

Welcome to the “Square Mile!” This tour will take you through the oldest streets in London – from the Roman settlement 2,000 years ago – to the newest (and tallest!) buildings in all of Europe. Starting with a stroll along the ancient underground river Fleet, with a mid-point stop at Christopher Wren’s masterpiece, St. Paul’s, and a grand finale at Her Majesty’s Fortress, The Tower of London, this tour manages to squeeze two millennium worth of time into one easy-to-handle 2 and a half hour jam-packed excursion!

This tour begins from Temple Underground Station, but if you are not coming via the Underground, you could start your tour at point #2, the Church of St. Clement Danes. The tour ends at the Tower of London.

Some of the sites we cover on the tour:

- St. Paul’s Cathedral
- The Tower of London
- The Bank of England
- Temple Church (dates permitting)
- Royal Courts of Justice
- Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese
- London Bridge
- Tower Bridge
- The Monument
- River Thames
- and much more

As soon as you step out of Temple Station, turn to the LEFT. Walk up the stairs here directly onto ARUNDEL STREET. Walk up the street (up the hill) until you reach the traffic lights on your RIGHT. Cross over DIAGONALLY to the courtyard of the Church across the road with the three statues in front.

The church here was designed by master architect Sir Christopher Wren and was opened to the public in the 1680’s. The curious name of the

building is thought to come from the fact that this area of London had a large Danish population in the 9th century, or perhaps because King Harold I was buried here in 1040 and he had Danish heritage. Originally, the church was just the neighbourhood site of worship for people living in this section of London, although today the church has a very different purpose.

Face the church and take the path to the LEFT. Jump up the ledge and stand just on the side of the building.

You can see quite clearly here that St. Clement Danes shows significant structural damage. All the craters and cracks you can see here are the result of the Blitz: the widespread bombing of London by the German forces during WWII. During the Blitz, Clement Danes was destroyed inside by fire and the external damage that you can see dates from then. Although the inside of the church has been totally refurbished, the outside was left as you can see it today to act as a memorial – and a reminder to all about the suffering of London during WWII. Because of the connection here to the armed forces and the air raids, the Royal Air Force has selected St. Clement Danes church as their principal site of worship.

Now continue on to the BACK of the church.

The statue here is of Samuel Johnson, who attended services at St. Clement Danes church when he lived in London during the 18th century. Johnson is best known as the first person to ever compile of a comprehensive English dictionary, although in the 1700's he was known for being a literary critic and great public speaker, hence the fact that he is holding a book – and is talking!

Step down now onto the traffic island.

This fantastic building across the road looks a lot like Hogwarts! However, this building houses the Royal Courts of Justice: two dozen purpose-built courtrooms that were erected here in the 1860's in an architectural style known as 'neo-gothic,' very popular in the Victorian age. The Royal Courts

of Justice can be visited by the public – for free! During the week the front door is open and guests can visit the large entrance hall, or even sit in the public galleries of the courtrooms. Tours of the RCJ are available but must be booked in advance at

<https://www.justice.gov.uk/courts/rcj-rolls-building/rcj/tours>.

Now cross the street AWAY from the Royal Courts of Justice towards the TWININGS TEA SHOP. Facing TWINGINGS, with the ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE behind you, head LEFT down THE STRAND. Stop outside the monument in the centre of the road with the dragon on top.

Now cross the street AWAY from the Royal Courts of Justice towards the TWININGS TEA SHOP. Facing TWINGINGS, with the ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE behind you, head LEFT down THE STRAND. Stop outside the monument in the centre of the road with the dragon on top.

This monument, topped with a Dragon, marks the boundaries into the City of London. So technically speaking, you are walking out of the City of Westminster, and entering the City of London. The City of London is actually only 1 square mile – starting here and finishing near the Tower of London. The City of London is separate from the rest of London in a number of different ways: they have their own police force, they have their own mayor (the Lord Mayor), and is considered the financial centre of the United Kingdom.

The City of London has been inhabited far longer than the City of Westminster – or any of the other areas that make up ‘the Greater London area.’ In fact, the City of London has existed here since the Roman settlement of England in the year 47! This means you are exploring the oldest streets of London on this walk.

Continue down THE STRAND (which is now called THE FLEET since you have entered the City). When you get to the brown and white Tudor building on your RIGHT, stop.

