



LONDON, BY DESIGN!

From sprawling art galleries and contemporary design centres, to stylish shopping streets and creative dining options, the British capital is a wonderfully aesthetic playground, with a surprise around every corner.

BY PRACHI JOSHI

“WHEN A MAN IS TIRED OF LONDON, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.” These famous words uttered by English author Samuel Johnson about 250 years ago, ring true even today. From storied landmarks like the Buckingham Palace, Tower Bridge, and Westminster Abbey to vibrant cultural institutions like The National Gallery, London, British Museum, and the Tate—there’s plenty to gladden the heart of art enthusiasts.

Add to that, its constantly evolving dining landscape, historic shipping streets, and a year-round calendar of events designed to enthrall. So, if you’re inspired by creativity, aesthetics, and all things beautiful, here’s what you can’t miss out on when you visit London next.

CULTURAL EMBRACE

Chock-a-block with world-class museums and art galleries, London is a dream come true for

the culture vulture. Begin with the venerable Victoria and Albert Museum (or V&A), known for its decorative arts and design collection. The museum building in South Kensington is impressive in itself, featuring a Victorian edifice with decorative mosaics, frescoes, and elaborate stained glass. The artistic vision continues within with its permanent collection showcasing an eye-popping 2.3 million objects spanning 5,000 years of history, and covering everything from architecture, painting, and sculpture to fashion, textiles, ceramics, and jewellery. While the museum is free to enter, some special exhibitions are ticketed, like the ongoing one on *Tropical Modernism* that includes examples of the architectural style’s expression in India (on till 22 September). Coming up in November is an exhibition on Mughal art and architecture that promises to be a stunner. And don’t miss Room 40, which holds the world’s largest textile and clothing collection and traces fashion through the ages. Another must-see is the David Bowie exhibit featuring photographs, album sleeve artwork, and memorabilia that traces the shifting styles of one of the most pioneering performers of our times. In fact, next year, the V&A is all set to open The David Bowie Centre for the Study of Performing Arts at its new

outpost, V&A East Storehouse in Stratford’s Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. With more than 80,000 items, including photos, letters, sheet music, original costumes, and instruments, it’s sure to be a treat for music and fashion fans.

Now that you’ve soaked in the splendours of the past, get ready to witness the best of contemporary design at the Design Museum on Kensington High Street (near Holland Park). Housed in a Grade II-listed modernist building, topped by a unique copper-clad, hyperbolic paraboloid roof, the museum traces the history of modern design through the works of some of the world’s best designers. Launching on 5 July, *Barbie®: The Exhibition* takes you on a colourful ride through the famous doll’s fashion, cars, houses, and more. And do drop by the complex’s beautifully curated shop to pick up a design-forward souvenir before you bid it adieu.

Need your modern art fix to be satiated further? Head to Hyde Park (a must-visit in itself) and make a beeline for the Serpentine Gallery nestled in Kensington Gardens. Coupled with the Zaha Hadid-designed Serpentine North (across the park’s Serpentine Lake), the two galleries have a fantastic calendar of programming through the year. Each summer,

Opposite page: Visitors explore Italian-Renaissance and other artwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum. *This page, clockwise from left:* A woman admires paintings at the V&A; Visitors enjoy a day out in the sun in the courtyard of the V&A; Presentation of a striped bodysuit worn by David Bowie; Sunlight streams through the parabolic roof of the contemporary Design Museum.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Sergei Figurny / Shutterstock; THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Image courtesy of Instagram @viamuseum; cowardlion / Shutterstock; Image courtesy of Masayoshi Sukita @ Sukita The David Bowie Archive 2012; Peter, Fleming / Shutterstock



Clockwise from top left: The Serpentine Pavilion presents *Archipelagic Void*, a creation by Minsuk Cho, Mass Studies; A row of must-visit interior design shops line Pimlico Road; A digital rendering of *Pumpkin*, a sculpture by Yayoi Kusama; The pretty 'Rhododendron' plate by Raynaud evokes spring at the Design Centre.

the gallery invites an architect, whose work has never been shown in the UK, to create a pavilion in Hyde Park. This year's creation, *Archipelagic Void*, is by Seoul-based Korean architect Minsuk Cho and his firm Mass Studies (open till October-end this year). This summer, the gallery also unveils a new large-scale sculpture by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama—the 6-metre-tall, yellow-and-black *Pumpkin* (2024) is her tallest bronze pumpkin artwork to date (on display from 9 July to 3 November). Yet another testament to London's high stature when it comes to contemporary art!

