

Exploring London by Boat



The Thames is one of the best locations from which to see London's many cultural sights. Avoid the crowds and traffic of dry land transport to enjoy a relaxing river cruise complete with live commentary, historical anecdotes and trivia tidbits. Given its prominent maritime history, it's little surprise that Greenwich has a pier where you can embark upon a variety of cruises that will take you into central London and past many of its best attractions.

From Greenwich Pier you will travel past **Canary Wharf**, London's most impressive and modern architectural development, which is now home to numerous international businesses and boasts a plethora of shops, restaurants & bars.

The stretch of London between Canary Wharf & Tower Bridge contains few major attractions, but you will notice the extensive redevelopment of property along the water's edge, evidence of London's growing property market as well as East London's financial rejuvenation over the last decade.

Standing over the Thames since 1894, **Tower Bridge** (pictured) is one of London's most iconic landmarks. Before this date, no bridge existed east of London Bridge, proving problematic for East London's burgeoning population. Yet concern that a bridge in this area would disrupt river traffic to its many busy ports initially stymied construction. Tower Bridge became the largest and most sophisticated 'bascule' (French for see-saw) bridge in the world. Today, the Bridge continues to lift to allow large vessels through. At the Tower Bridge Experience exhibition, visitors can learn how it was built, see the Victorian Engine Rooms and enjoy spectacular views from the high-level walkways.

Next to the bridge lies the famous **Tower of London** (pictured: left). During its 900-year history, the Tower has served as a royal palace, fortress, arsenal, mint, menagerie, jewel house and, most famously, as a prison for royalty such as Elizabeth I. Today, it is home to the Crown Jewels and popular for its entertaining tours led by Yeoman Warders, better known as 'Beefeaters'.

A reminder of Britain's naval heritage in the 20th century, the **HMS Belfast** is moored between the Tower and London Bridges. The cruiser was launched in 1938, playing a major role at the Normandy Landings and in the destruction of the German battle cruiser 'Scharnhorst'. Climb on board to visit its quarterdeck, bridge, engine rooms, messdecks, officer cabins, galley and sickbay.

Just after Southwark Bridge sits London's only thatched roof building, **Shakespeare's Globe** (pictured: right), an authentic reconstruction of the playhouse where Shakespeare worked and for which he wrote many of his plays. The exhibition details the building of the Globe, introduces visitors to the costumes and music of his day and includes a guided tour of the theatre. Performances take place between May and September. ▶

Tower Bridge

Tel: 0870 780 0268 Call for opening times. Tickets: £6.50 or concessions.

Tower of London

Tel: 0870 756 6060 Call for opening times. Tickets: £13.50 or concessions.

HMS Belfast

Tel: 0870 780 0229 Call for opening times. Tickets: £7 or concessions.

Shakespeare's Globe

Tel: 0870 780 5557 Call for opening times. Tickets: £8 or concessions.

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If you're on a cruise that allows you to break your journey and re-embark later in the day, hop off at **Tate Modern** (pictured: left), housed in the converted Bankside Power Station and undoubtedly one of London's most impressive buildings. The permanent collections of British and International Modern Art are free with special ticketed exhibitions arriving regularly throughout the year.

From here, you can take a boat directly across the river to the **Tate Britain** another one of the nation's favourite galleries. Otherwise, take a stroll across the Millennium Bridge to visit St. Paul's Cathedral.

Designed by renowned architect, Sir Christopher Wren, **St. Paul's** was built between 1675 and 1710 and, since then, has celebrated, mourned and commemorated Britain's most well known figures and worldwide events of immense importance. Climb the stairs up to hear the amazing acoustics of the Whispering Gallery and continue to The Golden Gallery some 280ft. high for wonderful views of London. Then cross back over Millennium Bridge to catch the boat at Bankside Pier and continue up the river.

For those continuing to Westminster Pier, you'll soon spy the enormous **British Airways London Eye** (pictured: right). Conceived for a millennium landmark competition, the Eye took 6 years to complete and the work of hundreds of people across Europe. At 135m high it is the world's tallest observation wheel and its 32 fully-enclosed capsules offer some 15,000 visitors a day the best views of London.

Next door in the County Hall Building is the **London Aquarium**. Home to over 350 different species from ocean,

lakes and rivers around the world, the London Aquarium offers a glimpse of underwater life including Zebra Sharks, rays, sea horses and clown fish (pictured). Free talks and feeding displays are organised throughout the day.

Just beyond the pier lie **Big Ben** and the **Houses of Parliament** (pictured). Although built in 1852, certain sections of the building date back to 1097. Take a tour of the Palace or visit the Strangers Gallery in both the House of Commons and House of Lords to see Parliament in session.

Various companies operate along the river. For sightseeing tours like the one described above, contact Thames River Services or Catamaran Cruisers. Crown River Cruises operates a circular hop-on hop-off service between Westminster and St. Katharine's Dock. Thames Clippers has a regular commuter service and Wood River Cruises 5 star fleet is perfect for private and corporate hire.

Attractions

Houses of Parliament Tel: 0870 780 4267
London Aquarium Tel: 0870 780 0240 Tickets: £9.75 or concessions.
London Eye Tel: 0870 990 8881 Tickets: £11.50 or concessions.
St. Paul's Cathedral Tel: 0870 780 0219 Tickets: £7 or concessions.
Tate Britain Tel: 0870 780 6326 Free entry except ticketed exhibitions.
Tate Modern Tel: 0870 780 6326 Free entry except ticketed exhibitions.

River Cruises

Catamaran Cruisers Tel: 0870 780 8672
Crown River Cruises Tel: 0870 780 6819
Thames Clippers Tel: 0870 780 8673
Thames River Services Tel: 0870 780 8674
Woods River Cruises Tel: 0870 780 8675