NEW LONDON THEATRE **WAR HORSE**

Booking To: February 2016
Times: Mon-Sat 1930, Tue 1900, Wed-Sat 1930, Thu & Sat 1430
Length: 2hrs 40mins
 Adapted from the beloved novel by Michael Morpurgo, *War Horse* is a powerfully moving and imaginative drama that transports the audience from the sublime fields of rural Devon to the harsh trenches of World War One. *War Horse* features astonishing life-sized horses specially constructed by *Handspring Puppet Company*.

i Groups of 10 plus receive a reduced rate of £45, with groups of 30 plus receiving a reduced rate of £39.50, valid for Monday-Thursday performances.

War Horse Puppetry Workshop has been designed to give students a primary understanding of characterisation.

Practitioners at the *National Theatre* - who mirror as performers and puppeteers in the production - run the *War Horse Puppetry Workshop*.
www.warhorseonstage.com



The Mousetrap celebrates 63 years in the West End, making it the world's longest running musical

**# SEE GTW'S INTERVIEW WITH
 EMMA THORNETT, WHO PLAYS
 BABY JOEY IN WAR HORSE, AT
WWW.GROUPTRAVELWORLD.COM**

APOLLO VICTORIA **WICKED**

Booking To: April 2016
Times: Mon-Sat 1930, Wed & Sat 1430
Length: 2hrs 50mins
Wicked is a creative reimagining of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, narrating the tale of the frightfully misunderstood Wicked Witch of the West. Based on Gregory Maguire's acclaimed 1995 novel - *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* - *Wicked* tells the untold friendship of two girls; Glinda and Elphaba.

i Groups of 10 plus receive a reduced rate of £29.50, valid for Monday-Thursday performances. Friday evening and Saturday matinee performances are reduced to £32.50.

Groups of 35 plus receive a reduced rate of £25, valid for Monday-Thursday performances, with Wednesday matinees reduced to £32.50.
www.wickedthemusical.co.uk

FORTUNE THEATRE **WOMAN IN BLACK**

Booking To: January 2016
Times: Tue-Sat 2000, Tue & Thu 1500, Sat 1600
Length: 2hrs

Woman in Black is celebrating 25 years in the West End, with Robin Herford's gripping production a brilliantly successful example of atmospheric, illustrious and controlled horror.

i Reduced rates are available for parties of 8 or more, with school groups of 10 plus permitted at certain performances.

Woman in Black Workshop welcomes visitors into the Fortune Theatre, to tread the set and experience how the *Woman in Black* conveys tension to hugely dramatic effect. Fully experienced West End professionals lead the *Workshops*. Cost depends on group size, with *Workshops* taking approximately 60-90 minutes.

Additionally, Q&A sessions are available exclusively for schools and groups and last approximately 20 minutes. To arrange a session contact Jon Huyton on 07971078411.

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London events 2015/16

● MAY 2015

LONDON COFFEE FESTIVAL

A celebration for coffee lovers, including samples, demonstrations and live music

May 1 – May 3, 2015

Old Truman Brewery, Brick Lane
www.londoncoffeefestival.com

ELECTRIC RUN

5km starlit fun-run followed by an all-night party with world famous DJs

May 2, 2015

Wembley Park, Wembley
www.electricrun.co.uk/london

LONDON CRAFT WEEK

Inaugural festival of activities and shows in famous galleries and back-street workshops

May 6 – May 10, 2015

Various venues
www.craftscouncil.org.uk/articles/london-craft-week

MUSEUMS AT NIGHT

A series of late-night events in the capital's biggest museums and quirkiest attractions

May 14 – May 16, 2015

Various venues
www.museumsatnight.org.uk

STAR WARS AT MADAME TUSSAUDS

See all your favourite Star Wars characters made entirely from wax

May 16 – December 31, 2015

Marylebone Road
www.starwars.madametussauds.com/london

FESTIVALASIA

Debut event showcasing everything Asian, from food to fashion and music to martial arts

May 15 – May 17, 2015

Tobacco Dock, Docklands
www.festivalasia.co.uk

FOODIES FESTIVAL

Celebrity chefs and tasting theatres are present at this three day gastronomic event

May 23 – May 26, 2015

Syon Park, Brentford
www.syonpark.co.uk

● JUNE 2015

FIELD DAY FESTIVAL

Underground DJs and folk musicians rub shoulders at one of London's best-loved alternative music festivals

June 6 – June 7, 2015

Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets
www.fielddayfestivals.co.uk

TROOPING THE COLOUR: THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY PARADE

All the pomp and pageantry you would expect on Her Majesty's official birthday.