HOME AND AWAY

If all that gallery-hopping has given you some home décor inspiration, the Design Centre is a good place to start scouting. Housed under three glass domes in Chelsea Harbour by the Thames riverside, it has 130 showrooms and more than 600 of the world's most prestigious

luxury brands on offer. Let the centre's personal shopping team take you through the various offerings—from Raynaud's crockery designs to Jensen Beds' sleek Norwegian-style upholstered beds, it's a furnishing haven for décor lovers! For a more eclectic selection, the numerous interior designs shops on Pimlico Road should be your next port of call. After all, this is where all the London designers flock to, whether for fixtures like hand-made sculptural plaster cone hanging lights at Rose Uniacke Interiors or bespoke British craftsmanship at HOWE just across the street. Next door at Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler's, you'll find elegant antiques like ceramic lamps, gilded mirrors, and decorative objets d'art. Speaking of period pieces, the Alfies Antique Market in Marylebone is an essential stop. As London's largest indoor antiques and vintage market, it's spread over four floors in an Art Deco building, where you will find nearly 100 dealers offering everything from antique jewellery, vintage fashion, and fine art to textiles, ceramics, silverware, and much more. And that's not all: if you're truly craving it, there's more vintage shopping on Portobello Road Market in Notting Hill. Said to be the world's largest antique market, it has more than 1,000 stalls lining the road. It may require a bit of wading through crowds, but you may just snag a vintage

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Image courtesy of Serpentine @ Mass Studies; William Barton/ Shutterstock; Image courtesy of the Fine Arts, Victoria Miro, and David Zwirner @ YAYOI KUSAMA; Image courtesy of www.dccb.co.uk

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Clockwise from top left: Visitors and shoppers through the colourful and lively Portobello Road Market; The majestic façade of Harrods, the world's most famous department store; Exquisite glassware at Alfies Antique Market in Marylebone.

designer outfit or a cool antique piece to take back home. While the street market is open on most days, the antiques section is open only on Fridays and Saturdays, with Saturday being the main trading day. Pro Tip: Arrive before 11:30 AM, if you want to avoid the crowds. After all, the early bird catches the—in this case, supremely vintage—worm!

OFF THE SHELF

Looking for some special luxury brands? Then Sloane Street is the place to go! Situated in Knightsbridge, this is one of the world's most exclusive shopping destinations, with designer flagship stores interspersed with chic town houses and beautifully decorated private gardens. You'll find all the iconic brands here, from Burberry, Bvlgari, and Chanel to Dior, Fendi, Gucci, and many more. Knightsbridge is also home to two of the most historic stores in London—Harrods and Harvey Nichols. Founded in 1849, the former is a 5-acre behemoth with an Edwardian Baroque façade, iconic green awnings, and hand-laid mosaic flooring. By comparison, Harvey Nichols feels more intimate. Founded in 1831 as a linen shop, the current red-brick building dates to the late 1800s. Inside are five floors of a retail mecca, including several shop-in-shop concepts like the pastel-hued Jacquemus space (designed by OMA/AMO), offering an immersive experience. Sign up for their personal shopping service, sit back in one of their private suites, and let your personal stylist take care of all your retail needs.

SWEET SURRENDER

All that shopping is sure to have worn you out and you deserve a bit of relaxation, amidst some creative brilliance, of course. Just around the corner from Harvey Nichols is the Jumeirah Carlton Tower, London's first tower hotel that opened in 1961. A recent £100 million renovation has seen the property transform into an elegant, sophisticated space with marble accents and Art Deco touches. Head upstairs to see the 20-metre swimming pool, London's largest in a hotel, with a Jacuzzi and a double-height curved glass ceiling that looks out over the city. A block away is another glamorous refuge, The Cadogan, A Belmond Hotel, housed in four gorgeous Georgian town houses. The interiors, tastefully adorned with velvet, marble, and wooden elements, capture the historic

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Vows for Eternity:

A tailored journey to lasting connections



Beyond the glossy veneer of the hyper-individualism and self-sufficiency of modern society, there lies a deeper, and oft-overlooked desire for connection and companionship—a desire for that special person to share life's joys and sorrows, to come home to after a long day, and to create cherished memories we hold close when looking back. Yet, amidst the relentless demands of modern life, this desire often fades into the background, leaving love feeling elusive.