This house dates from 1610 and was originally a pub. Today, it belongs to the office of the Lord Mayor and events are held inside, meaning there is no more public access. It is worth stopping to see this building – known as Prince Henry's Room – because it is very rare in the City of London for there to be a building as old as this. Prince Henry's Room survived the Blitz – but also the Great Fire of London in 1666 (details on which later).

A hidden gem tucked away inside one of the Inns of Court, Temple Church is a beautiful 12th-century church. Members of the public can not only visit the church but can often attend concerts that take place inside. Easily accessible from Fleet Street on Mondays-Fridays, it's a bit harder to find it on the weekends as the main entrance into Temple is closed – but it's worth the effort to eventually find your way! Temple Church came to the public's attention a number of years ago at the publishing (and subsequent film) of Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*. In fact, there is a scene set inside the Temple Church in the story that was also filmed for the screen. It is here that the main characters Langston and Sophie, along with Leah Teabing come when trying to solve the riddle: In London lies a knight a Pope interred. His labour's fruit a Holy wrath incurred. You seek the orb that out be on his tomb. It speaks of Rosy flesh and seeded womb.

Return to THE FLEET and continue in the same direction previously walked until you cross over BOUVERIE STREET which is on your RIGHT. Just past this street is a set of traffic lights. Turn LEFT and cross here. Walk up BOLT COURT (the small alley in between the McDonald's and Starbucks). Continue up, bear to the right and then left – past the metal bicycle stands until you get to a group of benches and a statue of a cat.

The House standing at the end of the courtyard here – with the blue plaque on front – was lived in by Samuel Johnson, who you saw earlier outside St. Clement Danes Church. Johnson did not own this house, he actually rented it, for the price of £30 a month! Also living with Johnson inside this house was his favourite cat, Hodge. Hodge was a big black tomcat and Johnson is quoted as saying that Hodge was, "a very fine cat indeed." You can see

these words carved into the side of the statue of Hodge amongst the wooden benches here.

The statue of Hodge was erected in 1997 and he is depicted here sitting on top of Johnson's dictionary next to some oyster shells. It is common for Londoners to leave money in the oyster shells here – so that Hodge can buy oysters up in cat heaven! Johnson's House is open to visit at scheduled times throughout the year. <http://www.drjohnsonshouse.org/>

With JOHNSONS HOUSE and Hodge behind you, go RIGHT back down past the metallic bicycle stands. But instead of going back the way you came, go LEFT. You will pass one pathway on the right then come to a dead end with another alleyway on the right.

You are now looking at one of the oldest pubs in London! Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese has stood on this site in one form or another since the 1530's. Today it is a popular pub known for its history, but also for the well-known clientele the pub has hosted throughout the years: Mark Twain, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Pepys, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde, Teddy Roosevelt, and Voltaire just to list a few! The pub is kept very atmospheric inside and is a great example of a traditional, historical London pub. Open 6 days a week, Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese also serves food and children are welcome. This is one of the best things to do in the City of London.

Walk now down the alley past YE OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE. You will come back out on THE FLEET. Turn to your LEFT and walk until you get to the RED POST BOX showing the initials of Queen Victoria. Here, carefully CROSS THE FLEET, then turn LEFT. You will walk over a road known as Salisbury Ct on your right and continue on before turning RIGHT into BRIDE'S COURT.

This is another of Sir Christopher Wren's churches. Built in the 1680's it was known as a London landmark for decades. Today, although it is somewhat lost in the modern buildings of the area, it is still a popular church which can be evidenced by the gleaming white spire on top of the

building. The spire here, the most notable aspect of the building, has recently undergone a £2 million restoration project and all the money was raised by donations! St. Bride's is considered a historical part of London's history and is also known as the "Journalist's Church" from the time when Fleet Street was dominated by newspapers, magazines, and the printing industry.

Facing the church, turn LEFT and walk down ST BRIDES AVE (the alleyway between the office buildings here and the Church.) At the bottom of the Ave, you will walk downstairs then turn LEFT onto BRIDE LANE. When you come back to FLEET STREET turn RIGHT until you get to the large junction with NEW BRIDGE STREET. In the same direction, cross the street (past the Co-Op store) and continue up LUDGATE HILL. At the top of the hill is ST. PAULS CATHEDRAL.