June 13, 2015

Horse Guards Parade, Westminster
www.trooping-the-colour.co.uk

WIMBLEDON TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Get the strawberries and cream ready for the jewel in international tennis's crown

June 29 – July 12, 2015

All England Lawn Tennis Club, SW19
www.wimbledon.com

RHS HAMPTON COURT PALACE FLOWER SHOW

Enjoy the work of the country's leading horticulturalists and garden designers

June 30 – July 5, 2015

Hampton Court Palace,
www.rhs.org.uk/Shows & events

● JULY 2015

WIRELESS FESTIVAL

Mary J. Blige, Drake and Avicii grace one of this year's most eclectic pop events

July 3 – July 4, 2015

Finsbury Park, Haringey
www.wirelessfestival.co.uk

HYPER JAPAN FESTIVAL

The O2 becomes a little Tokyo with this celebration of Japanese culture and trends

June 10 – July 12, 2015

The O2, Greenwich
www.theo2.co.uk/events/detail/hyper-japan-festival-2015

LOVEBOX FESTIVAL

Music, dance, performance art and mischief are all promised at this boutique festival

July 17 – July 18, 2015

Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets
www.loveboxfestival.com

BUCKINGHAM PALACE SUMMER OPENING

Visit the famous state-rooms while the royal family enjoy their summer holidays

July 25 – September 27, 2015

Buckingham Palace, Westminster
www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit

● AUGUST 2015

RIDE LONDON

Central London is closed to traffic for cyclists to have free-reign all weekend

August 1, 2015

Various locations
www.prudentialridelondon.co.uk

VISIONS FESTIVAL

Music, food stalls and exhibitions consume Hackney for the third consecutive year

August 8, 2015

Throughout Hackney
www.visionsfestival.com

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*Source: Independent research by Fusion Communications, January 2015
**ABC audited figures, February 2015

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MIND SPORTS OLYMPIAD

Win a gold medal without breaking a sweat at this table-top and board game festival
August 23 – August 31, 2015
 JW3, Hampstead
www.msoworld.com

SOUTH WEST FOUR

EDM, Electro and Trance fill Clapham Common at this club-themed dance festival
August 29 – August 30, 2015
 Clapham Common, Clapham
www.southwestfour.com

● **SEPTEMBER 2015**

ONBLACKHEATH FESTIVAL

Elbow, Manic Street Preachers, Madness and Kelis top the bill on this two-day event
September 12 -13, 2015
 Blackheath, SE London
www.onblackheath.com

● **OCTOBER 2015**

V & A EXHIBITION ROAD PROJECT

Celebrate the opening of this purpose-built underground courtyard exhibition space
October 1, 2015
 V&A Museum, Cromwell road.
www.vam.ac.uk

RUGBY WORLD CUP

Enjoy Rugby's biggest competition on home soil
Various dates in October 2015
 Twickenham and Olympic Stadiums
www.rugbyworldcup.com

REGENT STREET MOTOR SHOW

Free-to-view event showcasing 120 years of motoring on London's famous streets
October 31, 2015
 Regent Street, Westminster
<http://www.veterancarrun.com/event-info>

NFL UK

Watch Kansas City Chiefs take on Detroit Lions in the last of this

year's Wembley clashes
October 4, 25, November 1, 2015
 Wembley Stadium, Wembley
www.nfluk.com/tickets

● **NOVEMBER 2015**

BONHAMS LONDON TO BRIGHTON VINTAGE VEHICLE RUN

Enjoy the ride or just the view at the "World's Longest Running Motoring Event"
November 1, 2015
 (Starting from) Hyde Park Corner
www.veterancarrun.com/

OXFORD STREET CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH-ON

Watch the iconic lights get switched on from John Lewis' flagship store
November 2015
 Oxford Street, Westminster

GUY FAWKES NIGHT SPECTACULAR

Where better to see fireworks go off with a bang than at a Gunpowder Factory?
November 7 – November 8, 2015
 Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Abbey
www.royalgunpowdermills.com/whats-and-events

● **DECEMBER 2015**

CHANUKAH ON THE SQUARE

Celebrate the Jewish festival of lights on Trafalgar square
December 2015
www.london.gov.uk/events/chanukah

NYE FIREWORKS DISPLAY

Watch the world's favourite New Years Eve celebration from the banks of the River Thames
December 31, 2015
 London Eye, and along the River Thames
www.london.gov.uk/get-involved/events/london-nye-2015-fireworks

● **JANUARY 2016**

NEW YEARS DAY PARADE

Expect huge Disney-style floats and entertainment, including marching bands and much more
January 1, 2016
 Parliament Square
www.londontown.com/LondonEvents/New-Years-Day-Parade/e5c5d

LONDON ART FAIR

Museum quality modern British art is presented alongside contemporary work
 Business Design Centre, Upper Street
January 20 – January 24, 2016
www.londonartfair.co.uk

BURNS NIGHT

Celebrate the birthday of Scotland's favourite poet Robbie Burns without crossing the border
January 25, 2016
 Various locations

GROUP TRAVEL WORLD DIRECTORY

GTW have created a directory for group travel organisers, where they can find full details of accommodation, attractions, tourist boards and restaurants tailored to the group travel market.

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www.grouptravelworld.com/directory

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