Enter Vows For Eternity, a global matchmaking firm led by entrepreneur and Founder CEO Anuradha Gupta, committed to easing the burden of seeking connection in a world dominated by ever-shifting priorities. With headquarters in New York City, Vows For Eternity extends its reach across continents, from the bustling streets of Mumbai and New Delhi to the cosmopolitan hubs of London, Toronto, and Dubai. This global footprint underscores their commitment to connecting Indian communities across various geographies, bound by the timeless pursuit of connection and companionship.

Vows For Eternity's approach is grounded in profound introspection and emotional frankness. Unlike conventional matchmaking services, they delve deep into each member's worldviews, values, and life experiences. Here, members engage in heart-to-heart discussions about their concerns, whether it's a disconnect with parents over their choices or a personal emotional block. The process, charged with empathy, is facilitated by experts who help bridge these gaps. This isn't mere data collection or a cold exchange of biodata; it's a guided search for a union that reflects the true depth and significance of marriage.

With a quality-over-quantity approach, introductions are arranged only when both parties express genuine interest in moving the connection forward. This rigorous vetting process ensures that every member is not only

genuinely committed to the pursuit of marriage, but also aligns with the standards upheld by the service.

Their arranged introductions provide a comfortable starting point for members to authentically get to know each other on their own terms. Here, members are more than just profiles on a screen; they are real, human connections committed to building meaningful, long-lasting relationships. From highly successful professionals seeking a soulmate to established business families with a legacy to uphold, Vows For Eternity offers its discerning members a range of premium services, including the exclusive Private Club and Luminary League, designed to cater to the diverse needs of its esteemed clientele.

Whether one seeks a second chance at love or resuming their journey after less-than-ideal experiences, Vows For Eternity's tailored membership tiers ensure that finding a lifelong partner happens on one's own terms. Everyone deserves to experience love in their own unique way, and the brand's commitment to customisation reflects this belief. The journey to finding 'The One' is characterised by intentionality, authenticity, and transparency. As the brand aptly phrases it, "It's not about discovering someone new, but rather, coming home."

Anuradha is set to visit India by the end of July, and we anticipate a summer filled with refreshing conversations and meaningful matches!

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Clockwise from top left: Jumeirah Carlton Towers' rooftop swimming pool offers a stunning view through its curved glass ceiling; The discreet, regal entrance of The Cadogan; Books galore at the cosy John Sandoe Books store; Charming setting of afternoon tea at the Drawing Room in Brown's Hotel; The surreal and whimsical ambience of The Glade at Sketch offers a lovely escape into a forested wonderland.

London vibe perfectly. This was a favourite haunt of Irish poet Oscar Wilde, so, naturally, the interiors pay tribute to literature with over 700 books curated by John Sandoe Books (a charming neighbourhood store you must visit).

FLAVOUR OF THE SEASON

There's no doubt the city is home to some of the world's most famed restaurants, where design matters as much as the food on your plate. Case in point is Sketch in Mayfair, with five unique eating spaces—among them, The Glade, with its enchanting forest setting inspired by a French 1900s postcard, offers an amazing fairy-tale like dining experience. Also in Mayfair is Bibi, an Indian eatery set in a chic Georgian building. Its Jaipur-inspired interiors are decked out in pinks, mirrors, and paisley upholstery.

No trip to London is complete without enjoying a quintessentially British afternoon tea and one of the best places to experience this is at the elegant Brown's Hotel. The Drawing Room, once frequented by Queen Victoria, retains its original 1830s wood panelling but is

BANK ON THIS!

The world's most famous street artist has been spraying around London for years! Make sure to check out *Tree* (Finsbury Park, 2024), *Graffiti Area/Guard Dog* (Shoreditch, 2003), and the cheeky political commentary of *My Tap's Been Phoned* (corner of Chirp Street and East India Dock Road, 2011) to sample Banksy's unique, viral work.

adorned with striking contemporary artworks. And finally, swing by 42, the new sister bar from Michelin-starred Indian restaurant Gymkhana. It's all Indian maximalism inside, with ruby tones, hefty chandeliers, and even ceramic leopards guarding the fireplace!

There's a surprise around almost every corner, but that's not surprising. As Joey from *Friends* said, "It's London, baby!"

GETTING THERE

Vistara offers non-stop daily flights between London and Delhi.

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