You are now standing outside Christopher Wren's masterpiece: St. Paul's Cathedral. St. Paul's has actually existed in one form or another for the last 1,000 years or so on this site. The current church was completed by Wren and declared 'officially' open on Christmas Day in 1711. The Church is used for numerous events and ceremonies and has seen the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Victoria in 1897 and Queen Elizabeth II in 2012. It also hosted the royal wedding of Lady Diana Spencer and Charles, the Prince of Wales in 1981. Buried inside the church are notable figures such as the Duke of Wellington, Admiral Lord Nelson and Christopher Wren, himself! It is possible to visit St. Paul's Cathedral by either purchasing a ticket and taking the audio guide or on weekday evenings and Sundays throughout the day for FREE by attending a church service. Read our complete blog post on St. Paul's Cathedral.

Standing between the statue of Queen Anne and ST PAULS itself, go to the RIGHT of the church and follow the pathway along the side of the Cathedral. Continue to walk right beside St. Paul's until you get to the red phone box just beyond the back end of the church.

From here you have a perfect view of the dome of St. Paul's – which is the second largest church dome in the world, just behind St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. At the top of the dome is the Golden Gallery which guests are able to climb to once they have bought their entrance ticket to the Cathedral. Just behind St. Paul's is the bell tower of another, smaller church: St. Augustine. St Augustine is another Christopher Wren church from the 1680's, although it was nearly entirely demolished during the Blitz. The back of the building, as you can see, is modern 1960's style and now houses a school. But it is worth paying attention to just how close St. Augustine is to St. Paul's and to reflect on the fact that even though St. Paul's survived the Blitz mostly unscathed, buildings literally inches away were totally destroyed.

With ST. PAULS behind you, walk past ST. AUGUSTINES on your left and continue down the pedestrian path here until you get to the road – NEW CHANGE. Cross the street and keep the modern office building on your LEFT. You will walk past a tea shop – and JAMIE OLIVERS BUTCHERS SHOP on your left. At the end of the building, outside BREAD STREET KITCHEN, turn left onto BREAD STREET. Walk down until you have passed the restaurant BURGER & LOBSTER. Just to the side of the restaurant is an alleyway called JOHN MILTON PASSAGE. Go down the alleyway into the churchyard.

Here you are in the courtyard of another Christopher Wren church, St. Mary-le-Bow. In the centre of the churchyard is the statue of Captain John Smith (popularly known from the Disney film Pocahontas). On the side of Smith's statue, you can see a piece of artwork depicting the coat of arms of the City of London. You will see two dragons (just as on the top of Temple Bar) as well as the red cross of St. George and the red sword of St. Paul. This design is also on every road sign in the City of London – and most of the bins, too!

With St. Mary-le-Bow to your right and the statue of John Smith behind you, turn RIGHT onto Cheapside. As you walk you will walk across Queen Street. Keep going and when you get to the large junction with Mansion

House Street turn taking the crossing near the right. Immediately as you cross over you will see a small courtyard with a mansion on the left and the Magistrates Court on your right. This is Walbrook. Keep going forward until you reach Number 12.

We have already discussed how the City of London sits on top of the Roman city of Londinium and here is your opportunity to see it first-hand in one of archaeology's biggest ever finds in the capital. Beneath this modern office building (the European headquarters of Bloomberg) sits the remains of a Roman Temple, dating from around AD240. Uncovered originally as part of a bomb site during the Blitz, the temple has now been fully restored and placed near to what would have been its original site. The temple now also houses an astonishing exhibition of Roman artifacts that have been discovered throughout the years in this part of London.

The Temple here was dedicated to the Roman God Mithra originally - and was later dedicated to Bacchus, the god of wine, before being abandoned in the 4th century. The location of this Temple was strategically planned as, in centuries gone by, two small offshoots of the River Thames flowed into this area which meant this was an easily accessible place for locals and visitors (who would travel from throughout the empire) to access. The temple ruins lie underground today, and, strangely, would also have been built underground originally. Visitors would descend a staircase into a candle-lit hall filled with dark corners, smoke, and perfume. The entrance to the Temple was deliberately kept unsettling as new members of the temple would undergo terrifying initiation ceremonies where they believed were going to be killed. The ambiance has been recreated here and a slow descent into the Temple transports visitors back centuries.

