

# 25 Hidden Gems of London

That Most Tourists Never Find

A free guide from Love London  
[lovetovisitlondon.substack.com](https://lovetovisitlondon.substack.com)

*Beyond Big Ben and Buckingham Palace lies a London that even most Londoners take years to discover. This guide reveals 25 remarkable places hiding in plain sight across the capital.*

# The 25 Hidden Gems

London welcomes over 30 million visitors a year, yet most see the same dozen landmarks. The places below are loved by Londoners, overlooked by guidebooks, and guaranteed to make your trip unforgettable. Enjoy exploring.

## 1. Leadenhall Market

*Gracechurch Street, EC3*

This stunning Victorian covered market dates to the 14th century and inspired Diagon Alley in the Harry Potter films. Visit on a weekday morning when the light streams through the ornate painted roof and the market is alive with city workers.

## 2. The Hardy Tree

*St Pancras Old Church, NW1*

In the 1860s, a young Thomas Hardy was tasked with relocating headstones from St Pancras churchyard. He stacked them around an ash tree, creating an eerie, beautiful spiral of weathered stone that still stands today.

## 3. Postman's Park

*King Edward Street, EC1*

Tucked behind St Paul's Cathedral, this tranquil park holds George Frederic Watts's Memorial to Heroic Self-Sacrifice: hand-painted ceramic tiles commemorating ordinary people who died saving others. Each tile tells a story that will stop you in your tracks.

## 4. Kyoto Garden, Holland Park

*Holland Park, W8*

A serene Japanese garden hidden inside Holland Park, complete with a cascading waterfall, koi carp ponds, and Japanese maples. Peacocks roam freely nearby. It feels a world away from Kensington High Street.

## 5. Dennis Severs' House

*18 Folgate Street, E1*

This extraordinary 18th-century Huguenot house is presented as if its inhabitants have just stepped out of the room. Candles flicker, food sits half-eaten on tables, and the smell of wood smoke fills the air. It is, as the creator called it, a 'still-life drama'.

## 6. The Crossbones Graveyard

*Redcross Way, SE1*

A medieval unconsecrated burial ground for the 'Winchester Geese' - women licensed by the Bishop of Winchester to work in Southwark. The gates are now covered in ribbons, flowers, and messages of remembrance. Open garden days reveal the archaeology beneath.

## 7. Daunt Books, Marylebone

*83 Marylebone High Street, W1*

Often called the most beautiful bookshop in the world, this Edwardian building features long oak galleries, William Morris prints, and a stunning stained-glass window. Books are arranged by country, making it a travel lovers' paradise.

## 8. Little Venice

*Warwick Avenue, W9*

Where the Regent's Canal meets the Grand Union Canal, tree-lined waterways create a pocket of calm surrounded by elegant Regency mansions. Take a narrowboat from here to Camden Market and see a completely different side of London.

## 9. The Charterhouse

*Charterhouse Square, EC1*

A 14th-century former Carthusian monastery, plague burial ground, Tudor mansion, school, and almshouse - all on one extraordinary site. The guided tours reveal 600 years of London history that most walking guides completely miss.

## 10. Wilton's Music Hall

*Graces Alley, E1*

The world's oldest surviving grand music hall, built in 1859. After decades of near-demolition, it has been magnificently restored and hosts theatre, music, and film screenings in an atmosphere no modern venue can replicate.

## 11. The Pergola and Hill Garden

*Hampstead Heath, NW3*

A spectacular Edwardian raised walkway draped in wisteria and climbing plants, overlooking the Heath. Built by the eccentric Lord Leverhulme, it feels like discovering a secret garden. Most Hampstead visitors walk right past it.

## 12. God's Own Junkyard

*Unit 12, Ravenswood Industrial Estate, E17*

A dazzling warehouse in Walthamstow filled floor to ceiling with vintage and salvaged neon signs. Created by the late Chris Bracey, who made neon for Kubrick, Tim Burton, and the West End. Free entry, open weekends.

## 13. The Ceremony of the Keys

*Tower of London, EC3*

Every single night for over 700 years, the Tower of London has been locked in a ceremony unchanged since the 14th century. It is free to attend, but you must apply in writing months in advance. Worth every moment of planning.

## 14. Two Temple Place

*2 Temple Place, WC2*

A lavish neo-Gothic mansion built in 1895 for William Waldorf Astor. The interior is breathtaking: carved mahogany, bronze figures, stained glass, and a gilded weather vane. It hosts free exhibitions in winter and spring.

## 15. Columbia Road Flower Market

*Columbia Road, E2*

Every Sunday morning this East London street transforms into a riot of colour and fragrance. Arrive early (8am) to beat the crowds, or late (2pm) for bargains. The independent shops along the street open only on market day.

## 16. The Churchill War Rooms Map Room

*Clive Steps, King Charles Street, SW1*

While the main Churchill War Rooms are well known, the Map Room is the most atmospheric space: untouched since the lights were switched off on 16 August 1945. The sugar bowl still sits on the table.

## 17. Neal's Yard

*Covent Garden, WC2*

A tiny courtyard hidden behind nondescript doorways off Short's Gardens. Bursting with colour - every wall painted a different vivid shade - and home to some of London's best independent cafes and wholefood shops.

## 18. Leighton House Museum

*12 Holland Park Road, W14*

The former home of Victorian artist Frederic Leighton, featuring the jaw-dropping Arab Hall: walls covered in exquisite Islamic tiles collected from Damascus and Cairo, with a golden dome and tinkling fountain. Entry is affordable and crowds are thin.

## 19. The Wellcome Collection

*183 Euston Road, NW1*

A free museum exploring the connections between medicine, life, and art. Permanent collections include Napoleon's toothbrush, Darwin's walking stick, and a Peruvian mummy. The temporary exhibitions are consistently brilliant.

## 20. Barbican Conservatory

*Silk Street, EC2*

The second-largest conservatory in London hides inside the Brutalist Barbican Estate. Tropical plants, exotic fish ponds, and terrapins thrive in this unexpected urban jungle. Open free on selected Sundays - check dates in advance.

## 21. The Hunterian Museum

*Royal College of Surgeons, WC2*

Recently reopened after major renovation, this free museum displays the extraordinary surgical collection of John Hunter (1728-1793). It includes the skeleton of the 'Irish Giant' Charles Byrne and is not for the squeamish.

## 22. The Mudlarking Foreshore

*Thames Riverbank, Various Locations*

At low tide, the Thames foreshore reveals centuries of London's history: clay pipe stems, medieval pottery, Roman coins, and Victorian buttons. You can legally mudlark on the public foreshore - Bankside and the Tower are prime spots.

## 23. St Dunstan in the East

*St Dunstan's Hill, EC3*

A medieval church bombed in the Blitz and left as a ruin, now transformed into one of London's most photogenic gardens. Climbing plants cover Gothic arches and glassless windows frame the sky. A place of extraordinary peace in the heart of the City.

## 24. Sir John Soane's Museum

*13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2*

The eccentric architect's house, preserved exactly as he left it in 1837, crammed with antiquities, architectural models, and paintings including Hogarth's original 'A Rake's Progress'. Free entry. The Saturday evening candlelit openings are unmissable.

## 25. Eltham Palace

*Court Yard, SE9*

A medieval royal palace fused with a spectacular 1930s Art Deco mansion by the Courtauld family. The entrance hall alone is worth the journey - a circular room with a marquetry floor depicting Scandinavia and a lemur named Mah-Jongg once roamed the halls.

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