The Temple is open 6 days a week (closed Mondays) and is free to visit, but you must book a time slot in advance to guarantee entry. To book a ticket and view the opening hours, simply visit the website at: [www.londonmithraeum.com](http://www.londonmithraeum.com).

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Now standing in the financial heart of London, you are right next to two buildings of large importance. The Royal Exchange is the building with the columns in front and the statue of the Duke of Wellington on horseback outside. Originally, the Royal Exchange was founded in the 16th century by Queen Elizabeth I as a place for wealthy people to shop. Many different merchants traded underneath a single roof here and all the buying, trading and selling that took place here eventually spawned the Royal Stock Exchange. The Stock Exchange was moved to another building and today The Royal Exchange has been brought back to its origins: it is now again filled with luxury shops! You can expect to find inside companies like Rolex, Tiffany, and Hermes for example.

Mansion House -

Different than the Mayor of London, the Lord Mayor is responsible for the day-to-day running of the City of London. The job of Lord Mayor has existed for 800 years and they have been living here since this building was erected in 1752 by architect George Dance. We are currently on our 686th Lord Mayor (as of writing) and out of all of them, there have been only two female Lord Mayors. The job of Lord Mayor comes with a one-year term – only! So, Lord Mayors can be re-elected but there always has to be a one-term gap in between their tenure.

Now stand with both the Royal Exchange and the statue of the Duke of Wellington behind you, you'll be facing mansion house. You went to cross the street that is to your left and walk onto Lombard Street, take the first

left, which is still called Lombard Street, and start near the Sainsbury's and Pret near Abchurch Lane.

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Londoners have a habit of naming buildings after the items we think they look like, such as the Gherkin or the Cheese grater, and the Walkie-Talkie is another to add to the list. A commercial skyscraper in the City of London, the actual name of this building is 20 Fenchurch Street. The distinctive shape of the structure, which is larger at the top and at the bottom, has led to the nickname Walkie-Talkie. The building had originally been a hotly debated construction, with many believing the Walkie-Talkie had negatively impacted the views of the City of London, St Paul's Cathedral, and the Tower of London.

In fact, the building was originally intended to be another 40 meters, or 131 feet, taller but was shortened as a compromise. At the top of the Walkie-Talkie sits the Sky Garden. Spreading across three floors, the Sky Garden offers uninterrupted views of London. There's a landscaped garden as well as a bar and restaurant. Although it costs to drink and dine at the venue, the garden itself is actually free to the public as part of an agreement made before planning permission from the building was granted.

Something, the word garden is a bit generous when used to describe this part of the building, so expecting lush green grass and countless plants, flowers, or trees will leave visitors disappointed. However, the plants and trees that are on display here are lovely and give a somewhat surreal feeling while standing so high above the ground. For the price, particularly when compared to the London Eye or The Shard, this is definitely one of the best views in all of London.

It may be that you've heard of the Walkie-Talkie building before. As back in the summer of 2013, the building made international headlines because of a very interesting event, the melting of a car. The unique shape of the structure means that for around two hours a day, the sun shines directly onto the concave windows of the Walkie-Talkie reflecting onto the streets to the south. It is estimated that the glare reflecting off the windows is around six times brighter than direct sunlight. This reflection was so strong, in fact, that it damaged vehicles parked on the road nearby, including the partial melting of the framework of a Jaguar car. Please take note that although the Sky Garden is free to visit, you must book a space online in advance.

Continue down Lombard Street, past the Pret and the Sainsbury's, take the first right onto Abchurch Lane and walk down until you get to King William Street. At the bottom of King William Street is a large junction. Go down the stairs to your left, at the bottom of the stairs at the entrance to the House of Fraser on your left, and more stairs to your right. Go down the stairs on your right. Walk until you can turn left. There will then be stairs on your left and right, with the entrance the tube station directly in front of you. Take the stairs on the right. Once you get to the top of the stairs keep walking until you can see the monument on your left.

You are now looking at the tallest freestanding column in the entire world: The Monument to the Great Fire of London. Burning over the course of 5 days in September 1666, the Great Fire demolished all of medieval London, devastating the city and rendering tens of thousands of people completely homeless. As London was rebuilding after this disaster, King Charles II commissioned Christopher Wren to build a monument to commemorate the disaster. The resulting monument was opened to the public in 1671, making it one of the oldest tourist attractions in London. It is still possible to visit the monument and climb to the top! But do get ready to work...it's over 300 steps to the top! Read our blog post on the Monument. The reason the structure was built so tall is so that if you were to tip the monument onto its side, it would touch the spot where the Great Fire of 1666 is said to have begun!

With the Monument on your left, cross Monument Street and continue down KING WILLIAM STREET. Shortly after the bus stop on your right, before the road you are on crosses the river, you will see a set of stairs going down on the LEFT. Go down the stairs all the way.

You are now standing underneath London Bridge! One of the most famous bridges in the world, London Bridge has actually existed here for nearly 2,000 years. During the Medieval era, the Bridge here was so large that it actually supported over 250 buildings on top! Also displayed on top of the Bridge were 30 spikes displaying the severed heads of traitors against the crown... Although the name London Bridge is well-known the world over, many people confuse London Bridge with Tower Bridge. For more information, read our London Bridge post.

As you walk, Margaret will point out the Shard, the HMS Belfast, and the Old Billingsgate till you have a great view of Tower Bridge.

This stop is at the end of the walk and listen section.

Tower Bridge is the bridge that most people think of when they think of 'London Bridge.' Although, if you look behind you now you can get a view of the real London Bridge and you will probably notice it is not nearly as beautiful as Tower Bridge! Tower Bridge was opened in 1894 and spans a length of 244m (801ft). Tower Bridge is actually a drawbridge and the centre span can be opened to allow river traffic through, which happens a lot! In fact, they raise Tower Bridge around 1,000 times a year. It's possible to check on their website for the next lifting if you want to go down to take a look. Crossing Tower Bridge is free and if you'd like to know more there is a Museum located in the northernmost Tower that can be visited with the purchase of a ticket. Check out our full blog post on Tower Bridge.

From where you are standing, looking at TOWER BRIDGE, you will notice on the right along the path along the river with a BLUE FENCE. Head along that path. At the end, you will turn LEFT. Pass the building on your right

then turn RIGHT at the end onto LOWER THAMES STREET. Follow that Street until the end, which brings you to the TOWER OF LONDON.

You have now reached Her Majesty's Fortress, the Tower of London. The Tower of London originally began in 1071 when it was, indeed, just a single tower. You can see that over the centuries, many monarchs expanded and added pieces and buildings to the Tower which means that, despite its' name, it is a complex series of buildings including towers, but also turrets, walls, houses, and courtyards.

Throughout its' nearly 1,000-year existence, the Tower of London has been a royal palace, a fortress, the Royal Mint where money was manufactured, a menagerie where animals were kept, a prison, and a site of execution. It is the reputation as a site for executions that most people associate most with the Tower of London. Although it is worth noting that until the 20th century, only 12 people were officially executed here. The majority of executions took place in public, at a place called Tower Hill, just across the road from the Tower of London today. Visitors to the Tower need a ticket but once inside can take part in audio guides, a tour led by the world famous Beefeaters (read our Beefeaters post), or are able to wander on their own. On display are suits of armour belonging to Kings over the past centuries, the old royal Mint rooms, old prisoner cells, and the Crown Jewels. Guests also can see the ravens of the Tower (it is said that should the ravens that live here ever leave...the monarchy would fall! For this reason there is a full-time Raven Master who looks after the birds today), and the Beefeaters themselves. You can also visit for free during the Ceremony of the Keys.

The Tower of London is where your walk ends and it's advised by us, that you get yourself a ticket and head inside to enjoy one of the most 'London' experiences available.

As you face the Tower of London, you will see that there is a path at the bottom of the steps that runs around the Tower. Walk left and follow this path until it takes you underneath across the road. Straight ahead you will

see steps. After the first flight of steps, if you look to the right, you will see a piece of the original Roman Wall.

There is also a piece of the Roman Wall which would have surrounded London 2,000 years ago still on display. Notably, the city was surrounded by the London Wall; a 5 km (3 miles) long, 6 m (20 ft) high, and 2.5 m (8 ft 2 in) thick structure encompassing the entire city. This wall stood, in one form or another, until the 17th century. A dominating feature for centuries, today the wall has been reduced to a few small pieces, both of which can be visited by the public.